

ARKANSAS EXTENSION HOMEMAKERS COUNCIL  
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Official transcript of:

Helen P. Trotter  
Member of Sylvania Tri-Community Extension Homemakers Club  
of Lonoke County

Original recording made 14 December 2011

at Lonoke, Arkansas

Interviewed by:  
Jeraldine E. Brown  
Member of Lonoke County Extension Homemakers Council

Recorded, transcribed and edited by:  
Dianna Bowen  
Lonoke County Cooperative Extension Family and Consumer Sciences Agent





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Oral History Program

Jeraldine E. Brown, Lonoke County Extension Homemakers Council Member

14 December 2011

This is an audio recording of Helen P. Trotter, member of the Sylvania Tri-Community Extension Homemakers Club of Lonoke County. This interview is part of an Arkansas Extension Homemakers Council Oral History Program, and Helen is answering questions asked by Jeraldine E. Brown, Lonoke County Extension Homemakers Council Member.

Questions and comments by Jeraldine are in boldface type; Helen's responses and comments are in lightface type.

**I am Jeraldine Brown and I am interviewing Helen Trotter. This interview is being held at the Extension Center in Lonoke, Arkansas, in the county of Lonoke on December 14, 2012.**

**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.**

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**Would you please state your name and spell your name, and indicate that you are willing to give the Pryor Center permission the make the audio file and transcript available to others.**

I am Helen Trotter. H-E-L-E-N T-R-O-T-T-E-R, and I give my permission [*pause*] to use this.

**Miss Helen, how long have you been in EHC?**

Well, I haven't been too long. Twenty-five years.

**All right. When did you first learn about the Extension Homemakers?**

When I was a child my mother belonged to the Home Demonstration Club, as it was known then.

**Do you remember any of the activities those ladies was doing?**

Well, one of the main things they did, in the winter months was to have potluck dinner and all-day quilting. They had their meeting first and then they quilted.

**You were telling me something about they also made mattresses back then.**

Well, first, they had a canning kitchen in the community. People then didn't have presser cookers. So, they provided a cooker and a sealer because they thought the only way they could use these presser cookers was in tin cans and my mother was the instructor. People would bring their produce and help can it and then they was to learn how to use these cookers.

Then later on, they also made cotton mattresses. There was a surplus of cotton during the Depression because factories wadn't [wasn't] buying the cotton and the government took it over and made mattresses. My mother instructed that. Each family got one mattress.

**Well, it seems like you were really [pause] really indoctrinated into the [unclear word] before you ever joined. What was the first club that you—that you joined?**

My first project was [pause] sewing for the children's home and pregnancy center.

**All right, what club do you belong to today?**

Tri-Community. Sylvania.

**Is that the only club that you've belong to?**

That's the only club I've belonged to.

**What are some of the things that you really enjoyed doing when you were with—with EHC?**

Well, I like most all the activities, but I like the sewing part, I guess, because that's one of my main projects, and quiltin' [quilting]. I taught a quilt class at the State Fair one year and then in our club some of the women got together and I taught them to make quilts.

**I know that you're a judge of the quilting for the sta—for the county fair and I know that that's one of your main interests. You were saying earlier that, when your mother and the ladies made the quilts, they were making them for each other, is that correct?**

Well, they made 'em [them]—they'd meet in different homes. And they'd quilt two quilts each day. They made quilts back in those days because they needed 'em to keep warm at night. Houses wasn't insulated like they are now and they didn't have heat systems like we have now, so they needed the quilts to keep 'em warm at night.

**Is there anything special that you can remember about those earlier days when you were a member? Any special memories or thoughts?**

Well, I thought [*pause*] all women ought to belong to a club because it was so many helpful things they could learn.

**Why did you want to join?**

Well, I'd worked for 35 years in a factory with a lot of people. And I was a widow and I couldn't see myself settin' [sitting] at home and I joined to be with other people and to feel like I was doing something worthwhile.

**What has been your—well, I, I think we talked about what your favorite activity was, but what's your least favorite activity.**

Well, I don't know that I have any big least activity. [*Pause*]

**Have you noticed a lot of changes in the Extension Homemakers through the years?**

Yes, but since I didn't come on 'til [until] kindly late in life—I see people not interested in sewing anymore and some of 'em not in learning to cook.

**And you feel these are things we should press on with in Extension Homemakers?**

I think so; these things, to me, keep the families together.

**Well, do you have any other special memories that you'd like to share with us?**

[*Pause*] Well, I can't think of any right off hand.

**I know that you said that when you went to the state Council meeting that you taught quilting. Is that correct?**

That's right, I taught a class in shadow quilting.

**So you've been very active on the state level, as well as local, haven't you?**

Yes.

**And I know that you were one of the reasons I joined. And, I know that you've been an inspiration to a lot of ladies. Do you have any other thoughts or memories or experiences that you think we ought to record?**

[*Pause*] **OK. If not, we thank you so much for your contributions to the Extension Homemakers and for sharing your time and memories with us.**

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