

ARKANSAS EXTENSION HOMEMAKERS COUNCIL

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Official transcript of:

Mevalene Nadene Ashford

Pleasant Hill Extension Homemakers Club Member

Original recording made 7 March 2012

at the home of Mevalene Nadene Ashford

Interviewed by:

Cathryn Lundy

Good Neighbor Extension Homemakers Club President, Scott County, Arkansas

Recorded by:

Linda Forrest

Pleasant Hill and Scrap Pack Extension Homemakers Club Member
Scott County, Arkansas

Transcribed and Edited by:

Susan Fisher

Good Neighbor Extension Homemakers Club Secretary, Scott County, Arkansas



DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE
RESEARCH & EXTENSION

University of Arkansas System





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Arkansas Extension Homemakers Council

Oral History Program

Cathryn Lundy, Good Neighbor Extension Homemakers Club, Parks (Scott County), Arkansas

7 March 2012

This is an audio recording of Mevalene Nadene Ashford, a member of the Pleasant Hill Extension Homemakers Club. This interview is part of an Arkansas Extension Homemakers Council Oral History Program, and Mevalene is answering questions asked by Good Neighbor Extension Homemakers Club President, Parks (Scott County), Arkansas, Cathryn Lundy.

Questions and comments by Cathryn are in boldface type; Mevalene's responses and comments are in lightface type.

I am Cathryn Lundy. This is the interview with Mevalene Ashford for the Arkansas Extension Homemakers Council Oral History Program. This is being done on March 7, 2012, at the home of Mevalene Ashford in Waldron, Arkansas, in Scott County.

The audio recordings and transcript of this interview will be donated to the David and Barbara Pryor Center for Arkansas Oral and Visual History at the University of Arkansas.

The recording, transcript, and any other related materials will be deposited and preserved forever in the Special Collections Department, University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville, and the copyright will belong solely to the University of Arkansas.

Are you willing to give the Pryor Center permission to make the audio file and transcript available to others.

Yes, I am.

OK. First, I would like you to give your complete legal name and spell it for me.

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Mevalene Nadene Ashford. It's M-E-V-A L-E-N-E, Nadene
N-A-D-E-N-E, Ashford A-S-H-F-O-R-D.

And if you can tell me the city and the county in which you presently reside.

Waldron, Scott County, Arkansas

OK. Mevalene, this is going to be a very informal interview. I want to share your memories of your involvement with the Extension Homemakers—the good times and the bad.

What has been your association with the Extension Homemakers Program? For example, as a professional agent, specialist, member, etc.?

Well, I have been a member of the Pleasant Hill Extension Homemakers Club for 63 years now [*laughter*], and I have thoroughly enjoyed the years in the club and made many, many dear friends.

Great. Are you currently a member now?

Yes, I am.

OK. And what was the first club or clubs with which you were associated with?

I went to the club for a visit in June of 19 and 49 in the home of Lorene Millard. At that time, we met in the members' homes and we also met twice a month at that time. We would have a business meeting the first Thursday in each month and then we had a social meeting the third Thursday of the month and it was always a potluck. So we were quite busy with it, but the ladies did not work out of homes at that time so it was an outlook for all of us and we thoroughly enjoyed being with each other and we stayed quite busy at some of these meetings. We quilted and we did other projects and our Home Economist, who was Nancy Estes at the time, she came at each business meeting and usually did a demonstration or showed us something that we needed to learn about.

Uh-huh.

So it was very informative, as well as enjoyable.

I can see why. This Nancy Estes, now where did she come from?

I believe she came from Missouri to Arkansas.

Wow.

But she was the Home Economist in Scott County when I first visited and joined the club. As a matter of fact, I joined the day that I visited the first time.

And may I ask, how old were you at that time?

Well, I probably was 20. I guess 21.

Twenty-one?

Uh-huh.

Great, and you're still a current member now?

Yes, I am.

As you said the Pleasant Hill . . .

Yes, uh-huh.

And if you can please name the county and district that the Pleasant Hill is in.

The district?

Yes.

I do not know.

It's Ouachita. The District is Ouachita

OK. Well, I didn't really know. I guess I have known, but I didn't remember.

Yes, OK. And do you have any particular remembrances of that first meeting that you went to?

