

ARKANSAS EXTENSION HOMEMAKERS COUNCIL

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Official transcript of:

Jewel Dean Crawley

Maysville Extension Homemakers Club Member

Original recording made 9 March 2012

at Bentonville, Arkansas

Interviewed by:

Katie Rieff

Benton County Extension Homemakers Council Vice President

Benton County Oral History Project Chairman

Transcribed and edited by:

Melissa Ayers

Friend of Benton County Extension Homemakers Council

Recorded by:

Susan Kendrick-Perry

The David and Barbara Pryor Center for Arkansas Oral and Visual History

Assistant Director of Operations

UofA
DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE
RESEARCH & EXTENSION

University of Arkansas System





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Oral History Program

Katie Rieff, Benton County Extension Homemakers Council Vice President and Benton County Oral History Project Chairman

9 March 2012

This is an audio recording of Jewel Dean Crawley, a member of the Benton County Extension Homemakers Council. This interview is part of an Arkansas Extension Homemakers Council Oral History Program, and Jewel is answering questions asked by Benton County Extension Homemakers Council Vice President and Benton County Oral History Project Chairman, Katie Rieff.

Questions and comments by Katie are in boldface type; Jewel's responses and comments are in lightface type.

I am Katie Rieff. This is an interview with Jewel Crawley for the Arkansas Extension Homemakers Council Oral History Program. This is being done March 9, 2012, at the Benton County Cooperative Extension Services offices in Bentonville, Arkansas, in Benton 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.

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

Yes.

Good. Well, first, I'd like you to give your complete legal name and spell it for me, and then tell the city and county in which you present—presently reside.

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OK. I'm Jewel D. Crawley and I live in Benton County. OK—I—in . . .

OK. Go ahead.

Near Maysville Arkansas, and in the Ozark District—is that?

Yes.

Now, [*unclear words*]. OK.

Can we repeat this, Jewel?

We can repeat that.

And have you spell your name out? Yes.

I think—I think. OK. OK.

Jewel Dean Crawley. And, J-E-W-E-L D-E-A-N Crawley, C-R-A-W-L-E-Y.
I live in Benton County, in Ozark District of Arkansas.

Thank you, Jewel.

Jewel, this is going to be a very informal interview. I just want you to share your memories of your involvement in Extension Homemakers. I want you to tell me about the good times and the challenges. If there have been bad times.

What has your association been with the Extension Homemakers program? Are you a member?

I'm a member.

You're a member.

Of the Maysville Extension Homemakers Club.

How—how did you first learn about the Extension Homemakers Programs?

Well, I learned from my mother-in-law. She was one of the first members of the Maysville Club and she was getting ready to go the club meeting and she told me about it and invited me to go with her, so I went.

Well, how long has that been? How long have you been associated with—a member?

That was—a number of years. That was 56 years ago.

Fifty-six years.

In October.

Tell me—you say you live in Maysville? In what part of the county is Maysville located?

Maysville is in the extreme western—northwestern part of the county and it's like a mile and a half from Oklahoma, our farm is, and five miles from Missouri, so . . .

What was the first club—you mentioned that—in which you were associated? And yet, tell me again the year.

That was nineteen fifty sssss—five, 1955, yes.

1955. Well, are you presently—are you still a club member?

Yes I am.

And still in the same club?

I'm still in the Maysville Extension Homemakers Club, and I—yeah, I'm still a member of that club.

Do you have any special remembrances of the first meeting, the first time you went to club with your mother-in-law?

Well, I'd never been to a meeting like that before. There was—I—the women impressed me because they were friendly and cordial and seemed to want to help, and some of these women were older and some younger, near my age, and many of them had small children, but they seemed to enjoy themselves anyway. All—everyone enjoyed themselves, being together and the—the—the discussions were about things such as their homes and the club, the community; and so a group like that was new to me since I had worked in an office in a large city for eight years.

Well, let's go back then and tell—this gives me an opportunity to find out a little about your background before you ended up in Maysville, Arkansas. Were you born in . . . ?

I was born . . .

. . . Arkansas?

In Creek County, Oklahoma, which is 30 mile, about 30 miles west of Tulsa. And, course. I went, it was on a really small little farm and we raised [*unclear words*] . . .

Keep going.

. . . cotton crop, which was—that was our cash crop, if it made, and then we had grains for the cattle and—and the chickens and we had a garden for the family—to feed the family and that was like, of course, way back in the Depression times and then during World War II which was—all of that was pretty hard some times.

So you marr—when did you move to Arkansas?

Well, then I—then after I graduated from high school, some friends asked me to go to Tulsa and live with them because —well, that was the only way I could get—get there. And, so they went there and I finally went to—took a business

course and went to—and started to work there. So, then, come—what was your other question?

