

ARKANSAS EXTENSION HOMEMAKERS COUNCIL
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Official transcript of:

Edna French

Fulton County Extension Homemakers Council Past President

Original recording made 24 October 2011

at Saddle Community Center
Saddle, Arkansas

Recorded and edited by:

Beverly Reeves

Heart Extension Homemakers Club President

Transcribed by:

Cecilia Taylor

Fulton County Extension Service Administrative Office Supervisor

Edited by:

Kathy Antus

Fulton County Extension Homemakers Council Member

UofA
DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE
RESEARCH & EXTENSION
University of Arkansas System





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Oral History Program

Beverly Reeves, Heart Extension Homemakers Club President

24 October 2011

This is an audio recording of Edna French, Fulton County Extension Homemakers Council Past President. This interview is part of an Arkansas Extension Homemakers Council Oral History Program, and Edna is answering questions asked by Heart Extension Homemakers Club President, Beverly Reeves.

Question and comments by Beverly are in boldface type; Edna's responses and comments are in lightface type.

I am Beverly Reeves; this is the interview with Edna French for the Arkansas Extension Homemakers Council Oral History Program. This is being done on October 24, 2011, at the Saddle Community Center in Saddle, Arkansas, in Fulton 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.

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Are you willing to give the Pryor Center permission to make the audio file and transcript available to others Edna.

Yes.

First I'd like you to give your legal name and spell it for me, and then tell me the city and county in which you presently reside.

I'm Edna French: E-D-N-A, F-R-E-N-C-H. I live in Saddle, Arkansas.

And county?

Fulton County.

OK. This is gonna [going to] be a very informal interview. I just want you to share your memories of your involvement with Extension Homemakers Program—the good times and the challenges. [Laughs] We know there are those.

There were some very challenging times. My first memory of Extension Homemakers, I was only about 10 years old. I was born and raised in Sharp County at Hardy Arkansas. I attended EHC [Extension Homemakers Club] with my Mother and one of the earliest memories I think that I have of EHC was making a cotton mattress. Ohhhh, we made that at a neighbor's house. Another event I remember in my early years was a canning kitchen. Extension Homemakers provided and showed people how to can their vegetables and—and with a pressure cooker. Of course, people had canned before that with what they called cold pack and a boiling kettle of water that they canned with. But they opened up a kitchen and—and they taught people how to use a pressure cooker. So those are some of my first memories and I was only about 10 years old I suppose, whenever, I can't remember for sure, but I would say somewhere around 10 years old when those two events happened.

Now you've basically been a member of EHC [Extension Homemakers Club] rather than a professionalist. You haven't been an agent or specialist or . . . ?

Closest to an agent I've been is county president [*laughs*], and that's far from being an agent.

OK. How did you learn about the Extension Homemakers Program?

Well, I've been going to Extension Homemakers with my mother. At that time it was called Home—Home Demonstration was what it was called. In my lifetime it's been called various different things,. At one time—before it was called Extension Homemakers, I think and then it was called something else and went back to Extension Homemakers.

And how long have you been associated with the program?

How long have I been associated with it? Ohhh, well, I consider since I been 10 years old, off and on. I have been out of Extension Homemakers a few times during WWII [World War II]. My husband was in the service and I went with him. A few times I was not involved with Extension Homemakers and then after he got out ohh [of] the service, I became a member of the Saddle Extension Homemakers. I had married and we moved to Saddle at that time. I in—in [*unclear words*] the club in 1950 took over cleaning up the Saddle Cemetery. That was a project that we took over. It was in very bad shape, grewed up and brushy, trees and —and so we worked on that and I was a member for about three years and we moved to Texas and we was out there for a while and I was out of Extension Homemakers—ohh, I don't know how many years, but through the period we was in Texas and then we moved back to Sharp County and—and I was not involved probably 10 years of that time I was not involved and then we moved back to Fulton County why I became a member of the Extension Homemakers, and I have been a member now for about 15 16 years since that time.

OK. What was the first club with which you were associated? Do you remember what year that was?

I don't know. I don't remember that the club actually had a name, because it—we was just a small community. There was not a—there was not a community name and as I said I was very young and I just—I don't remember that the club had a particular name.

Was it more county association, as opposed to a local association?

No, not really. It was a local association of the neighbor farmers around us. The women would get together and they would have their meeting and they would do quilting for one another. They'd meet at various houses. You know, it was not a located . . .

You didn't have a specific location?

No, we met at different ladies houses.

OK.

So it was not like we have today. There was not a specific meeting place because we all met at different—each month it would be some other ladies' house.

OK. But it was local as opposed to being . . .

Yes.

. . . to being county-wide?

No, it was not county-wide. It was—it was local.

And are you presently a club member?

Yes ma'am, I am. As I said, I've been a member now for about 16 years. Since exclusively, but I've not been out of EHC [Extension Homemakers Club].

And the name of the club.

Saddle Extension Homemakers.

And that's in Fulton County.

Yes, it is. That's Saddle, Arkansas.