Yes, I have a few. I had a little boy who was not hardly 2 years old and the mothers always took the children to the meetings then, so I had him with me. I went with my mother-in-law, Mrs. Tosia Ashford, who was a charter member of the club and we had, I guess, probably 10 members there at the time. They were all older ladies than I was, but I felt welcome and I just thoroughly enjoyed it. I guess it was an outlook for me because I was not working out and I had this little boy so I was pretty home bound most of the time with a small child and that was something that was different and everybody was very friendly and I just thoroughly enjoyed it.

That's wonderful. And, and I assume that the different things that you learned back then—do you still continue to do a lot of those things?

Well, yes I do.

Great. Let's see, why have you continued your membership?

I really don't know; I guess it's because of the friends in the club and enjoying the activities and getting out, you know.

Uh-huh.

I worked out for several years, but always had Thursdays off. That was my day off and I usually made the club meetings on my day off from work because I just enjoyed it enough that I wanted to be among my friends and to see what they were learning and—course I learned a lot, too.

[Laughter] OK. How in this question—how involved did you become? List the offices, committee chairmanships and special responsibilities that you held?

Well, I became the vice president, I guess, in 19 and 62 and then I was elected president in 19 and 64 and I served two terms as president of the club, and then I don't know, I was chairman of several committees in the club through the years. And I was always on the Fair Booth Committee that we participated in each fall when the fair was going on, and we had style shows for a few years with the Extension Club ladies, and this would be a Council activity. And I narrated the style shows. I don't believe I ever was a model in the shows, but I always narrated them. And I just thoroughly enjoyed that. I did it off the top of my head I guess [*laughter*].

That's neat.

And, you know, I would describe the outfits that the ladies were wearing and the places that they would probably be wearing this outfit to and all, so it was quite an enjoyable experience.

Were—were—these outfits for the style show, was that something that the ladies made in the club?

Usually it was things that were handmade, most of the time they were, you know, homemade garments.

Neat, that's interesting. Have you attended state Council meetings then?

One time in Hot Springs, and we stayed at the Velda Rose Motel, and I remember one particular program and it was on motivation. And it was really quite interesting and I think it motivated me to become more active in my club, so it was—it was quite educational.

Well that's interesting. Do you remember what year that was?

I really don't. I believe it was in 19 and 64. I think it was probably in January. I remember it was cold weather.

Uh-huh.

So I would say in January 1964 and the Council president at that time was Elsie

Oliver and she attended with me and another friend in our neighboring club went and her name was Dickie Smith. So we had—we had a three-day stay and it was really very educational and enjoyable.

Good, good. That's great. Can you tell me, how has Extension Homemakers touched your life?

Well, I don't know how it has touched me in other ways than what I have already mentioned. I have learned a lot. Our Extension Homemaker Agent used to have different displays and different teaching sessions, and she taught us in the early days about using pressure cooker. I had never used one before, so that was very, very interesting and it was really something that I needed to learn . . .

Uh-huh.

. . . because we did a lot of home canning back in those days; and course I learned to quilt through the Extension Homemakers Clubs, because I had never did that before. And one year I remember we made a quilt in our Pleasant Hill Club and then we sold it and we got the full, huge amount of \$3 for it
[laughter].

Oh, goodness. OK. Can you tell me, what has been your favorite event or activity if you could choose one out of all the years?

Well, I think the most exciting event was going to National Council meeting in Little Rock, Arkansas. Our Council in Scott County chartered a Trailways Bus out of Fort Smith and there was, I would say probably 50 members from the county that went on this trip. There was I think 15 clubs represented. If you can imagine that many back in those days. And we just had such a good time; we had a very full day. We left very early in the morning and came back late. And we didn't have any money in the Council at the time, so we borrowed money to charter this bus and we like to have never got that debt paid off
[laughter]. We worked so hard after that the rest of the year to pay off that debt that we owed.

Hmmm. What year was that?

It would have been in 19 and 63. [*Papers shuffling*]

[Editor's Note: The Arkansas Extension Homemakers Council changed its name to the Arkansas Association for Family and Community Education at its annual meeting on June 3, 1992, and hosted the National Association for Family and Community Education's national meeting in 1994. In September of 1994, the State Association voted to withdraw from the national organization and on September 24, 1995, voted to change the name back to the Arkansas Extension Homemakers Council.]

That's great [*laughter*].

It was October of 1963.

I'll be darn. And now I have to ask you, what has been -- if you can think of -- what has been your least favorite activity or event throughout the years [*noise in the background*]?

