

Northwest Arkansas Oral History Project  
 Zanetta Reed Bedwell Interview Abstract  
 October 24, 2018

Interviewee	Zanetta Reed Bedwell
Year of birth	1941
Place of birth	Mena, Polk County, Arkansas
Interviewer	Connie Fetters
Interview date	2018-10-24
Interview location	Kindley House; Gravette, Benton County, Arkansas
Keywords	Bedwell, Zanetta Reed Duffy, Glenn Fetters, Connie Gravette, Benton County, Arkansas Automobiles Carnivals and Fairs Education Recreation Schools Small town life Television Tent revivals U.S Postal Service
Description	<p>Zanetta Reed Bedwell describes Gravette (Arkansas) in the 1950s as a great place to grow up. The family rented a 40-acre farm. Her mother traded their dairy products for Bedwell's piano lessons. Her father, the local school's first agriculture teacher, invited students to use the farm for their school projects. Gravette bustled with a variety of shopping, worship, education, and recreation opportunities. Bedwell recalls the name and location of each, saying her family had little need to go anyplace else. If something was not available locally, it was ordered from the Sear's or Penney's catalogs.</p> <p>Residents living in and around Gravette came to town on Saturday nights. Someone would be lucky enough to win \$100 in groceries. Most drove cars, but at least one family came by buckboard.</p> <p>Bedwell remembers watching Post Office staff put the mail out for the train; her father buying the only car Kaiser-Frasier had in stock; the carnival's (wintering in Gravette) trapeze artist attending school, everyone serving the tent revival preacher beets, and the murder at the dump on Strawberry Ridge. Gravette offered many activities for its children. For ten cents (until she was twelve), Bedwell and friends enjoyed movies at the Cozy Theater. Other friends, maybe without parental approval, visited the pool hall. TV arrived at her home and that of a neighbor's during her junior high years. To see the screen the blinds were pulled and lights turned off.</p>

	<p>School for Bedwell and her friends was in the building where the Civic Center stands today. She tells how the barracks bought from Camp Crowder by Superintendent Glenn Duffy became her 4-6<sup>th</sup> grade rooms. Furnishings came from army surplus in Ft. Smith. The school grounds would house a bookstore, candy store, and new band room after the old one burned. Following high school graduation, Bedwell went to State Teachers College (Conway Arkansas). In the years that followed she taught in several Missouri and Arkansas schools, including over sixteen years back in Gravette. Many of her junior high students called her Nana. Today, as she walks around Gravette it is not surprising to hear someone call out 'Hi Nana.'</p>
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Interview sidebar	Bedwell recalls the day she rang up the local operator and said "I need to talk to Carolyn. [the operator] replied 'I'm sorry, she and her mother went to Fayetteville shopping.'" [00:22:18]