

ARKANSAS EXTENSION HOMEMAKERS COUNCIL

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Official transcript of:

Gladys Sams

Member of Conway County Extension Homemakers Council

Original recording made 10 February 2012

at Morrilton, Arkansas

Recorded, transcribed and edited by:

Ashley Terry

Conway County Family and Consumer Sciences Extension Agent





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Oral History Program

Ashley Terry, Conway County Family and Consumer Sciences Extension Agent

10 February 2012

This is an audio recording of Gladys Sams, a member of the Conway County Extension Homemakers Council. This interview is part of an Arkansas Extension Homemakers Council Oral History Program, and Gladys is answering questions asked by Conway County Family and Consumer Sciences Extension Agent, Ashley Terry.

Questions and comments by Ashley Terry are in boldface type; Gladys' responses and comments are in lightface type.

I am Ashley Terry. This is the interview with Gladys Sams for the Arkansas Extension Homemakers Council Oral History Program. This is being done on February 10, 2011, at University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture Cooperative Extension Service in [Morrilton] Conway 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?

Yes.

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

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My name is Gladys Sams. G-L-A-D-Y-S –S-A-M-S, and I reside in the Birdtown Community in Springfield, Arkansas.

And the county?

The County is Conway.

Gladys, 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.

What has been your association with the Extension Homemakers Program?

The Birdtown Club, the community where I live, was organized prior to 1934. It was called the Home Demonstration Club, and I was born and raised in the Birdtown Community and recall going with my Mother to the club meetings as a child.

So you learned about about Extension Homemakers through your Mother and you've been a member?

Yes, and from my childhood experiences with it.

OK. So what was the name of her club and do you remember what year you became associated.

Well, I remember I always loved to go with my Mother to the club meeting. We met in homes then. Now we have our own building and we meet there. But, it was great fun to go to the homes to a meeting and I could play with other kids.

Do you know how they decided whose house the meeting would be at or did they take turns?

They just sort of took turns.

So, why have you continued you membership? What has brought you back to Extension Homemakers?

Well, the club is highly respected in the community and helpful information is disbursed to the members and worthwhile projects were undertaken and completed and each member truly cared about the other members and that's true today.

Would you say a lot of people in your community have been a part of the Birdtown Club?

At one time, we had a big club there.

So, how did you become involved with the Birdtown Club? Did you hold any offices; do you currently hold any offices in your club?

I'm currently secretary of the club. The secretary was killed in an auto accident, and I took over for her and have continued. At one time I was also president of the club.

Do you remember about what year you were president?

No, I sure don't.

OK. Have you attended any of the State Council Meetings?

I don't believe so.

Do you think you might attend some in the future?

Perhaps, if my physical condition allows it.

How do you think that the Extension Homemakers Program has touched your life the most?

Well, I've learned a lot from the information presented at the meetings and the close and caring relationships that are formed. As the result, the association has

enriched my life.

Well, good! So what has been your favorite event or activity?

I've thought about that. I don't think there's any one that's my favorite. All activities have been very enjoyable to me.

What is one that might—that kind of comes to your mind right off?

I can't really think of one.

OK. So, most times there is always some that people dislike in some situation. Has there been a least favorite activity?

Nope.

What are some changes that you've seen take place in the Extension Homemakers Program?

Well the name of the club has changed over the years and there is a lot more interaction between the clubs in the county. In these later years because of transportation and communication that's available now. That was not always available.

You said interaction. What types of interaction with other clubs?

Well, Council meetings, Spring meeting, Christmas meeting and all the joint meetings that we have. We didn't have the ability to do that early on.

So is that something you enjoy? So you can see other members in the County?

Yes, very much.

So, has Extension Homemakers taught you anything about other people?

Yes, that you can always learn from other people. One of the best ways to learn

is firsthand from other people.

So is there something that sticks out in your mind that you've kind of learned? That kind of stuck throughout the years.

Well, the value of cooperation, because we really had it at Birdtown.

Yes, that's very important. Are there any other memories or experiences that you would like to share?

Well, our club has enriched the lives of all Birdtown citizens whether they were actually a member of the club or not. The community came together in 1954 and purchased a small run-down, framed dwelling and plot of land for \$400. It was for the use of the club and community, and in 1978 we came together as a community and remodeled, and a native stone veneer was added to the building. And rocks were located and hauled to the site by club members and their husbands and non-club members and their husbands. Several years later we added a 20-by-32 [foot] dining room.

And in addition to club meetings the building is used for a polling place for all the elections that are held in Conway County, for the Birdtown Township and its available to the community and surrounding communities for meetings, family reunions, school reunions, birthday celebrations, weddings, showers and so forth, and it serves not only the Birdtown community but surrounding areas. It's estimated that the building serves about 300 to 400 people each year. We keep our fee for the rental at a very low and that's why we get so many surrounding communities 'cause [because] the fees are low, and our club members are like family to each other. We can love each other and we always work together on our projects and try to help our community, our schools, and citizens.

Well, that's great. It seems like the Birdtown Club is a big community effort. You help the people around you and you [are] kinda [kind of] a hub for different types of activities at your building. I know a lot of people—have—I've heard other Extension Homemakers talk a lot about the mattresses. Did you have any experiences?

Yes, yes.

Mattresses?

Mattresses and comforters.

Can you tell us a little bit about how that worked out?

Well, it worked out great. I slept on one of those mattresses myself until I was grown. They were very good quality because they gave us good quality materials and taught us well how to do it.

Could [you] tell us how the process kind of was to actually make a mattress or how does someone get to make—get the materials to make a mattress?

Well, they brought the materials to us. I can't remember exactly who it came from, whether it was the federal government, but I think it was. They brought us the ticking, striped ticking, for the mattress and cotton batting for the mattresses and the long needles we'd need to make the rolls along the edges of the mattress. They taught us well how to do it. We put it up on a [*pause*] taller than these tables so that you would stand up and be comfortable working at it.

So was it a family effort to make a mattress or did everybody have a certain job they had to do one each mattress?

Well, it was a lot of cooperation. There was one old maid in the community that was always in the mist of all community. She was a member of the club and she really pulled it together for everybody. Her name was Anna Roads. I'll never forget her.

OK. Is there anything else you'd like to share with us about your Extension Homemaker's experience?

If I had not done it there would be a big hole in my life.

I completely understand.

[*Laughs*]

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Thank you so much for everything you've done for Extension Homemakers and sharing your time and memories today.

Thank You for having me.

You're welcome.

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