Well, how—when did you come to Arkansas?

Oh, well, I came to Arkansas when I got married. But, just before that, my husband's sister—I met her in Tulsa, and so we came—she brought—I came to Arkansas with her to visit and that's how I met my husband.

[Laughter]

Was he a farm boy?

Oh, yes, he was. He was there. Born there and never left except when he was in the Air Force during World War II.

Do you—well, you shared your special remembrances of the first meeting and the—the women there, the old and the younger ones. Why did you join?

OK. It was hearing about things. I heard about things there that I wanted to learn about and, and needed to learn about because I had been in the community only three weeks at that time, and so it would be good to be associated with a group of women who had the same interests that I had. Also, I could be involved in the—in the local club, in the county, community and meet new people that way.

Well then, you've almost answered the next question [which] is why have you continued your membership?

OK. Well, I have some—something to say about that.

Well, just *[laughs]*—we, I want to hear it.

OK. I want the—for one thing I want the—our club—the club to continue. I don't want it to fade away, and so I believe that it's good for me to continue to be in the club and keep—stay involved because, I think, it makes me healthier

in mind and in body, as well. And, course, we have lots of training meetings that I enjoyed and learn so much from, as well as other subjects that we have from time to time. Also, [*pause*] our club is k—we kind of think, feel like it's needed because of our responsibility for the upkeep of our community building and—it was once an old school, the Maysville school.

Well, let's take a minute then and I would like for you to tell us about—tell me about your, your community before we go on with the other questions about the Extension Homemakers. Tell me a little bit about this community and the involvement—the position that the Maysville Club has as far as maintaining the history in that small community.

Well, for one thing our club—when we need this meeting place that we try to keep —keep up and keep in repair and everything because our club meets there, the 4-H Club meets there; also we have family reunions—families meeting there for reunions, showers, weddings, anniversaries and lots of other things and then, this may not be, but anyway, right now I hear that they're having—going to have a fund-raiser for a small—a little baby that has a real, really a rare disease ...

Hmm.

And, so they wanted to use the building for that. So, we—I think it's important to keep the building up for that reason.

What's the history of the building? It—was it just a building?

OK. The way I understand the history of the building, I believe, I—I might not be very clear on this, I was—that was—happened before I got there so—that they at least built part of—that the community—men in the community built part of that building and, and like for the big gymnasium they . . . I understood they brought lumber from Camp Crowder when it was torn down after—torn down after the war—and brought it in there and built that building. So the community was really involved and they have, have stayed involved to a certain extent real well or we wouldn't be there.

Was the building not at one time a school?

Yes, it was a schoolhouse and that was where our club met every time except some times at homes, but that was our main meeting place, and my three boys all started to school there and then when —then they had to go to Gravette to school later years. So.

So ties are strong to that building for you . . . ?

Yes. Yes.

. . . and the community?

And my—the Crawley family have lived there, right where we live right now, for about 92 years.

Oh.

So we're there. [*Laughs*]

All right. You've told me why you joined the club and when . . .

Yeah.

But, how . . . ?

Well . . .

. . . how involved have you become . . . ?

OK.

. . . in the club over these years, your offices or?

Well, there, I—I've been involved, but I haven't been . . . I was president and secretary and then some of the things that I liked and did most and was best—best at, I did—was clothing and sewing later. I was on several fair booth committees and, and assisting 4-Hers in workshops and other community activities that we might—that might be.

OK. The—have you ever—you know the Extension Homemakers, Home Demonstration Clubs as they were, have always had state meetings, state Council meetings. Have you ever attended any of those?

I ha—I have never attended one. I just didn't ever—would have been quite an effort years ago to get there.

Well, this might be a good time to ask you then if you would share with me a typical day in your life when you were trying to do everything. If you were—you farmed, you said you had three children, young, trying to get to a meeting.

Yeah. Well, my husband was a dairy farmer and he didn't have any—he didn't have help on the farm. Well, that is, except his dad who helped some and because they lived right next—we lived right close to them. And, but mainly my mother-in-law was my biggest help in getting around to go to club meetings. Sometimes my—my father-in-law would keep the boys. I had three boys; the oldest one was under 3 ½ when the, when the third one was born. So, it was quite a—quite a job to get around and go and—for lunch we had—and do all of the things. So, without her help I couldn't have done it, I didn't think.

[Laughter]

Wh—Jewel, how has Homemakers—Jewel, Extension Homemakers touched your life?

Well, I think it has made me a better homemaker and—and because I've been in that, in the club and done these things, I think that I've stayed healthier because I stay interested in things that are going on. And I've been associated with women in the community and the county that I would not have known otherwise, so that's, that's important. I've made a lot of friends I'm really—I still have friends that I met right in the beginning, so that's some of the reasons that I . . .