[Sniffs] Besides your experience with making mattresses, do you have any other special remembrances of that first meeting or the first club with your Mother?

No, as I already said, one of the meetings we made mattresses and another one of the meetings we was at this designated place around Highland, Arkansas, where that they had set up the canning kitchen, and we made, you know, canned fruit and vegetables. Not only fruit and vegetables, but that was the first that I ever heard of canning meat. Before that time, we had always had to salt down our pork and, of course, beef they was not really any way of curing beef that—that I remember of. Generally if you cured—if you killed a beef you—you

shared it with your neighbors and got rid of it. [*Laughter*]

You didn't do things like make jerky then?

I don't remember ever—ever making, ever making jerky. No.

OK.

Before my—before my time, which I came from a family of nine siblings, so I had nine siblings, and I was the third from the bottom, so I had seven older than I. Maybe in those times—oh, mother made jerky. I don't know. Of course, I do remember one time that they put some meat down in a brine solution. But I was too young at that time to really remember much about how it was done or what it turned out to be.

Could that have been something like soured brachten?

I don't know.

OK.

I don't know.

OK. OK. Once you got past coming with Momma [*laughs*], why did you decide to continue on?

Well, I remembered after I married and we came back from the service. Of course, my husband, as I said, he was in the war during WWII [World War II] and after he came home and we moved up around Saddle, I had remembered about Extension Homemakers. I had been out of Extension Homemakers for probably at that time five years or more. But I remembered of going with my Mother, and [*breathing*] I don't even remember who got it started, but we did form a club. Possibly some of the older women that lived around here, like Onie Mosey and Mrs. Sutherland—Ava Sutherland had been members of the Extension Homemakers around Saddle.

Anyway we—we formed a club and at that time we would meet at one another's

houses, too. Of course, it was a Saddle Club, but we didn't have a designated place like we have a community building here and meet at the community building, we met at ladies' houses. And I had already, I think, said that we took over the Saddle Cemetery and Project and that was in 1950, and we cleaned up the cemetery to where that you could actually get through it. [*Breathing*]

I remember going the first time I ever went to that cemetery—my brother—father-in-law, course I was not married at that time, but—but he became my father-in-law, he had died and I had gone to his funeral, and you could just barely walk through the cemetery. You couldn't drive through it at all. [*Laughs*] You could just barely walk through it and so that was a project that we took over and cleaned up, and, of course, it has nothing to do with Extension Homemakers, but now then the Saddle Cemetery is an association and is well maintained and . . .

Oh, I think that has a lot to do with Extension Homemakers. [*Laughs*]

Anyway and I was very involved in—in helping it become an association and—and to get it started and everything.

Well I—it sounds like if Extension Homemakers hadn't gotten involved in the first place, it probably wouldn't exist except as a corn field at this point.

Well, it wouldn't existed except like a lot of the other cemeteries around that have grown up and lost basically because there is cemeteries in Fulton County that are just over run with cattle and the tombstones is tore up, and we did reach the Extension Homemakers with that and they—it was my idea. I decided that I was going to do some kind of a record of Saddle Cemetery and I had mentioned it to someone and—and they said I think that would be a good project for the county. So as a result we published a cemetery book that has all of the cemeteries that we could find and locate at that time. I have heard of some cemeteries that we missed because we had no idea that they were there and probably most of them just has a very few graves in them, but nevertheless, they were cemeteries. And we had no idea where they was at. Even though the county only had a record, I believe, of 70 something when we started this project and we wound up with a 105 if I remember correctly. I wouldn't say for sure on that but . . .

I remember hearing some of the stories about.

Ohhh.

About you all going to the cemeteries . . .

Let me tell you, those were the days. We—we fought the chiggers and the ticks and the cold [*laughs*].

I remember Shirley and Jean telling the story about sitting at dinner in a restaurant and picking the ticks off of themselves and their husbands.

And so was [*unclear words*] went to a cemetery up close to Mammoth Spring and their husbands went with them because they didn't really know where the cemetery was at so, and anyway after they got through doing the cemetery, they decided to go to Fred's Fish house [*laughs*] and have a meal and they couldn't hardly eat for picking the seed ticks [*laughs*] and everybody in Arkansas is familiar with the seed ticks [*laughter*].

Yes, indeed we are.

But that was a project that, that was done by the Extension Homemakers. Also . . .

Go ahead.

. . . also, another project that was started—it wasn't exclusively done by Extension Homemakers—was publish a history book. Fulton County and Extension Homemakers was the beginning of that, but then we brought in other people in the community to help us because it was such a big job.

Yes, very large project.

It was, and we have a very nice history book of Fulton County that was the results of Extension Homemakers.

Why have you continued your membership?

Why have I continued my membership? I lost my husband in [19]'82, and I was a widower [widow] living alone—and actually Extension Homemakers has—it's just been wonderful therapy for me.

OK.

