

ARKANSAS EXTENSION HOMEMAKERS COUNCIL
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Official transcript of:

Marjorie Louise Koone

Alread Extension Homemakers Club Vice President, Van Buren County

Original recording made 7 December 2011

at Alread, Arkansas

Recorded by: Katherine Bensuk

Highway 110 Extension Homemakers Club Secretary, Van Buren County

Interviewed by: Frances d'Orsay

Van Buren County Extension Homemakers Council Secretary

Transcribed and edited by: Cynthia J. Pace

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Oral History Program

Frances d'Orsay, Van Buren County Extension Homemakers Council Secretary

7 December 2011

This is an audio recording of Marjorie Louise Koone, member of the Alread Extension Homemakers Club of Van Buren County. This interview is part of an Arkansas Extension Homemakers Council Oral History Program, and Marge is answering questions asked by Van Buren County Extension Homemakers Council Secretary, Frances d'Orsay.

Questions and comments by Frances are in boldface type; Marge's responses and comments are in lightface type.

[Recorder's Voice: "Go."]

I am Frances d'Orsay. This is the interview with Marjorie Koone for the Arkansas Extension Homemakers Council Oral History Program. This is being done on December 7, 2011, at the Alread Extension Homemakers Club in Alread, Van Buren County, Arkansas.

The audio recording 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.

Good. First, I'd like you to say your complete legal name and spell it for me.

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Marjorie Louise Koone. M-a-r-j-o-r-i-e L-o-u-i-s-e K-o-o-n-e.

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

Alread, Van Buren County, Arkansas

Frances d'Orsay, this is going to be a very for—informal interview. I want you to share your memories of your involvement with the Extension Homemakers program, the good times and the challenges. So let's get started.

What has been your association with the Extension Program—Extension Homemakers program?

Well, I have been a member for a number of years, and I have been associated with them for over 30 years.

OK. And so you've been a member, that's good. OK. How did you learn about the Extension Homemakers program?

My sister-in-law, Fern Waddle, was probably the instigator, and then Joyce Goodman was another neighbor that was interested in my helping and working with the club.

Good. How long have you been associated with the program?

Well, over 30 years. During the first few years I was teaching and wasn't available all the time, but I helped in the summer and when they had special events I'd help them, too.

That's a long time. Are you presently a club member?

Yes.

OK. And what is the name of your club, the county and the district?

It's the Alread EH Club in Van Buren County, and I'm not sure what the district is.

[Whisper from the side: "Ozark."]

Ozark District.

Ozark District. OK. Do you have any special memories of that first meeting or of that first club?

I think probably the memories that stick out the most are the ones that—that have to do with the enthusiasm that Joyce Goodman imparted to the ladies in this community. And she just knew—there was no doubt that they couldn't build the building that could be used and take care of it—and then later on organizing a deal to get a scholarship for the J.D. Puddy Scholarship by matching the . . . James Gillam had promised to furnish \$5,000 matching funds . . .

Hm-mm.

. . . if the EH Club could raise that much money.

Why did you join?

Well, I thought they were doing some exceptionally good activities that would help the community and that would help me in my, in my home, and that I could help them, also. And I thought that was a good reason to get involved with the people.

Why have you continued your membership?

Basically the same thing—that there is a lot of good information that comes from the monthly programs and it's good fellowship with the people of the group, and good activities to help all the community.

How involved did you become?

Well, I've been Vice President as a—as an officer and I have helped with many of the activities throughout the years—the—there's cake sales—the pie sales and the, all the different auctions and things that they've had, and suppers and various things.

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 event?

Did not attend any State Council Meetings.

How has Extension Homemakers touched your life?

It has improved my knowledge of things that would help provide for my family and for the health of all of us and just food preparation and diet and various things that you know have really, really helped, I think, in my overall outlook on life, too.

What has been your favorite event or activity?

I think the most awesome activity was the one in which we gathered—this whole EH Club property was covered with things—and we had an auctioneer come out and that auction brought in over \$6,000 in one day's time. I mean, I think, we started at 8 in the morning and it was just, it was just awesome to think that a group of ladies could do this much to—and this was for the scholarship in matching funds with Mr. Gillam.

What was your least favorite event or activity?

I don't get excited at all about puttin' [putting] down volunteer hours.

[Laughter]

What changes have you experienced in the Extension Homemakers organization?

Well, the basic reasons for having it, I think, are still the same. But I think the different age groups is good, and, I think, we have young people and I know for

myself we have some old people in the EHC, *[FD laughs]* Alread EH Club now; and it's—it's good to have different ages work together, as well as what we do here, and I am thankful for that.

