

THE LEOPOLD WRITING PROGRAM

2 0 1 8 A L D O L E O P O L D W R I T I N G C O N T E S T A W A R D W I N N E R



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When telling the story of a local land ethic leader, the person that came to mind was my grandfather, Benjamin Romero Rivera. My grandfather was born in Belen, New Mexico on Sep 24, 1926 from Indo-Hispanic parents whose ancestors settled in New Mexico in the early 1700's. Land, farming, and a moral responsibility to the natural world was passed down to him from his father and grandfather, and now to my family.

Aldo Leopold's land ethic is based off of one idea, "A thing is right when it tends to preserved the integrity, stability and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise." My grandfather was a farmer and his land had been passed down from generation to generation. He owned his own property but he was also the President of a Spanish land grant association. While acquiring lands sound simple, it was not. It took many years of negotiations along side his brother to return the Sevilleta land grant back to the La Joya community.

My grandpa was raised with a strong responsibility that if you took care of the land, it would take care of you. Farming was essential to his upbringing and raising his children. He taught his children about wild plants in New Mexico especially near their farmland in San Acacia. He taught them the benefits and purposes of native plants. He used natural healing methods from plants. He said "All things were put here on Earth for a purpose." He believed in protecting the land for farming, clean water sources and the balance of nature. As a farmer he did not believe in using pesticides and used natural deterrence instead.

As a farmer and president of a land grant he wanted his children to understand the significant purpose of man's responsibility to care for the Earth that God gave us. Grandpa believed in preserving the stability of the land by not interfering with nature.

In conclusion, many times in grandpa's life he had to fight for what he felt was going to preserve integrity of land. He believed in protecting and preserving his own farmland and water rights. In Socorro County my grandfather negotiated land disputes both for the land grant and his own farmland. He passed away in 2010 at 83 years of age, but his legacy lives on in his children and grandchildren.



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