

Northwest Arkansas Oral History Project  
George Cowgur Interview Abstract  
September 25, 2018

Interviewee	George Cowgur
Year of birth	1929
Place of birth	Hiwasse, Benton County, Arkansas
Interviewer	Camille Hatcher
Interview date	2018-09-25
Interview location	Cowgur home; Bentonville; Benton County, Arkansas
Keywords	<p>Cowgur, George  Cowgur, Vernita  Banks, Virgil  Walton, Sam  Hatcher, Camille  Bella Vista, Benton County, Arkansas  Gravette, Benton County, Arkansas  Hiwasse, Benton County, Arkansas  Bank of Gravett; Gravette, Benton County, Arkansas  Daisy Company; Rogers, Benton County, Arkansas  Kraft Foods; Bentonville; Benton County, Arkansas  Annexation  Apple orchards  Baseball  Cemeteries  Depressions, economic  Farming  Politics  Poultry industry  Railroads  Recreation  Schools  Small town life</p>
Description	<p>George Cowgur was born a few miles east of Hiwasse in 1929. He showed an early interest in the community's history. For his high school graduation ceremony, his speech was on the class's history. In this interview, Cowgur brings the history of his family and hometown to life.</p> <p>Cowgur fills the interview with people and places. He can trace both sides of his family: his mother's back to the 1300s, including a castle in Scotland; his father's likely roots in Tennessee, Kentucky, and Ohio. Family members are buried in several of the area's cemeteries: Mount Pleasant, Word, and Dickson. Outdoor activities in the lives of he and his family took place on the Spavinaw, Big Sugar, Indian, and Buttermilk waters. Family shopped in Hiwasse (Hiwatha) and Gravette (Nepo), along with smaller places including Dickson, Condit and Laura. Today some of these places only appear on maps Cowgur</p>

	<p>has in his collection.</p> <p>From the late 1800s to early 1900s, the land around Hiwasse, including Cowgur's father's farm, was known for its apple orchards. The railroad brought visitors to see the apple blossoms. Other cash crops included beans, tomatoes, and strawberries. Times were hard during the Depression, but families worked together. The poultry industry began in the late 1930s. In 1949, Cowgur and his wife Vernita, (with help from his father and a loan from Virgil Banks) built their own poultry houses and added the well with a pump. He credits the Banks', especially Virgil, with supporting many to be able to earn a living in good and bad years. Virgil allowed customers to buy on credit and provided loans with little or no interest. His Hiwasse Produce Store stocked everything needed for poultry farmers and he bought their locally produced goods.</p> <p>Living in Northwest Arkansas meant working hard. Yet there was time for fun whether you were a kid or married with family. Cowgur, his friends, and cousins played baseball in summer, swam in the original Blue Hole, flattened nails on the train tracks, had fun with bean-flippers, and tricked drivers with the pocketbook game. Later, he and Vernita took the family on summer camping trips. One ended in a court appearance. Cowgur's home is located where Hiwasse, Bella Vista, and Bentonville intersect. That's given the family an advantage point to observe and comment on changes experienced in their lifetime. Cowgur believes 'there's not many of them [changes] bad', saying 'my kids and grandkids don't have to go to California to get a job.' He points out the improvements "Mr. Sam" (Walton), Daisy, Kraft and poultry companies have brought to the area. Finances and tax revenue are a key as he notes changes in the Bank of Gravette ownership, the growth of Bella Vista, and decision of Hiwasse to incorporate with Gravette over Bella Vista.</p> <p>A man of several careers, Cowgur has been a farmer, carpenter, and business owner. In addition to Hiwasse, he and Vernita lived in Bartlesville and Tulsa. But Hiwasse is home; its where he has been an active volunteer serving for twenty-three years on the Benton County School Board, as trustee for the Mount Pleasant Cemetery, and chairman of the Benton County Water Authority #1.</p> <p>Always interested in history, George Cowgur and family have made and participated in a history of their own.</p>
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Questions or Comments	<a href="https://nwaoralhistory.org">https://nwaoralhistory.org</a>
Interview sidebar	When it came time to plant or harvest Cowgur says “yes, we hired help to ‘set tomatoes’. There were always guys willing to help...bean pickers, gee, young kids were great bean pickers. My brother would go canvas the area find out how many in the family could come help...He would haul them in his truck [to pick].” [00:27.11]