

## **Why Animas, you ask?**

Why Animas, you ask? The answer is pretty straight forward but it covers a history of about 100 years.

It begins in the early 1900s with the Mormon Colonies in Mexico who were concerned for their safety from Poncho Villa. As the Mexican rebellion intensifies in northern Mexico, the United States assured the US citizens of the Colonies that they would be protected from the rebels but they must be on the US side of the border for that to happen. In mass, the colonists gather their belongings for a short stay and set up a "tent city" across the border. There they are met by a unit of soldiers under orders protect the US citizens from harassment of Poncho Villa's band. Their short stay became a permanent relocation. Typical of Mormon pioneers, they had a dance every weekend for entertainment. It is there that Mae Richins, daughter of Orson Richins, met Babe Bowers, a US soldier. To make a love story short, they eloped and had a wonderful 50+ years together. They had 2 sons, Eddie and Walt. Also there was a time that Sid Wright, a cousin, lived with the family. A close bond was formed between the cousins that lasted throughout their lives. For a time Mae and Babe lived in the Animas area but quickly Babe discovered that ranching was not his cup-of-tea. He was able to obtain employment in El Paso, Texas, at Ft. Bliss as a mechanic. There they lived the remainder of their lives, keeping in touch with friends and family in Lordsburg and Animas.

Meanwhile another family was experiencing life in Mexico. Two families, in fact, the Blacks and the Stouts. These 2 families, as did others, had tragedy and personal loss while in Mexico. They left to return to Utah. From these 2 families Don Black and Arita Stout married while in Utah. They had 6 children. Mary was one. During the depression Don lost everything and decided to return to the El Paso area. He obtained a position as a security guard and teacher of Spanish and the electrical trade to illegal immigrant Mexicans who were sentenced at the La Tuna prison just outside of El Paso.

Mary and Eddie knew each other at church and were together at many of the activities. They each dated others throughout their teen years. WWII was declared and all the young men wanted to serve. Eddie was among them; however, because of contracting polio as a child, he was not eligible. He applied with all the forces but was rejected. He had a special artist talent as a draftsman/architect and soon took a job designing planes in Wichita, Kansas. Mary was in El Paso as a telephone operator. Eddie came home on leave and chemistry ignited and they were

married. They had 5 children. Throughout Eddie's professional career he always felt El Paso and Lordsburg were home. As he worked on the space program in Huntsville, Alabama, and Valpariso, Florida, he was trying to get back to home roots. Finally the family moved to Holloman Air Force Base in Alamogordo, New Mexico. Shortly before he retired also went for 2 years to Thailand during the Viet Nam War, but that is another story for another time.

During the years in Alamogordo, relationships were renewed and strengthened with relatives in Lordsburg and Animas. Often the Bowers family would be found at Ena's or Sid's home. Eddie belonged to an airplane club where he was able to rent a small piper-cub for the weekend. At times when Eddie was leaving the area by plane, he would buzz Sid's kids or Buddy Richins in the fields as he was picking cotton.

Eddie and Sid joined together in the "Hog Haven" enterprise in Animas. It was very successful and unique for its time. The environment was very sterile and controlled. Employees and guests wore special booties when entering the facility. The climate and temperature indoors was monitored. These hogs were treated with the care of pets (then led to the slaughter). Soon the demands of the business were such that neither Sid nor Eddie could continue to manage it as a part-time adventure, so they sold it.

When Sid died and was buried at the LDS Church cemetery in Animas, Eddie expressed his desire to be buried there also. And so it happened. Now Mary is joining her husband.

All of Mary and Eddie's children have memories of Animas and Lordsburg. Even though they now live in many different states, New Mexico is still special to the Bowers family.

So now you know, Why Animas? Think of it as roots. Many don't have that anymore. It is unique to feel connected to the land and the Richins family and we do.

Memories shared and written by Arita Mae Bowers Beard,

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