Has Extension Homemakers taught you anything about people?

Certainly so. Just lots of different things about people and, I think, it gives you a better awareness of cooperating together with different activities and just because you want it one way doesn't necessarily mean that's the best way and having to, you know, let certain things go that you might rather have done differently.

Are there any other memories, experiences or thoughts that you would like to share?

Well, I—I can't say enough about Mrs. Joyce Goodman and the amount of time, effort and enthusiasm that she brought to this club back in the, I think it was in the [19]'70's, late [19]'70's, when she came and she just inspired the ladies to work—all of us to work toward so many different things. And, I think, we're the only club in the county that has their own building, and it's a resource for people in the community to use. It's a good—it's a good thing and without Joyce, I don't think this would have been possible.

Have you worked with other organizations to accomplish a goal? Has your club, or you personally, worked with other organizations to accomplish a goal?

Well certainly, we've—I've worked with different churches, I've worked with the school on different things that we, you know, have tried to do. We—we've fought the consolidation at Alread School for, well, I taught out there over 30 years and it's—it has been a constant battle and we'd organize and go on a, I've been to speak with the state; no I haven't spoken, but I was a part of the group that went to speak with the state committee for consoli—for the school board's association; and—and church things.

We've organized lots of different things like Vacation Bible School and visitation to different people that are needing help and helping with meals for

people and different— for different occasions like the EH Club. And a lot of the church groups do meals for any family that so desires if they're having a funeral out in this area, and it's amazing how much food you'll see for one of these funerals or services.

What do you think about the 100th-year celebration of the Arkansas Extension Homemakers?

Well, I think that's a wonderful thing to have a group of people that are meeting for that length of time to better the communities and the just general people all over the country, or at least in this State of Arkansas. I don't know how active they are in other states, but . . .

Who are some of the older club members when you joined who may no longer be with us?

There's a long list of those. I think of Mrs. Wilma Walker and I think of—as I've already mentioned Joyce and then Fern Waddle, and Dorothy Henderson, Bea Summers and just lots of— let me think some more here—I'm trying to think of other people that, I was unprepared for this question, I'm not . . . [Whisper from the side: "Ila Hefner"] Yeah, Ila Hefner was one and [Whisper from the side: "Enid"] Enid Hefner was a member. There were a number of them that were here and those are some that I think of, and I'm sure I'm leaving somebody out of that list, but . . .

Does your club actively recruit new members?

Oh, yes, I think Ceil Boyd is chairman of that committee. She—she doesn't go anywhere that she doesn't mention that to some people. That and church, and she's, you know, a strong believer in the faith of God to take care of our situations.

What have you learned through your EH experience that you use in your everyday life?

Well, meal preparation, canning and freezing of materials for other times and a lot of activities that help you with the stress of a family and life in just different things of that nature.

Are there any other things you want to tell us about your experience with the Alread EH Club?

Well, I've touched on this one already about the auction sale, and then I'd—I'll just review that for, you know, a little bit. I don't know how long it took, but I know that we brought all the materials out here within two days of that auction, but we were gathering them before that time. And then, and I'm not sure who the auctioneer was, but they started, it seems like 8 or 8:30 [a.m.], and then they sold hamburgers and hot dogs and stuff like that, also. And, I think, it was 3:30 to 4 o'clock [p.m.] before they finished, and when they did, as I said, we had brought in over \$6,000 and that was just astronomical. I mean it just didn't seem like the small community of Alread could have accomplished that.

And then one of the other things that I was really impressed with and glad for the organization of was the trash pickup, and we had started in the [19]'70's and, I believe, it was the spring of [19]'76 because it was a beautification program that they wanted to do with the people in—throughout the country to kind of beautify America for our 20th, 200th year anniversary. And they made arrangements with the school, and, I think, certain kids from maybe fifth grade on up were—they were all given a day off from school to help with this thing and every road that came out on Highway 16 was picked up. They had people start from one end to the other with—they volunteered trucks, and they had a county truck out here. Another man had donated a place and they got a dozer and dug out a landfill. The kids tried to recycle stuff as they went, things that could go to the recycle center that I'm not even sure was in operation at that time. I'm not sure what time that started, but anyway, this was done and the kids worked all—all day some of them. I know we started at the Rex Road—is about seven or eight miles long—and we started at the far end of that and walked the whole way out, picked up both sides of the road and anything we found and filled up trash, you know, put the trash into the truck and then went on and emptied it when we had to, but . . .

