

ARKANSAS EXTENSION HOMEMAKERS COUNCIL  
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Official transcript of:

Virginia Anderson Bates

Retired Newton County Extension Home Economist

Original recording made 5 October 2011

at Newton County Nursing Home

Jasper, Arkansas

Interviewed by:

Janet Voshell

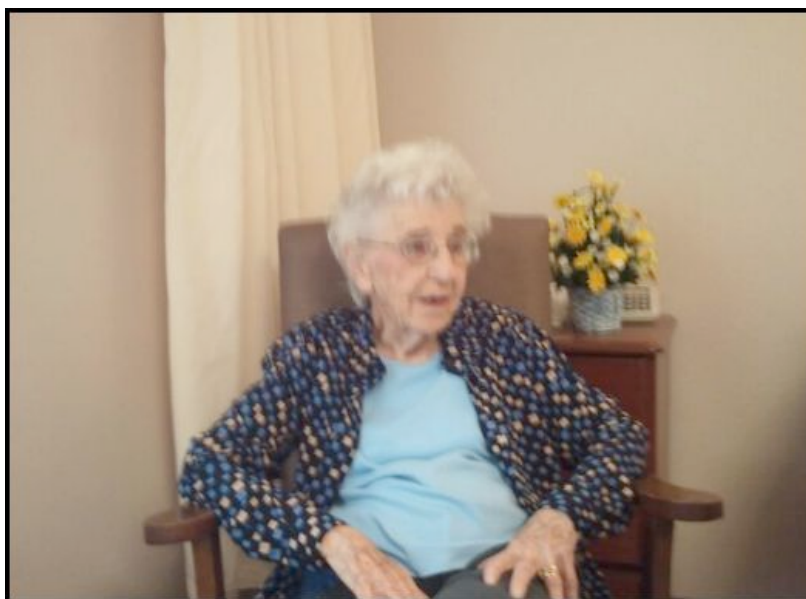
Newton County Extension Homemakers Council Member

Recorded, transcribed and edited by:

Linda Chappell

Newton County Extension Family and Consumer Sciences Agent





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## Oral History Program

Janet Voshell, Newton County Extension Homemakers Council Member

5 October 2011

This [is] a tape recording of Virginia Bates, retired Newton County Extension Home Economist. This interview is part of an Arkansas Extension Homemakers Council Oral History Program, and Virginia is answering questions asked by Newton County Extension Homemakers Council Member, Janet Voshell.

Questions and comments by Janet are in boldface type, and Virginia's responses and comments are in lightface type.

**This is the interview with Virginia Bates for the Arkansas Extension Homemakers Council Oral History Program. This is being done October 5, 2011, at Newton County Nursing Home. This is going to be a very informal interview; I want you to share your memories of your involvement with the Extension Homemakers program—the good times and the challenges.**

**First, I'd like you to give your complete legal name and the city and county in which you presently reside.**

Virginia Anderson Bates.

I grew up in Pine Bluff, Arkansas. My father, Theo Anderson, was a wholesale news dealer and he handled all kinds of daily, morning and evening papers and weekly magazines—Liberty and Colliers—and monthly magazines, a lot of them are still being used. But, people used to read; they didn't have the radio, TV, so everybody took the paper and they took the weekly magazines and they read to get the information and their news. So I grew up with all these kind of magazines and papers.

**And now you live in Newton County in Arkansas.**

**What has been your association with the Extension Homemakers program? As a professional agent?**

When I was growing up in Pine Bluff—I don't remember—we lived in town though. A Home Demonstration Clubs like they were called then were more for

rural living, as I remember, and the county agent, but it's quite different. Everything was segregated.

Finished school at UCA [University of Central Arkansas at Conway] in Business Management, yeah, and I taught Home Ec for two years.

**How did you learn about the Extension Homemakers program?**

I was teaching Home Ec in Forrest City with a friend of mine, Juanita Fuller. Juanita joined the, the—well, she got into Extension work and she talked me into trying it out. So it was good, I enjoyed it. I got a job in DeWitt as Assistant Home Economist. Well, they called it Home Demonstration Agent, and we went to different places and gave demonstrations, that's where the name came from, Home Demonstration Club.

I don't remember giving a demonstration on making a mattress, but we probably did. So, that's the way I got started.

**How long have you been associated with the program?**

Well, ever since I've been working with them. I first went in as an Assistant and then got groups together and organized Demonstration Clubs.

**At Least 60 years?**

I imagine all my life.

**What has been your association with Extension Homemakers?**

DeWitt, at DeWitt I was the Associate. I worked in several different counties. I worked in Helena and I was in Fort Smith, then I joined Extension Service and I was working there.

**How has Extension Homemakers touched your life? It's changed your whole life around, hasn't it?**

Yeah, I met worlds of wonderful people and I like working with people.

**What has been your favorite event or activity?**

I guess the biggest joy I had was when I came to Newton County. We didn't have many clubs. I think there were three. So I organized a Knitting groups and got groups of women together to learn to knit. Didn't mention joining a club or anything, I was just trying to get groups together, and we had a real good Kitty Williams, a knitting instructor, and I never did think of that lady's name, Orr, Mrs. Orr. Both of them went to the Methodist Church, that's where I went and they were doing—got groups together. We had a man's sweater that was a cardigan knit and button-up-the front and it had a cable pattern. And so Kitty Williams had the pattern, so she worked out directions and instructions to fit whoever wanted to make one. She would work it out for them, tell them how many stitches to put on the needle.

We used a size 6 needle, I believe, and regular yarn. Well, I guess now we use cotton. We used wool as knitting thread. They knitted those sweaters and they were so pretty and some of the ladies did two or three of them, like for gifts. But, I have one and I still wear, a red one, but they were very serviceable. A plain pocket sweater and, I guess, that was the most fun and turned out better than anything I did.

**I heard you won an award?**

Oh, yeah, I did. I received the Distinguished Service Award from the—it was a National Organization I belonged to. We went to Denver and I got the Distinguished Service, which I framed and still have on my wall. Yeah, I was proud of that.

**What has been your least favorite event or activity?**

Didn't like to do. I don't know, probably a lot of things. What are you thinking about? Oh, yeah, cutting up a chicken. I used to have to do all sorts of things, whatever was on the program was what I did, so this cutting up a chicken. When I was growing up, my mother did the cooking, and I would help with meals. I would help with the salad, setting the table and things like that.

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**Thank you for all your contributions to Extension Homemakers and for sharing your time and memories with us.**

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