Meeting with all of the ladies and the projects that we have done. We make pillows. I don't know what they call them, cough pillows or whatever for the Children's Hospital [Arkansas Children's Hospital at Little Rock] for when they do surgery on them that they hold the pillows over the incision and helps to cough. We make pillows; we make teaching dolls for the Children's Hospital. We knit crochet hats and booties—that some of the clubs make stockings, Christmas stockings. I may be getting into somebody else's territory.

That's fine.

But anyway, the Heart Club makes the stockings and the dolls, and we make lap robes for hospice—that's our club, the Saddle Club [*clears throat*]. We make those. We make what we call a “Care Bear” for the preschool Head—kindergarten—not really kindergarten. It's preschool I should call it.

Are you talking about Head Start?

Huh?

Are you talking about Head Start, or is this something different?

Yeah, I guess you would call it Head Start. It's not at the school. Now we have a Head Start at the school at Mammoth, but this was in a separate building that they went to and they attended that before they was ready to go to kindergarten.

OK.

But anyway, every Christmas we donate these little bears to the children for Christmas [*clears throat*]. We have also made sheets for their little cots at the school there at the same place for Head Start.

Uh-huh.

We have—right now we're not doing that. We have made what we call ouch dolls. They're, [*breathing*] they're just little things—just like little round deals that has a happy face and a smiley—a sad face on it—on each side that we do for the . . .

Health Department.

Huh?

Is it the Health Department?

Yes. Yes.

I remember making those awhile ago.

Yes, we do that and make them for the little ones. When they give them shots and things, they are just right for their little hands to squeeze. One year we did, which we have a volunteer fire department here at the Saddle, which the house is right here by the center and we did bears for the what is—first responders, you know, to take if there is a burn out or a wreck or something that they go to the children, you know.

So that they—they have something to give.

They have something to give to kindly, you know, help to calm them down at least something that they can hang on to.

OK. The folks who—who are sponsoring this would like to know how involved you became. What offices did you hold, committee chairmanships, special responsibilities.

I have been, ohh, county president for one term, and I've also been president of the Saddle Extension Homemakers for several terms before I finally got out of that. In fact, I—I held that office for many years before I became county president, and then I refused to take the local president.

It's hard to do both.

You can't hardly do both and do a good job of it. I don't know. I'm not. That's the only offices that I have held in . . .

Oh, it seems to me that you have done some chairmanships. I remember working with you [laughs]. I remember working with you on education and . . .

Yes.

. . . going up to the schools.

Yes I have been on the membership of education a few times and—and I've also been on chairman of trying to promote Extension Homemakers. You and I went one year. We used to do.. I also went one time—we made some puppets. A friend of mine and I made puppets. We did the puppet show for the Head Starts—the story in Fulton County, and we did the puppet show for the little kids to show them that it was OK to tell if you was being molested in any way, and then you and I went to some of the schools and tried to promote EHC [Extension Homemakers Club] to the young high school girls there.

Not that we were terribly successful [laughs].

No, not that we was and—and we said to say that Extension Homemakers is losing—is losing interest in Extension Homemakers—lost our clubs to where there's only two clubs now in the county. Which at one time, I think, we had eight to 10 clubs. We had about a hundred members in Fulton County. We no longer have that; we only have five members ourselves. Four—four that's actually active. Of course, the Heart Club is a—I guess they've got about 17.

No, actually count everybody, we have 21.

Do you?

Although—Although two of those have moved, they're still on the books.

Yeah.

But two have moved, so we have 19.

I don't know what the solution is to getting interest back in the Extension Homemakers, but I am gonna [going to] throw this is. It's gonna [going to]—gonna go to the state so [*laughs*] . . . We have so many programs—have had over the last few years that was the same thing over and over and over and over, and, yes, if we had a younger members maybe teaching them how to keep foods safe.

Now your talking about the monthly programs.

Yeah, the monthly programs. Yes.

OK.

That we have.

OK.

You know, as well as I do, that these programs that we have—we have had year after year after year after year, and I know my ladies are saying, "Can't we have something different?" I am tired of these. I know how to exercise. I know how to cook. And I know at one time we tried to do, and I don't know if state doesn't believe in doing quilts, you know, teaching young people how to quilt and how to piece quilts and things like that. And I don't know if that's the answer or not, but I do know that we can't get the young people interested in what we do any more. I have tried and course I understand and I realize that most of these young people nowadays have to work in order to live— they have to work.

Yes, and that unfortunately is a fact of life.

It is a fact of life.

I'm not sure—I'm not sure that having meetings in the evening or on a

Saturday would make things any better.

I don't think it would, because—and maybe, yes, maybe having meetings at night you might get young people out, but then right on the other hand to get these young people involved. Let's face it, Beverly, I'm 84 years old and I don't mind saying that I'm 84 years old because I'm proud of every year that I have been able to live. I'm in good health. I still do my own mowing. Yeah, I ride a lawn mower [*laughs*].

Bless your heart.

But I have—I have enough mowing to do that on the lawn mower it takes me about four hours to do it

BR: You're a better woman than I am [*laughs*].

So but I don't drive at night.

OK.

