

ARKANSAS EXTENSION HOMEMAKERS COUNCIL
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Official transcript of:

Imogene James

Independence County Extension Homemakers Council Reporter

Original recording made 27 February 2012

Old Independence Regional Museum
Batesville, Arkansas

Interviewed by:
Linda Brooks

Independence County Extension Homemakers Council Past President

Transcribed and Edited by:
Laura Reed

Independence County Extension Homemakers Council Member-at-Large





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Oral History Program

Linda Brooks, Independence County Extension Homemakers Council Past President

27 February 2012

This is an audio recording of Imogene James, Independence County Extension Homemakers Council Reporter. This interview is part of an Arkansas Extension Homemakers Council Oral History Program, and Imogene is answering questions asked by Independence County Extension Homemakers Past President, Linda Brooks.

Questions and comments by Linda are in boldface type; Imogene's responses and comments are in lightface type.

This is an interview with Imogene James for the Arkansas Extension Homemakers Council Oral History Program. This is being done February 27, 2012, at the Old Independence [Regional] Museum in Batesville, Arkansas. Now, Imogene, this is gonna [going to] be a very informal interview, and I want you to share your memories of your involvement with the Extension Homemakers Program, the good times and the challenges. First, I would like you to give your complete legal name, the city and the county in which you presently reside.

My name is Imogene James, and I live in rural area. My address is Cave City, but I live in Independence County.

What has been your association with Extension Homemakers program as a member?

Yes.

Could you give me some . . . you've been as a member?

Yes. Uh-huh.

How did you learn about the Extension Homemakers Program?

Well, my mother and my sister were Extension Homemakers in Izard County, and since I did not work away from home, they suggested that I try to organize a club in my area part of the county. So that's how I started out, and that's how I learned about Extension Homemakers.

How long have you been associated with Extension Homemakers Program?

In April, it will be 34 years.

And let's see. What was the first club with which you were associated and what year?

We were called the Curia Extension Homemakers. It was April 1978.

Are you presently a club member? If so can you please give the name of the club and the county and the district?

It's the same in Independence County. It's called FANS club. That stands for Friends and Neighbors Sharing.

And the district is Ozark. [LB: Laughs]

Right, right.

OK. We keep forgetting what district we're in.

Yes, it used to be a different district you know when I first started so I forget.

Do you have any special remembrances of that first meeting or that first club?

Well, a special thing about the club, I guess, that I remember the most—because some of our first members—most of them were young homemakers, young mothers. And so we always worried when we were going to that first council meeting how the other club members, which were older members,

was going to react to these children that came to the meeting. And it was so wonderful because they just took them in. They just almost adopted those children and they helped to baby-sit and everything. So that was real special. It made it real special to start out.

Now why did you join? You mentioned earlier in the question why you joined.

Like I say, I did not work away from home and I just felt like that, I needed to get involved in something else in the community.

Why have you continued your membership?

Oh, basically the same thing I've—it, it helped me to get involved in things. I don't think that I ever would have been brave enough to start in. But another thing is it's like a family and I would not—I would miss my family if I didn't stay with the Extension Homemakers.

How involved did you become? I mean you if you can list the offices or committee chairmanships and special responsibilities you held, if you can.

Well, when I join a club or anything else I have to be involved. [*Laughs*] I'm a people person, so I love to work with other people. But I've held most of the offices in my club and the county and also was a state chairman for state and district chairman for Membership Committee, also for the Family Resource Management Committees. [Of] Course they're changed names now. And also I believe, the best I remember, maybe I was the first State Chairman for Family Relations, at that time. So I've always worked on state level, too.

Have you attended State Council Meetings and if so, what year did you attend your first one? And do you have special remembrances of that?

[*Laughs*] Oh, yes. The first one, I guess it was probably in June after we organized the club 'cause [because] my sister insisted on me attending that meeting and the counties were working together; her county and my county

was working together on a skit to present to the, to the other clubs or the other counties. And we were supposed to go around to the dormitories—the different dormitories—and present this skit. And you know the reason I remember cause I got volunteered and it was a skit about a fashion design. And it, the thing that I was supposed to do was wear a slip-over dress. Model a slip-over dress. So I went all over that campus with that group with a dress and a SLIP OVER MY DRESS. *[Laughs]* So that was, that was my first experience at a state meeting.

How has Extension Homemakers touched your life?

I think it's—it's given me confidence and like I say I'm a people person, so I've met people that I never would have met before. And I've been in—it's gotten me involved in like the county fair, and helping with fire departments, the elections and school activities and things like that I probably would never have done if I hadn't belonged to Extension Homemakers.

What has been your favorite event or activity?

Oh, I guess they've all been favorites. I don't think I could pick out an especial favorite one. I love to do the crafts and I love to teach the crafts, so I guess I enjoy doing that.

What has been your least favorite event or activity? *[LB Laughs]*

Well, probably that first experience at the state meeting. *[Laughs]*

***[LB Laughs]* What changes have you experienced in the Extension Homemakers Organization?**

Well, the thing that really comes to mind is, you know, when I first started. Now I was not a member when it was Home Demonstration Clubs, but it was Extension Homemakers, then it went to FCE [Editor's Note: Family and Community Education Clubs] and then back to Extension Homemakers. I've seen the name changes—also the committees, you know, the names of the

committees have changed. And, you know, there's been some changes. But it's made progress.

Has the Extension Homemakers taught you anything about people?

Oh, yes. And I remember once at a membership committee meeting, we had a speaker at this meeting and he made a remark and I've never forgotten that remark. He said he thought Extension Homemakers Clubs were people developers. And I think that's very true because it's like these young ones that I was talking about, they would never have gotten involved in county activities—other things in their community. Some of them that couldn't get up in front of a people and speak, they learned to do that. So I think that's, that's what it's all about—it's a people developer.

Any other memories, experiences, or thoughts that you would like to share?

Well, I could probably bring up a few. My, I'm so forgetful—probably just don't ask me dates and times and things like that. But, you know, I've lost friends I remember, and when we started doing this project, I think, I did a lot of reminiscing and going back and remembering people that we used to work with and that's been good though. It's been a good memory.

Imogene, thank you for all your contributions to Extension Homemakers and for sharing your time and memories with us.

I've enjoyed it.

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