Extension Homemakers, from what I know, and the 4-H program, they kinda run hand-in-hand. Has that been true in your family?

Yes. They—well, my—I guess my husband and his brother, and sister possibly—I guess all three were 4-H members, and then my boys were 4-H members and— and then—and the club did do a lot of things to help them. Now my granddaughters and little grandson are members of the 4-H club, so—but, anyway, we have tried to encourage the 4-H members from time to time and at one time— sometimes we have had them come in to and give demonstrations or talks to our club. And another thing that we did to encourage them to attend the meetings and do all was to—attend a 4-H meeting, we sponsored a little contest, a point—on a point system that all of them could enter into, and so, we had to keep records on that so someone had—needed to attend the meetings in order to do that, and we gave a little award to each—like each junior member, senior member, and first year member I think it was.

What's been your favorite event or activity over the years in Extension Homemakers? It may be hard for you to name one.

[Cough]

You OK? Well, *[unclear words]* one *[laugh]*. OK. Favorite event?

Yes.

[Pause] Well, I—there was—I've always enjoyed the dress revues that the county used to have. For years I was in almost every one and so it was always some high point when I—if I got a blue ribbon! *[Laugh]*

Well, tell me a little bit more about the dress revues. How did you get to compete? You said you would win a blue ribbon or win probably a grand or a sweepstakes, but how did you get to that level?

Well, in order to be able to compete in the county dress revue?

Yes.

Well, one thing that I remember that we did, we would have a local dress revue and we picked from that or sometimes if you'd—you just didn't have any competition at—at—at our own club, so we automatically could enter.

What was it broken into classes or things or categories that you . . .?

The club? The dress revue?

Yes.

Oh, yes, we had like best dress and sports and that—that's a couple of the classes. I can't remember another one right now. About three or four.

Where did you hold the dress revues? The county ones?

They—the county—they were at the—we usually—me at the old fairgrounds in the old [*clears throat*] women's building or later on in the new buildings that they built there on the grounds.

About how many—I'm sure you couldn't know exactly, but you remember just a ballpark figure of how many women would compete or how many women would attend those activities . . . ?

County-wide?

. . . back when you were having the dress revues the county-wide? Yes.

County-wide?

[*Clears throat*] Excuse me. Well, I just—I don't know there might have been as many as 30 at one time, some of the time.

Thirty entries.

Yes, 30 entries. I—I just—I'm not sure, but there were a lot of them at time—times.

I don't suppose you would remember how many clubs there might have been or even at that time that would have entered?

Um.

Do you still have the dress revue here in Benton County?

No, we don't. No. Haven't had one for several years now.

What county activities do you attend and/or participate in now. Are there still county activities?

Well, the county council meetings. I guess that's all that I do county-wise probably.

What about the county fair?

Oh, oh gosh—fair, yes. I've entered in the fair just about, a—a lot of clothing and crafts and a lot of different things and also our—have had fair booths—have helped with fair booths and been pretty active in that. My family—my sons and my husband—always entered in the cattle division, too, so we were kinda [kind of] busy at that time.

[Laughter]

Is your family still involved in the fairs?

Oh, yes, yes they are. They are—are very involved. My granddaughters are. Well, they have their cattle and they love their cattle. So, they are involved and pretty busy. They just work really hard when it comes fair time. They are any other times, too.

And there are some times, I hear, that young people and adults go on to other fairs outside the county's fair and . . .

They—from here, they usually—it may be that they will go to Fort Smith and then they will go to Little Rock and then to—in the fall—or later they went to Louisville, Kentucky, to the national show, which was a big highlight. They didn't win top, but they—they did get some ribbons and so they're planning to go back next year and win!

[Laughter]

What has been your least favorite event or activity? Maybe you don't have one but . . .

Oh, I do. [*Laugh*] That's just like holding an office . . . ?

Mm.

. . . or—and talking, conducting a meeting. I'm not—I—that's something that I'm not very fond of doing.

I'm sure you have other skills that help.

What changes do you see and have you experienced in the Extension Homemakers organization?

Well, that has been interesting. For instance when I—well, right now there are fewer members and the age of the members is older. There—most of them are older. In 1958, I went, looked in a book, record book. We had 27 regular members and three associate members. At least 18 of those members had children school-age or below. And the membership—then the membership numbers started dwindling when many of the younger women took jobs away from home. But some of those ladies have retired and have returned and are very active in the club.

So—and the younger women, many of them still work away from home, so we don't have very many of them in our club but this time we have two members with school-age children and they are my daughters-in-law. And so I'm proud of them.