So therefore I don't see well enough to drive at night. I'd be dangerous to other people as well as myself and I don't drive at night [*clears throat*] and therefore and all. Our youngest member is 63 years old.

Yeah, I think that is about right for our—for the Heart Club, too.

So most of them doesn't—doesn't drive at night. So how are you going to get young people interested to have a club at night if you can't get out to go and invite them people to that club. So therefore I don't think that night is gonna [going to] work that way, at least for this community it's not.

Yeah, its . . .

And most of them on Saturday do their washings and ironings, and, you know, the things that they can't get done through the week, so I don't know what the answer is.

No, I don't either. I don't either.

That's just throwed in there for [*laughs*] whatever it's worth.

That's fine. Have you attended any state Council meetings?

Yes, yes, I have.

Do you remember what years you attended? I'm sorry. It says what year you attended your first one.

Ohh, lands, I don't know, but it was when they was still having the Council meeting at Searcy.

OK.

But I can't tell you I attended two, I think, at Searcy.

OK.

But I can't tell you what years those were.

Do you have any special remembrances of them?

Yes, [*laughs*] there again it really doesn't have anything to do with Extension Homemakers in a way, but I remember their—their library on the campus there— what a nice library that— that they had, and one of the things that I remember about the library was the—they had all of these Bibles from way back—early translations of it.

Oh.

Which was very interesting to see the different translations. Not that I could read them, [*laughs*] but they were still—it was still interesting that they had all of these translations of way, way back

Which college was this?

It the Search Christian College [Editor's Note: The meeting was held at Harding University] there in Searcy.

OK.

It's—it's sponsored by the Church of Christ.

OK.

Christian College, and we had this—the meetings. That's where they used to have them before they went to having them at Hot Springs. [Editor's Note: The annual meeting of the Arkansas Extension Homemakers Council meetings was held on college campuses until several years ago when the meeting site was moved to the Hot Springs Convention Center.]

OK.

And I have been to—oh, I don't know, four or five meetings at Hot Springs, I guess. I didn't go last year; I went year before last, but I didn't go—now I went—I went last year, but I didn't go this year.

OK. So you went in [20]'09 and didn't go in—no, sorry, you went—you went in [20]'10.

I went in [20]'10.

And didn't go in [20]'11.

No, I did not. One of the things that I learned at the—one of the meetings in Hot Springs was they taught us how to make Victorian Christmas ornaments. I took a class on that and enjoyed it very well and came back to Fulton County, and we had a workshop that winter and I taught some of the ladies how to make the Victorian Christmas ornaments, which are very beautiful. Another year, we wove a Christmas sled. I took a . . .

A Christmas sled?

A Christmas sled, uh-huh. I—I learned how to do that.

Was this made of paper?

No, it was made of, I guess you would call it these little bamboo you know, woven out of . . .

Or maybe balsa wood.

I don't know what kind of wood it was but anyway.

OK.

But anyway it was wood.

It was wood.

And—and it was red and green. They were dyed red and green these—these strips— were. And so the last [*clears throat*]*—*the last couple of times that I've been to the Council meeting or the state meeting, they didn't have really any classes that I wanted to take. They—they were not—they were not interesting class—classes for me.

What kind of classes did they have? That you weren't interested in . . .

Well, one of them—and we just sit in on this meeting—it wasn't filled up and so they let us just sit in on it and it was making—it wasn't really a class, but it was making—they called it snack foods or something like that and it was mixin' [mixing] different kinds of cereals together and—and . . .

Making—making trail mix kind of thing.

Well, you might call it trail mix. It—it was just made out of different kinds of cereal and you ate it as a snack just, you know.

What kind of programs would you like to see?

Well, Beverly, at my age, I probably will not attend another one down there, so they would not [*laughs*] need to plan anything for me particularly, but, I think, some kind of—well, for instance and they might not call it a craft, but the Victorian ornament, but they taught us how to make I would call it a craft class.

Uh-huh, I would, too.

Also the—the Christmas sled—I would call that a craft class.

Uh-huh.

My understanding is they don't really believe in craft classes any more. It's more nutrition, exercise, and, yes, I know we all need exercise. We all need nut—need— excuse me, good nutrition, but most of us know that.

OK. So you want something that's unusual for you. Something that you don't know.

That's right.

At your advanced age.

That's right [*laughter*].

BR: OK, well that makes - that makes a great deal of sense. uh

And—and let's face it, most of Extension Homemakers are like me.

If you mean that they are not young people, I—I have to agree with that.

That's right. That's what I'm talking about. Most of them are older people.

Yes.

And a lot, of well—that's why say that most of us know, not that we always follow it, but we do know good nutrition.

Uh-huh.

We do know we should exercise.

BR: Uh-huh. It doesn't necessarily get us out there doing it.

That's right. [*Laughs*] That's absolutely right. The exercise classes is all very well good and—and we need more of them, but the problem with me of going to an exercise class is they're all so far away from me. Just like you teach an exercise class.

Yes.

Every week?

Twice a week.

And that would be great, but it's 25 miles for me to drive to that exercise class, one way. It's not two ways. One way it's 25 miles.

