

ARKANSAS EXTENSION HOMEMAKERS COUNCIL
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Official transcript of:

Jo Alta Spanhanks

Member of Sweet Home Extension Homemakers Club

Original recording made 4 October 2011

at Nashville, Arkansas

Recorded, transcribed and edited by:

Barbara Denny

Member of East Delight Extension Homemakers Club





Jo Alta Spanhanks

ARKANSAS EXTENSION HOMEMAKERS COUNCIL

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Official transcript of:

Jo Alta Spanhanks

Member of Sweet Home Extension Homemakers Club

Original recording made 4 October 2011

at Nashville, Arkansas

Recorded, transcribed and edited by:

Barbara Denny

Member of East Delight Extension Homemakers Club

Arkansas Extension Homemakers Council

Oral History Program

Barbara Denny, Member East Delight Extension Homemakers Club

4 October 2011

This is an audio recording of Jo Alta Spanhanks, a member of the Sweet Home Extension Homemakers Club. This interview is part of an Arkansas Extension Homemakers Council Oral History Program, and Jo Alta is answering questions asked by East Delight Extension Homemakers Club member, Barbara Denny.

Questions and comments by Barbara are in boldface type; Jo Alta's responses are in lightface type.

I am Barbara Denny. This is the interview with Jo Alta Spanhanks for the Arkansas Extension Homemakers Council Oral History Program. This is being done on October 4, 2011, at 99 Primrose Lane in Nashville Arkansas, in Pike 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. The recording, transcript, and 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.

First, I would like for you to say your complete legal name.

Jo Alta Spanhanks.

And spell it for me.

J-o A-l-t-a S-p-a-n-h-a-n-k-s

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

Nashville, Arkansas, in Pike County.

Jo, 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? As a member or as a professional—agent, specialist, etc.

As a member. Am I supposed to tell first meeting time? 1950. It was called Home Demonstration Club with Miss Mary Mitchell as our director.

How did you learn about the Extension Homemakers Program?

Through my neighbors and friends that were organizing the club for Sweet Home local.

How long have you been associated with the program?

Sixty-one years now.

So how did you get started in them?

Well, we went to an individual home and began organizing and making plans to have us a community center to have our very own meeting place. We began meeting in individual homes and that worked very well for awhile, but we got to get more members and it was crowded in the homes and everything and we began thinking of projects to work with to accumulate funds so we could build a community building.

So that was the first club you were associated with?

Yes, Madam.

And what year was that again?

1950.

Are you presently a club member?

Yes, I am.

And what is the name of the club?

Sweet Home Extension Homemakers Club.

The county?

Pike County.

And District?

Ouachita.

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

Yes, we gathered together and the hostess had refreshments to serve us. We played a little game or so, and we talked about helpful hints for the homemaker, and how we could interact with the community, and be involved to be a help to our community.

So why did you join?

Because, I love people and wanted to be useful and enjoy the fellowship of my neighbors and friends around about, and wonderful fellowship and wonderful information that we received. Started out I was just a member, then I became a reporter, and then a treasurer, and later vice president. And then the president died, so I became president and held the position as president for over 14 years.

So, when it says how involved did you become, you really took part in all the activities and became an involved member?

Yes.

Why have you continued your membership?

Well 'cause [because] of the learning crafts and, and have a sense of responsibility to home and friends, and others. And, because it was something that I love to do.

Have you attended state Council meetings?

Yes, I believe along about the first ones were about 1995, and I kept going every year until about 2001. And it was a lot of helpful hints and a lot of lessons that we attended class for. Enjoy good fellowship and meeting with friends from other counties and all that.

So, you do have special remembrances of that event?

Yes.

So there were probably a lot of special people and made new friends?

Yeah.

How has Extension Homemakers touched your life?

Well, I think, I have a sense of responsibility to home and friends, and others and a lot of good information for more efficiently serving my family and friends and community.

What has been your favorite event or activity?

Well, a lot of crafts. Like we made a stuffed rabbit and dressed it, and we made a doll from strings of a mop head and decorated her. We made covers out of safety pins, and quilts with name blocks with the name of individuals of our local club. We made pillow quilts and useful things for camping and even home. You could lie down and put your feet in the pocket [recording ends] or fold it up and use it for a cushion in a chair. I have one over there in that chair—that little checkered thing—well not checkered but . . .

So crafts? That has always been fun to learn new crafts.

Yeah, and how to be more efficient with your laundry, with your cleaning and with your cooking, and with fellowship, and learn about the rights of others and not think you're the important person around and want to respect and make other people feel important.

What has been your least favorite event or activity?

[Laughs] Well, sometimes the lessons were instead of real informative and boring at times. But just occasionally, most of the time, it was good. And I don't know.

I think most of the time the interaction with the other friends makes the meeting enjoyable.

Yeah.

What changes have you experienced in the Extension Homemakers organization? What has changed since you joined?

Well, when we began, the lady—what do you call the Extension lady—the agent came to our individual meetings at different clubs in the county and demonstrated how to do a lot of things for us like canning, cooking, maybe how to use efficient means of how to buy your groceries, how to make out a will or something other. I don't know if I can think of anything else.

So that's one thing that has changed then?

Yeah, they claimed that they didn't have money—funds to come to the individual meetings or local meetings.

Has Extension Homemakers taught you anything about people? I think you have already mentioned them.

To respect others and make them feel important and you be diminished and them be exalted. [Laughs]

Do you have any other memories, experiences or thoughts that you would like to share?

Well, a lot of times, we got together and gave showers for people expecting a newcomer, or new bride, and we even carried food to shut-ins and things like that—special occasions or carried a surprise gift to some lonely lady or went to sat with her when she had a time of grief or something. You know, just try to be helpful and useful.

I noticed you have some things here in your house that you have done for the Homemakers, some quilts, and you said some awards.

That one on the end [*points to quilt*] is one that a lady gave me. We brought gifts for the hostess when we hosted in our homes, you know, but after we got our building going—we declined meeting in our community building because we didn't have sufficient heating or cooling. Well, we had good cooling but we didn't have sufficient heating, so when winter came, we went back to meeting in our individual homes.

So how long have you been in Extension Homemakers?

Sixty-one years.

Sixty-one years of good times.

Yes.

I want to thank you for all your contributions to Extension Homemakers and for sharing your time and memories with us. Thank you so much.

It has been a joy and pleasure.

The Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service offers its programs to all eligible persons regardless of race, color, national origin, religion, gender, age, disability, marital or veteran status, or any other legally protected status, and is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer.