

Northwest Arkansas Oral History Project  
 Kaye Cotton Interview Abstract  
 May 9, 2019

Interviewee	(Leila) Kaye Cotton
Year of birth	1937
Place of birth	Glenwood, Pike County, Arkansas
Interviewer	Connie Fetters
Interview date	2019-05-09
Interview location	Rogers Historical Museum; Rogers, Benton County, Arkansas
Keywords	<p>Cotton, Kaye          Cotton, Lee          Clark-Will, Sharon Kay          McClure, Ed          Trammell, Richard          Fetters, Connie          Rogers, Benton County, Arkansas          Slidell, Tammany Parish, Louisiana          Texarkana, Bowie County, Texas          Arkansas Public Theatre; Rogers, Benton County, Arkansas          Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art; Bentonville, Benton County, Arkansas          Main Street Rogers (Organization); Rogers, Benton County, Arkansas          Northern Texas University; Denton, Denton County, Texas          Northwest Arkansas Community College, Bentonville, Benton County, Arkansas          Pinnacle Hills Promenade; Rogers, Benton County, Arkansas          Prairie Creek Hickory House; Rogers, Benton County, Arkansas          Rogers Historical Museum; Rogers, Benton County, Arkansas          Acting and Actors          Beaver Lake          Community Concerts (Company)          Newspapers          Theatre          U.S. Chamber of Commerce</p>
Description	<p>Kaye Cotton shares highlights from her busy life. She's enjoyed three exciting careers, served as Rogers' Chamber of Commerce first female manager, acted in community theaters, and enjoyed living in a changing Rogers</p>

community.

Cotton, born in Glenwood Arkansas, spent parts of her childhood in Galveston, Texarkana, and Pueblo (CO). Already in these early years she showed talent in art and theater that she would use throughout her adult life. In high school, Cotton and her cousin Peggy were known for their lip-sync pantomime programs. When Cotton became art editor of the school newspaper, she was on the path to her first career.

Shortly after high school graduation in Texarkana, Cotton became a writer, and later editor, for the local paper. Deciding she wanted more education she enrolled at North Texas State Teachers College. While she completed her majors in journalism and theater, she met and married Lee. Lee's years in the Marines and later as a Delta pilot took the family to homes in Florida, Texas, South Carolina, and Louisiana. Cotton continued her work in newspapers and acted in community theaters at each stop.

It was during the family's time in Louisiana that Cotton began her next career. She became manager of Slidell's Chamber of Commerce. She assumed a similar position in Tarpon Springs Florida before getting the position in Rogers in 1982. Cotton credits her experience with tourism, along with interest in art and theater, for being offered the position. She also thanks a forward-looking Chamber and the support of Richard Trammel. Cotton shares stories of the successes and challenges of being Rogers' first female in this position.

During her tenure at the Chamber, Cotton, S.K. Clark-Will, Ed McClure, and a group of residents created the Rogers Little Theater (today Arkansas Public Theatre). Cotton became active, acting and directing productions.

Productions in the first season (1986) included one of Cotton's favorites, *Barefoot in the Park*. She remembers the group working to obtain performance venues that ranged from the local schools, to an old hotel, to the Prairie Creek Hickory House.

Following her years at the Chamber, Cotton began work for Community Concerts. In this career, Cotton worked with communities to provide concerts based on their residents' interests. She notes this career may have been her best. It included working with the arts, plus lots of time for travel with her husband.

Cotton remembers the many changes in Rogers during her years with the Chamber. She points to Rogers getting a branch of the community college and the Main Street

	<p>Rogers effort as instrumental in the growth of Rogers. Each added to making Rogers a wonderful place to live and raise a family. Later changes she embraced were the coming of the airport, interstate, Pinnacle Hills Promenade, Crystal Bridges, and health care facilities.</p> <p>If you meet Cotton in downtown Rogers, be sure to ask her about her home on Beaver Lake, family, or time spent volunteering at the Rogers Historical Museum. She'll tell you life in Rogers 'it's paradise.'</p>
Duration	80 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	<a href="http://pryorcenter.uark.edu">http://pryorcenter.uark.edu</a>
Questions or Comments	<a href="https://nwaoralhistory.org">https://nwaoralhistory.org</a>
Interview sidebar	<p>Kaye Cotton recalls the work that went into forming the Rogers Little Theater...it took the support of the Chamber of Commerce, S.K. Clark-Will, and 30 people who turned up for the first meeting..."each had an area of theatre...someone for light and sound, construction, stage building...we [had] performers, directors...we could do this" [00:46:13]</p>