Yes.

I can't afford. I don't have any income except my Social Security. I can't afford to drive twice a week, or even once a week, every week from here to Salem, 50 miles to take an exercise class.

OK. Well, there's not much I can do about that at the moment, but I'll keep that in mind [*laughs*]. That's a problem for another—another time [*laughs*].

That's right—that's right.

I may have [*unclear words*]. We touched on this earlier, but how has Extension Homemakers touched your life?

How has it touched my life?

Uh-huh.

Well.

B I know you said that it helped after your husband's death.

Yes, it's—it helped very much and it keeps me, I think, it keeps me busy. It keeps me interested in things, and I think it has helped me to reach the age that I am, as healthy as I am because I have been active. I nearly—every year I help with the MaLinda's [Editor's Note: MaLinda Coffman is the staff chairman of the Fulton County Extension Service] fit n fun class—the camp that she has.

Uh-huh.

I help with the fair every year and enjoy that very much and have, I think, have been very helpful in—in increasing our fair. I [*unclear words*] because, well for instance, last year before school was out, I went to Mammoth and took our tabloid and talked to the 4-H'ers up there, which the both of the. And not only did I have 4-H children, but I had adults in there and as a result several of them entered things. They asked intelligent questions about how to enter things, and you'd be surprised at the people that don't know that they even get premiums for that stuff that they enter into the fair.

Yeah.

You know, and there has been even some of the adults—well, I'm gonna [going to] raise a garden and, you know, and—and, of course, now this year, we didn't have a great lot of canned stuff at the fair, but . . .

Well, the weather made a difference.

I started to say that had a lot to do with the weather. We didn't have much produce at the fair this year, but that had a lot to do with the weather. So it's through the Extension Homemakers, maybe the fair doesn't have anything much to do with Extension Homemakers, but through the Extension Homemakers I've become, because I was not involved in the fair before. Of course, I was a raising family and we had farms—on the farm we had cows to milk and I was

not involved in the—in the fair in any way. So I had become involved in the fair and with . . .

Now I—Extension Homemakers has taken an interest in the fair.

They have.

As—as a project, so . . . ?

They have.

I would definitely say that's—that's a—that's Home Extension.

I don't know how else that I could really say that my involvement in Extension Homemakers has helped me other than it's just been a—a great benefit to me I feel like.

What has been your favorite event or activity?

My favorite?

Uh-huh.

Activity? Oh, [*laughs*] I don't know, Beverly. I know that the ladies when we go to the convention and things like that we always have fun.

I know. We are talking about your favorite activity not . . .

I know.

Not everybody's.

I know and you know that is. I suppose really to stop and think about it—my favorite, not that the—the activity of doing it was so great, but being able to do the cemetery books.

OK. I tell you what my favorite activity was.

What?

Do you remember the time we went over to Ozarka College [at Melbourne, Arkansas] and had the culinary students . . .

You know I . . .

. . . serve us a meal?

. . . I didn't get to go that trip.

You didn't get to go? I loved that.

Yeah.

I thought that was a treat. It was really fun.

EF: Yeah

I really enjoyed that.

I—I didn't get to—to make that trip. Now we did, and I enjoyed that we did—not that—that was my first train ride, but one year we—a bunch of us went on a train ride, went to Calico Rock and—and caught that train that has over there and—and made that trip.

OK.

On that and I enjoyed that. As I said, it wasn't the first train ride I'd ever been on, but because I've rode trains several times in my life but—but I think the most satisfactory I will say—the most satisfactory activity that the Extension Homemakers has taken on. I can't really say it was getting the Saddle Cemetery clean but [*laughs*] or the cemetery books, but I really felt like we did a great service to a lots of people. We are still selling cemetery books.

Yes, we are.

And we will continue selling them as long as—as somebody you know—at least they are selling. And we had sold them far and wide. I don't—I don't know how many states that we have mailed them to, a number of states.

Yeah, true.

Besides just Arkansas. And so as I've said, but even, Beverly, I'm about to say that even with the ticks [*laughs*] and chiggers and climbing the fences and going through the brush that we had fun. We really did; we had fun.

You all seemed to really enjoy yourselves with that.

Shirley—Shirley Black and I done lots of cemeteries together, and oh, we'd be tired by the time we got them done, but we still had fun. She was—she was a great lady to work with.

Yes. What was your least favorite activity?

My least favorite [*laughs*].

Or event?

Oh, I think—let me think if I have a least favorite activity. I really can't think of anything, Beverly, that—that I have not enjoyed as an activity of Extension Homemakers. I remember, this goes back to my early Extension Homemaker association. I was just a little bitty girl, as I said I was only about 10 years old when I got involved with Extension Homemakers, and we rode, which was to me was the greatest event I thought that personally a kid of my age could have, and the whole county chartered a bus and we went and I got to go. They was neighbor ladies—my mother didn't go, but I got to go with these ladies on this bus, and we went to Memphis to the Zoo.

I—that would be fun for a child.