Another things that has changed is the food preservation. They—in—they reported that in—it was about 1960 or [19]'61 that this report was given – they canned like 1,904 quarts of—no 2,880—n—55 quarts of vegetables (Editor's Note: Mrs. Crawley's correction—2,855 quarts of vegetables), 1,904 quarts of fruit, 181 quarts of beef, 640 quarts of pickles, 731 glasses of jelly, 219 pints of preserves, and then they had fruit—frozen fruits and vegetables and poultry in their freezers.

So that was just from your club.

Mh-hmm.

From the one Maysville?

That one fair. That one, [19]'60.

And the year again.

[19]'60 or [19]'61 or maybe—it was about. I don't know which year it was for sure. [*Laughs*] So I thought that was just really different.

While you're on the subject of changes, you mentioned sewing—that you've been very involved and been a sewing leader and entered the fashion revue. What changes have you seen in—in sewing practices, the—sewing machines?

Well, I've seen all of these new sewing machines but I don't have one and, you know, but the sewing [*pause*] . . . What was that question?

Well, and fabrics and availability of fabrics and other sewing . . .

Well . . .

. . . notions.

Well, the fabric down through the years has really changed. At first we had cottons and then there were the nylons that came along, then, then came the polyesters, and we had to learn new sewing techniques and that was taught to us by the county Extension office. And the, the new sewing machines are wonderful, I think. [*Pause*] Anything else?

Do you see—do you see young women, older women, even—do you see them sewing as much?

Not—not as much. I—I'm sure that they don't and, I think—I think the fabric availability right now is still very, very good. I think you can get what you want, but for myself since—I don't know, I don't need to make—I used to

make my clothes because I could save money and, and that was, once in a while, you know, really nice because, but then I don't need very many clothes now, although I like clothes and they—I got myself off-track.

Well, your needs change, I think, and . . .

Yes, my needs changed, so I—well I have taught my granddaughters to sew and other 4-Hers I've taught to sew. But right now my interest is quilts. I try to—I like to make quilt blocks and quilts.

So you're using your sewing skills . . . ?

I still sew.

. . . and your desire to sew making . . .

I still sew.

I—that is my, I mean, I—it's kinda [kind of] like therapy for me if I can just go do that.

Have you entered any of your quilts at the fair, or any of your quilted items?

I did. I have entered just the quilt blocks because it's pretty new to me. I really haven't done a whole lot. I have made quilts, but I have entered one. Yes, I entered one or two in the fair. Two in fact, yeah. Just this last year I made a quilt for my great-grandson, entered it in the fair. And so, I was able to give him the quilt then and—he's just like a few months old—and with a blue ribbon.

[Laughter]

Well, Jewel, among the other things that you've learned through Extension Homemakers, and it's obvious you have, what has being in Extension Homemakers taught you about people?

Well, first one—that first impressions are not always right and so you need to get to know people before you form an impression or, or—and, but they are usually cooperative and, and they can be helpful and understanding and sometimes challenging. And since everyone's different, their ideas will be different than mine, so I need to be willing to go more than half way at times when something comes up.

Thank you.

Are there any other memories or experiences that you'd like to share and just —any thoughts about the club, about your community and your family's involvement? Anything?

Not, not much about my family—about my family's involvement. My—here I mention my mother-in-law again. She was one of the—she joined the club after— she wasn't a charter member, but when they met the next month, in 1949, she joined and that was a big—something that she really enjoyed and I have enjoyed that, too. But, I thought that was interesting that she was one of the very first members.

And, so, it's become a three-generation . . .

Yeah, now, my two . . .

. . . for your family.

. . . my two daughters-in-laws are involved in the—in—very much involved in the club and the—and in the county and in the community, also. So, yes.

Well, Jewel, thank you so much for taking time and being a part of our interview today.

Well thank you. This has been a good experience for me.

Thank you.

I'm back with Jewel and I want to ask her about another activity at the Maysville Community that she has only touched on, if she would tell me a

little bit more about what this is and what the Extension Homemakers do there.

This fun day is something that we have done for a few years and we have a lot of fun there. The Extension office employees and—and some other people cook hamburgers and hot dogs for us and then other clubs join us at the Maysville Community Building and bring salad and dessert, so we have a real nice meal. And then we hear from special speakers and maybe someone shows us how to do something like transplant a potted plant or—or it might be something else like a skit that you men—or—and then sometimes they will—we will have something about fashion, maybe someone will show us something, how to accessorize or something like that, and the—we have had 4-H members who would give—give—would entertain and they would also give us talk—talk—talks, demonstrations and—and we have—always have lots of—lots of door prizes and that's fun, too. So, thank you, Extension staff.

Thank you for telling us about that. It sounds like a fun activity.

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