

Northwest Arkansas Oral History Project
 Jimmie Lee Nevener Interview Abstract
 January 15, 2019

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| Interviewee | Jimmie Lee Nevener |
| Year of birth | 1917 |
| Place of birth | Pine Bluff, Jefferson County, Arkansas |
| Interviewer | Beverley Helton |
| Interview date | 2019-01-15 |
| Interview location | Nevener home; Bella Vista, Benton County, Arkansas |
| Keywords | <p>Nevener, Jimmie Lee Nevener, John Ellison, Virginia (Ginny) Lee, Jimmie Lloyd Lee, Thomas Collier Helton, Beverley Altheimer, Jefferson County, Arkansas Bella Vista, Benton County, Arkansas Pine Bluff, Jefferson County, Arkansas Colony House Interiors; Pine Bluff, Jefferson County, Arkansas St. Theodores Episcopal Church; Bella Vista, Benton County, Arkansas Trinity Episcopal Church; Pine Bluff, Jefferson County, Arkansas Automobiles Churches Interior design Simmons Bank Small town life Tuberculosis</p> |
| Description | <p>It seemed fitting that Jimmie Lee Nevener’s interview took place in her home. With each story she told, Nevener pointed to a picture or other memento from her full life. That life began in Pine Bluff, Arkansas in 1917, over 101 years ago (2019). The family’s long-time roots in Arkansas include relatives who lived in the Elms Plantation in Altheimer, sold REO cars, and established the Simmons Bank. Named for a favorite uncle, Nevener was the oldest daughter of Thomas Collier Lee and Jimmie Lloyd Lee. Except for the year when her father was in a sanatorium in Denver and another when she lived with grandparents in the Little Rock area, Nevener’s childhood and married life was spent in Pine Bluff. It was during her teenage years that she developed her drawing talent. Movie stars were her first subjects. Nevener met her husband John Joseph at a swimming pool in the 1930s. They married in 1935 but kept it a secret until the story came out when Nevener had to give her full name in a court case. They were married 72 years. Together they raised three children. A daughter is deceased; another son and</p> |

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| | <p>daughter live in Bella Vista Arkansas. They, and their children, visit daily with Nevenner. She talked of fun afternoon car rides with her son and grandson as they go out and see what's going on. She's reminded of the rides she took in her grandmother's electric car growing up. When they returned from these Sunday outings, the car had to be charged. Thirty miles was the maximum it would run.</p> <p>Nevenner is proud she can add the designation ASID (American Society of Interior Decorators) to her name. In the 1950s, after working part-time in interior design and taking a correspondence course from a New York school, she opened Colony House Interiors on Linden Street in Pine Bluff. She decorated homes and rooms around the Pine Bluff Country Club area, surrounding cities, the Simmons Bank Building, and the Symphony House (fundraiser for the Little Rock Philharmonic Symphony). Nevenner initiated a craft guild at Trinity Episcopal Church. About three years ago Nevenner moved to Bella Vista to be closer to her family. Son, John, acts as primary caregiver and daughter, Virginia, visits daily to assist with personal care. Even with limited vision, Nevenner is up and fully dressed for breakfast at 7 am, ready for an outing at 9 am, a brief nap, and second outing about 2:30. Best outings are a stop for Braums' ice cream, eating out with family several times a week, and attending the 8 am service each week at St. Theodore's Episcopal church.</p> <p>Nevenner's 100th birthday in 2017 was a milestone celebrated with family coming from New York, Texas, Colorado, and California.</p> |
| Duration | 28 minutes |
| Audio File Format | MP3 |
| Images | Yes |
| Producer | Northwest Arkansas Oral History Project |
| Copyright | Pryor Center for Arkansas Oral and Visual History, University of Arkansas |
| Website URL | http://pryorcenter.uark.edu |
| Questions or Comments | https://nwaoralhistory.org |
| Interview sidebar | Jimmie Nevenner remembers when her brother's fox terrier dog, Midnight, would follow the family over one mile to church (Trinity Episcopal). The dog would sit in the aisle during church, walk another eight blocks to family dinner at her Grandmothers to be fed at the back door, then walk home. [00:11:29] |