It was.

And I'm sure the adults enjoyed—enjoyed it just as much.

It was. It was. It was really—I really looked forward to that trip and even though we started early and we got home late at night I—I still enjoyed that trip and I still remember that trip today. That was so far back that we had to ride a ferry. The bus had to take a ferry across Black River and—and the—the river at Memphis down there. There was no bridges across those rivers [*laughs*]. We went across on the ferry.

I won't make any comments [*laughs*]. OK. What changes have you experienced in Extension Homemakers organization?

What experience have I . . . ?

What changes?

What changes? Well I—I don't know. There again that—that goes back to the early times that the Extension Homemakers helped families, which before they made the mattresses most families had straw ticks to sleep on; they didn't have cotton mattresses to sleep on. They were—just you put straw in a tick and then made a bed out of it, Beverly. Some people was fortunate enough to have—to be able to—to get enough feathers to make a feather bed to go on top of that, but a lot of people slept on straw mattresses instead of cotton mattresses and the state furnished these people the cotton and stuff to make these mattresses out of.

So they gave them both the outside material and the—and the stuffing.

They did and showed them how to make them. Now in the canning kitchen you—you bought your canner, but they—they furnished the canners to—to where the people could buy them, which as I said, people around here knew nothing about canners. Your pressure cookers . . .

Yeah.

. . . is what I'm talking about. People didn't know anything about them when they brought the canning kitchen in down there and course the families furnished their own jars and lids and—and their vegetables and stuff, which was easy enough to do, you know.

You were growing your own to start with?

Absolutely. We grew our own, you know, our own vegetables and things, and we [*unclear words*]. A family my size, we would can hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of quarts of or half gallon jars of food to put up to have for our winter, you know, meals and things.

Uh-huh.

You didn't go to the store and buy fruit vegetables. And you went to the store, you bought flour and maybe sugar, if you had the money. If not, you would use sorghum molasses or honey to sweeten things with.

Did you have your own hives?

Yes ma'am.

You did.

Yes, and the funny thing about it was I can tell this now [*clears throat and laughs*]. My Dad and Mother moved to Hardy off the farm. Let's see what year did they move to Hardy, about [19]'50—[19]'57 or [19]'58—something like that. They sold the farm to Cherokee Village and my dad took, I think, three hives of bees with him. They bought a big old house there in Hardy right behind Bigger's store and it had an upstairs in it. It was a rooming house at one time, had all kinds of rooms upstairs that was rented out, you know, before and he took one of them big rooms upstairs [*laughs*] in that house and opened the window and put three hives in [*laughs*] up there in that house [*laughs*].

I suspect his neighbors were not terribly happy with him.

Well, you know what the—the bees didn't bother neighbors because they just went in and out the window to the hive. They would go out to, you know, to eat
...

Uh-huh.

. . . get there pollen and stuff to make their honey out of, but they didn't bother the neighbors.

Oh, OK.

Half of the neighbors didn't—most of the neighbors didn't even know there was bees up there [*laughs*].

That's interesting.

I know a lot of people didn't believe but that it's the truth.

No, I—I believe that [*laughs*].

He did, but anyway, of course, that's getting away from what we was talking about the canning and things. But as I said you—you went to town and you bought flour and sugar if you had the money and, you know, your kids shoes and clothes, but you didn't go to town [to] buy cereals and—and all of this stuff . . .

Uh-huh.

. . . that people buy today. We raised our own eggs. We had our own milk, actually we raised goats more than we did cattle [*clears throat*].

OK.

The year—the year that I married—my brother that was younger than I, he was two years younger than I, and the rest of the boys was all—I had four brothers that was in the service. In fact, during WWII [World War II], I had a husband and four brothers and two brother-in-laws in the service.

Whoa.

[*Clears throat*] And before I married, course, we was on a farm. And the boys—rest the boys was all gone and [*unclear words*] and I my brother younger than I, as I said, we done everything that had to be done on the farm and that

summer we—we milked a hundred goats and feed 75 baby kids a bottle, a nipple.

Whoa.

And besides that, we had this long wagon. I guess it was probably about 16 feet long, but Dad had made and he put a what they call an A frame in it. This frame would fold up . . .

Uh-huh.

. . . and you put it in the bed and release it and it would—it would set like this. See it was on a swivel and these would set down in the bed and then this would extend out over the bed, which made to haul hay, it would make about a 16-foot long by about a 12- foot wide load of hay.

OK.

And you—you loaded the hay with a forks. It was not baled hay that you loaded and we put up 46 loads of hay that summer. That was in 1944.

Long summer.

It was a long summer [*laughs*]. In fact, one of the neighbors told my husband—told Noel. He come home on furlough in July that year—he come. She told him,” I tell you what if you don't hurry up and come home and marry that girl, there's nothing gonna [going to] be left but a head of hair.” [*Laughs*] Course, I had long hair—lots of it [*clears throat*].

Has Extension Homemakers taught you anything about people?

Do I have to answer that [*laughs*]?

No, you don't have to answer that.

