

Northwest Arkansas Oral History Project
 Mary Edna Baggett Interview Abstract
 June 21, 2019

Interviewee	Mary Edna Baggett
Year of birth	1931
Place of birth	Bentonville, Benton County, Arkansas
Interviewer	Camille Hatcher
Interview date	2019-06-21
Interview location	Bentonville Public Library; Bentonville, Benton County, Arkansas
Keywords	<p>Baggett, Mary Anglin, Ryan Anglin, Susan Cavness, Noel (Red) Clinton, Bill Clinton, Hillary Walton, Helen Walton, James (Bud) Walton, Sam Bentonville, Benton County, Arkansas Backstrom-Pyeatte Funeral Home; Siloam Springs, Benton County, Arkansas Bank of Bentonville; Bentonville, Benton County, Arkansas Bentonville Public Library; Bentonville, Benton County, Arkansas Boys and Girls Club of Benton County; Bentonville, Benton County, Arkansas Kraft Foods; Bentonville, Benton County, Arkansas Quorum Court; Bentonville, Benton County, Arkansas African Americans Cold storage industry Depressions economic Indoor plumbing Politics Radio Recreation Small town life Streets Water supply</p>
Description	<p>Mary Baggett's stories begin with her 1931 birth. It occurred not in a hospital, but in Dr. Richard Atkinson's Bentonville office. These were Depression years. But though times were tough Baggett remembers growing up with loving parents and a "village (Bentonville) that raised the children." People who were friends then remain so today.</p> <p>Imagine growing up on NW Third Street in a home with no electricity or plumbing. These amenities did not come until the mid-1930s when her Dad built an indoor bathroom. Until then she got used to "smells' and using a catalog for toilet paper.</p>

	<p>Many streets were dirt roads that got blocked off during the hot summers to keep the dust down. Baggett's street did have a sidewalk; not many did. That meant Baggett, her brother, two sisters and their friends had a place to skate and play hopscotch. Favorite radio stations were KUOA (she and her mother listened to music) and KWTO (she and her dad enjoyed Cardinals' games).</p> <p>Baggett's dad was involved with the ice business in a time before refrigeration was common. Her dad worked long hours at the ice plant and later managed the frozen food locker plant. Baggett's mom showed her how to garden, an activity she continues today.</p> <p>Baggett enjoyed going downtown to shop. She worked at the Horseshoe Café where, after closing, she danced to the jukebox. In a favorite story, Baggett recalls how she and her friends loved the warm nuts and sundaes available at the local drugstore. In another story, Baggett recalls friendships with some of Bentonville's African American residents; Rabbit Dickerson, who shined shoes and Elizabeth, who took care of Sam and Helen Walton's children.</p> <p>Baggett calls herself progressive, holding positions in both the private and civic centers. As administrative assistant to mayors, attorneys, and hospital directors, she participated in the development of Bentonville. When Sam Walton and his brother James (Bud) bought the Bank of Bentonville, she became Sam's secretary. In this position she traveled with Walton to new stores, working long hours but being well compensated. More than once she bought him a hamburger. Baggett is also a certified funeral director.</p> <p>Baggett's civic positions include serving on the Bentonville City Council and Benton County Quorum Court. These activities got her involved in issues that ranged from the Thistle Law to Beaver water. She's been involved with the Library Foundation and Boys and Girls Club of Benton County. Baggett says 'every [job] gave insight into my community that I would never have had.' As a result of her activism, Baggett spent time with several politicians and elected officials. In the interview, she shares riding 'shot gun' with the Sheriff, lunch with Hillary Clinton, and attending Bill Clinton's inauguration.</p> <p>Baggett retired when she turned 84. Long living near downtown Bentonville, Baggett now resides with her daughter and son-in-law, Susan and Ryan Anglin, on a dairy farm between Bentonville and Centeron.</p>
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Questions or Comments	https://nwaoralhistory.org
Interview sidebar	"All our shopping was downtown. That was the center of our universe besides our church...and the Square was the center of our City..." [00:19:29]