I really can't say, because I think I have always enjoyed all the clubs. I'm not as active now as I used to be, but a lot of it was work, of course. Putting the fair booths together, and exhibiting at the fairs and all. I think that a lot of the present day ladies can tell you what a job that is [*laughter*].

I remember, it is.

But I enjoyed it and it was always very interesting to participate in that and we didn't have a very nice building back in the early days to exhibit in. As a matter of fact, it was a building with sawdust floors and no air conditioned, and it would always be so hot because the fair always came the last of August or the first of September, and you know Arkansas weather. It gets very hot that time of year.

Yes, it does. Are you still active in the fair, whether entering something or helping out there?

Well, I've baked a lot of cookies for the Country Store this past fall, but I'm not, I'm not too active any more in a lot of it because I just have had some

health problems that has kept me from participating in a lot of it. But I did make a lot of cookies. As a matter of fact, one of the club ladies came by and picked them up, took them to the Fair Building for me. So I was happy to participate in that way.

Yes, and I know; I've—I've worked in that so I do know how much appreciated it is.

Well, I have worked in the Country Store out there many years, too, and you have to have something to sell if you're going to make any money at it, and the Council always seems to need money.

Yes, yes they do. And now you've named several, but can you think of any other changes that you've experienced within the Extension Homemakers organization itself that—that you've seen though the years.

Well, there's been many, many changes through the years, and course, some of the modern technology and all that we have now that they're bringing into the club meetings and what have you and—I really don't know of anything else in particular that has changed a lot. People are still the same and the association with them is still very nice and congenial.

Let's see. Any other memories, experiences or anything at all that you would like to share?

We—I have mentioned before. We didn't have much money back in those days. Not any of us had very much money to put into club work; and I remember one time in our Pleasant Hill Club, we dressed baking hens. A lady in the club donated chickens from her chicken yard and we dressed those baking hens and she was so particular. I remember how hard we worked getting those chickens cleaned and then we sold them and seemed like we got about \$1 a piece for them and that was quite an experience and it was really a lot of work, but we needed the money, so we did it.

Wow, That's, that's really—that's going beyond the call of duty I'd say [laughter].

We also, in the Council, participated in making curtains for the new Scott County Hospital when it came into Waldron, when they first built it. We worked with the other ladies in the county, and we made curtains for the hospital and we also had a tea a time or two to raise funds for the Auxiliary. We—I guess that would be civic participation because we would work with the Hospital Auxiliary to do these projects.

Wow, benefit y'all and the Hospital, as well.

Uh-huh.

That's a great community service, wow.

And course now our club participates in—once a year they feed the Hospital and the Nursing Home employees, which I think is really a great thing for them to do and I say for them to do, because I have not participated in that. I wasn't quite up to it.

Well, maybe next year you will.

Maybe so.

That's great, OK? Anything else you'd like to join with us or share with us?

I can't think of anything. Well, yes, I do think of one more thing I want to tell you about. One year, our local club, the Pleasant Hill Club, fed—[*noise in the background*] about 100 to 150 cowboys and cowgirls and cattle buyers at Evans Ranch, west of Waldron. The lady that was the owner or co-owner of the ranch was in our club, a Mrs. Evans, and she asked us to serve this crowd of people that were coming in from all around and the neighboring states for this big cattle sale out there. And three of the Extension Homemaker members baked 35 apple pies the night before and I was one of those three; and believe you me, that was a lot of apple pies to bake. But the cafeteria was gracious enough at school to loan us their facility for a few hours that night and that's where we went to bake the pies. And Mrs. Ashford, who was a charter member of the club, I mentioned earlier, and my sister-in-law and myself, we baked the pies.

And then the next day, we served a dinner to all of these people and fortunately we did not run out of food.

Wow, and what year was that?

I don't remember what year it was. It would probably been maybe in 19 and 50.

My word [laughter]

It was around that time. I can't remember exactly the year.

Yeah, that's pretty impressive [laughter]

It was quite a project, but we really appreciated Mrs. Evans being a member of our club, and it was something that she asked us to do and —we just decided we would take it on, so we did and it was successful.

That's great, that's great. OK. Can you think of anything else?

I don't think of anything else that I . . .

All right. Well, we thank you very much for all your contributions to Extension Homemakers and for sharing your time and memories with us. It has been most enjoyable and enlightening [laughter].

Well, thank you for coming. I've enjoyed the experience.

Good, good!

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