Yes, Extension Homemakers—well, I don't know if it's actually taught me anything that I didn't already know. I know there's—there's people and then

there's people.

OK [laughs]. Is there any other memories or experiences or thoughts that you'd like to share? Or have we talked you out?

I think, [laughs] Beverly, I've probably have talked you out.

No.

I've probably said things that, as I said while ago, I probably said things that I shouldn't have said but anyway.

I don't think there's anything on here that you shouldn't have said.

I've had an interesting life and I have enjoyed Extension Homemakers. I think that it's— I think it's been a very beneficial activity for me. I think that it would be helpful to young people today if they had time to be members of the Extension Homemakers.

And what way do you think it would be helpful?

Well, [clear throats] one of the things in my time as growing up, Beverly, we knew in—in other words I'd share this with the young girl last night. She had to do a—a interview of an older person [laughs] for her college class, and we was talking about the differences in girls today and as I was a girl growing up. I made my first cake when I was 7 years old.

OK.

My mother was sick and I didn't use cake mix either [laughs].

[Laughs] We didn't have cake mixes.

You didn't have cake mixes, so it was not a cake mix. As—as she said her daughter would if she made a cake with a cake mix. She'd say, “Mother, what do I do next?” you know, and she'd say, “Well, read the box. But my mother was sick and in fact she had mumps is what was wrong with her. And I wanted

to make a cake, and so I would do one thing and I would go to the bed and as [ask] her what do I do next. She would tell me and I would go back and I would do that and then what do I do next. And I made cake and it didn't come out to bad.

We cooked on a wood stove. We didn't have these nice fancy gas or electric stoves nowadays, and if you didn't keep the fire going, your stuff didn't cook. I think that some of the programs that they have today would be beneficial, if you could get young people, as I started out with Extension Homemakers, to attend because it would teach them how to cook and they don't even have home-ec anymore in school that teaches kids how to cook and sew like they—like I was taught.

OK.

So, I think that a lot of—a lot of stuff is lost that we had as girl growing up, as I had as girl growing up.

And you think Extension could replace some of that? Or should replace some of that?

Somebody needs to replace some of that because girls doesn't even—girls don't even know how to sew anymore. Most—most young you know that from our fair.

Yes.

Because we don't have any sewing entered into the fair. And nowadays if—if somebody tie-dyes something, it's a T-shirt that they just take and they put dye and they call that sewing and that's not sewing.

No.

This is the first year that I have not had that type of stuff in my Sewing Department in the fair.

Really?

Really.

That's interesting.

And embellished sewing is not sewing. Because embellished sewing—most of it—is like sweatshirts that's embellished, T-shirts that's embellished; It's not sewing. Sewing is when you cut out something and you make it.

And put it together.

Yes, that is sewing.

Aaah, you won't get an argument from me.

And—and people—that's like crocheting is crocheting and knitting is knitting.

Uh-huh.

People don't do any sewing anymore and I—I grant you that maybe—maybe you can go to the store and buy something almost as cheap as—I won't say you can buy as cheap, but almost as cheap maybe, as what you could make it, but it's not—it's not made as good. If you're taught to do it right, it's not as made as good and it won't last as long.

I agree.

I think that one of the things that—that could be taught is young people, if they want to sew, they could be taught—like tops of material could be used for what things, because there is actually—there is a difference in what kind of material you use for different patterns to make difference things out of.

I agree.

I think one of the things, and I might blame the fair maybe on this maybe it's—maybe it's not wrong, but then back when I was a kid growing up, you made a quilt out of whatever you had, out of scraps.

Uh-huh.

And they made beautiful quilts. Nowadays, materials has to be coordinated. They'll have to be made out of two or three patterns per se or they're not a quilt.

BR: Well that's a matter of judgment I think on the--on the

It is.

. . . on the judges' part rather than . . .

It is.

. . . than something that's . . .

I have seen some quilts that was just as beautiful as any quilt I ever seen that was called string quilts. You know what a string quilt is?

No.

It is a square. You take a square of paper and you take these pieces of material and generally start in one corner of it and make a—a diamond or something mean a angle across like that and then you sew these strips across this quilt like that all the way across.

On the bias.

On the bias.

OK.

Yes, you sew across on the bias. They don't necessarily have to be cut on the bias.

Well, no, of course, not.

These don't, but you're sewing them across your square not—not with the

square, but across the square and then you set them things together. And you don't sometimes—you don't turn your—you can make 'em [them] one of two ways. You can either set your blocks with your strips a coming together . . .

OK.

. . . or you can set 'em [them] opposite either way, and they make beautiful quilts. They're colorful quilts because there's ever color in the rainbow.

OK. Well . . .

Prints, solids, whatever you've got and that's the way people used to make quilts. They take whatever they had even—even clothes that kids have outgrown that still had some good material in them and make a quilt out of that.

Oh, sure. Of course.

Well, if you entered a quilt like that in fair today the—the judges wouldn't even judge it.

Oh, I don't think that's . . .