And this took place for a number of years and the 4-H was active in this

participation at a later date. I couldn't get a hold of anyone to find out when they—they stopped, but each year then for a long period of time in the spring between the EH and the 4-H, they organized to pick up all the road and they had some—some of the schools. We didn't take days off from school after that though, just the first time was the only time we had a day off from school to help with it, and they would pick up the stuff and people would do it at their own time. They had like a two-week thing to do it, and they would get it done and it just really helps the appearance of the whole community. Plus we had school—school groups and church groups picked up the Highway 16 on a more regular basis than once a year, so.

Tell us more about this lovely building, the Alread Extension Homemakers Clubhouse.

Well, in 1981, I believe, it was that they decided they were going to start on this and they —1980—and started with the organization of what they wanted to do and how they might go about it. And they drew up plans for it and talked with people about it and got started. They also decided they didn't want to spend any money they didn't have. They wanted to pay as they go and at that time the ladies were quilting like—there'd be six to eight of them come out every week and work all day on quilts and they would pay—get paid so much money. And seems like they started out at like 20 or 30 dollars a quilt to quilt them by hand and they were expert seamstresses. They—they did a wonderful job in—they didn't—I didn't do much of that. I'm not that way. But, anyway they did that and they had sales of stuff and, I think, you'll learn more about that from someone else.

But they started in [19]'81, and they, in [19]'81 the footing, the floor and the walls were poured for the building. This is all concrete—this is all, the floors, the walls—and everything were concrete. And then in [19]'82, they finished the roof and a lot of the men that were married to these women, Extension Homemakers, were out here doing a lot of the work.

And the beginning started when the Toombs—Scottie and Mr. Toombs—donated the land here for—for the building. They also donated for the Fire Department next to us and they—they gave so much land for that and that was the start. Then they got the roof in—in [19]'82 and then there were other things

accomplished through a period of time that helped get this building here, and just community effort. People, a lot of people did volunteer work that came out here to help with this and it wasn't—no one was paid anything except like they paid for supplies and they paid for the concrete and things like that. But it was all donated labor and again, Joyce spearheaded that. She had them coming and organized and getting started.

Then the building has had some—some maintenance done since that time and things have been changed, and we're collecting now to build, get new tables for the room and then possibly new doors and then maybe even a new flooring because of the—had a problem with water coming into the building and we have alleviated that and so I don't know. We had—we had the water situation for the club was a—a real consideration because it takes—if you're gonna [going to] have events here and allow people to come in, you need to have enough water supply for right or at 100 people and that's quite a chore. So to begin with they put cisterns out here and collected the water—the rain water to use in—and brought in bottled water and such as that if they, you know, for drinking purposes. And then they have connected with city water since then, but we were—that was brought in just in the last few years.

Do other people besides the Extension Homemakers members use your clubhouse building?

Anyone in the community is allowed to use the building, yes.

Are there any other public buildings around that people can use?

Well, they can use the school somewhat, but that's temporary as far as it's got to be in warm weather because we can't afford to keep the water and the heat on these—the buildings of the school. So this is, probably other than churches, and usually they will allow certain things, but this allows — there's many showers and family—family gatherings held in this, this building.

When you were building this building and working on this building to improve it, did you get any commercial donations for the building from businesses?

I don't know that we got any donations; maybe we got better deals on some of the materials and stuff, but I'm not sure about that.

[Pause and paper shuffling]

It is a lovely building. Thank you very much for your interview. Is there anything else you need—you would like to add before we close up?

I think that's all that I have to share right now.

OK, well, thank you very much.

You're welcome.

You've been very informative.

[Interviewee's edit: Marge Koone wished to add the names of former and founding members of the Alread Extension Homemakers Club (in no particular order): Loretta Israel, Burtie Harder, Edith Lake, Chloe Gardner, Louise Hoyle, Ramona Drenner, Lewis Emerson, Dorothy Henderson, Fern Waddle, Enda Shirley, Billie Sham Hart, Lillious Israel, Arlene McFall, Karen Strange, Wilma Walker, Nola Wolfe, Carolyn Yates, Willa Dean Smith, Pat Trigg, Calvin Hoyle, Roy Henderson, Debbie Turner. Louise McCutcheon, Betty Mosley, Vicky Allen, Freeda Bruce, Ruth Cole, Onie Graves, Virginia Baker, Nora Boswell, Jackie Pickett.]

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