They wouldn't. No, I saw several years ago. We use to go to Harrison for the district fair, . . .

Uh-huh.

. . . and one year, there was a lady that had a quilt made out of velveteen, velvet, velveteen—something like that that she had put together and they were made of blocks. The blocks was made a lot on that older like I was telling you and they would maybe have a strip of bias tape, a strip of rick rack, whatever type of—of . . . I had a senior moment. I'm sorry.

That's OK.

. . . decoration.

OK.

You know, trim is, I think, the word I'm a huntin' [hunting] for. She used whatever type of trim that she had, maybe buttons—whatever . . .

Uh-huh.

. . . and put on this top and it was beautiful, and one of the women gave her a white ribbon on that because she didn't like it.

Well, that you know, but see that's—that's.

I know it's judges.

It's—that's judges. That's . . .

That's judges.

. . . that's judges. That's not . . .

And then that same time, there was another quilt that was made up out of a color she didn't like and that was colors she didn't like and— and so she, you know . . .

Yeah.

So anyway.

But that's—that's the judge, that's not . . .

That's away from Extension Homemakers.

I'm gonna [going to] go—I'm gonna go back to something that you said earlier.

OK.

You said that the monthly programs that we're getting for our meetings . . .

Uh-huh.

. . . are not appropriate for . . .

Don't think I used the work appropriate.

. . . for your group. Well, they are not appropriate in that they don't have a great deal of meaning to the people in your group because they already know most of what is in this programs and you're just preaching to the choir.

Uh-huh.

What kind of programs do you want to see? What kind of programs do your ladies want to see—do your members want to see?

Well, I don't know. They haven't necessarily—they haven't necessarily named any particular thing that they would like to—to have in these programs, Beverly. Only thing that you know—the only thing I'm going by is just the fact that whenever one of them pro—programs comes up in the—in the month, you know, that, “Oh, we had that.” I—and—and MaLinda is—is she's saying that now just like we get generally last couple three years, we have been getting our programs maybe in January, February for the whole year.

Uh-huh.

Supposed to. Well, she gave us a few, and I don't know about your club, but the ones that she gave us has not gone with the month that is in our books, and she said when somebody, and she gave us some and one of the particular ones that she gave us the last time, you know, she gave . . .

Uh-huh.

. . . material. Oh, that was the club—that was the material for the clubs for the month we had already had.

Yeah.

You remember that?

Well, one of them was . . . Yes.

And she said that they don't understand our year and they don't send these this material. Well, if we're going—if she's going to give out material the first of the year for the—the programs that were supposed to have . . .

I don't—she doesn't do it the first of the year. It's—it's—it's July to July or July to June, isn't it?

No, that's not when—that she's—she gave all of these.

Did she give it to us?

One year. One year.

In January? I'm sorry.

One year she gave it to us in January.

OK.

Now I don't remember. It wasn't January. It was a little later, but it was for July that she gave us the first batch of—of this stuff.

Uh-huh.

This year.

Uh-huh.

But anyway, if we're going to get these—this material for the programs that we're pre—supposed to present to our ladies for that you know for the month . . .

Uh-huh.

. . . we need to have that material before that month rolls up because we need—
whoever is the leader needs to study that material so that they can use it wisely .

. .

OK.

. . . for their members.

Uh-huh.

And part of, I know, myths of aging, I believe, is the one for January, and I had
I was supposed, I'm supposed to give that. Well, now we had part of that
material the first time and the rest of it come this last time that she gave us the
stuff, [*laughs*] so I don't know whose fault that is, but anyway if we're going to
get material for our programs, we need to have the material when we're
supposed to have it.

Yeah, I understand that.

But as far as to tell you what kind of programs that the—the women would like
to have, I don't know because I told them back—even though I'm not the
president of our club now and haven't been for actually since I went out
whenever I was county president, I've not been back in as president—but I
usually— everybody in the club asks me about things [*clears throat*] and they
will—they will call and ask me questions and things. But anyway, I just know
that we need to have the material if we're going to do a program to where we
can do it with some benefit to somebody rather than just reading over 'cause
[because] sometimes we don't get the material until maybe the day before we're
supposed to use it and then all you do is just read over the material and that's it.
You can't study it and you know pick out the—the points that they need to
know . . .

Yeah.

. . . because, let's face it, there's always things in there that you don't—you don't

use.

Yes, true.

So . . .

Well, anything else you'd like to say?

I don't know a thing that I could benefit anybody with, Beverly [*laughs*].

Well, then I'm going to say thank you very much. I have really enjoyed this—this has been fun for me. I don't know about you, but it's been fun for me.

Well, I'm glad you have. It's—it has—it's been interesting for me—to you know—just to—to share my, as I said, I—I feel like I've had a good life and—and I'm looking forward to some more years and [*laughs*] . . .

Absolutely [*laughs*] . . .

. . . some of—some of them would not be something that I would want to do again, but I think we all do that.

Yes, absolutely. Well, thank you.

Well, you're welcome.

And you will—you will get to see a copy or read a copy of this eventually [*laughs*].

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