

Northwest Arkansas Oral History Project  
 Marianne Farner Interview Abstract  
 May 6, 2019

Interviewee	Marianne Farner
Year of birth	1942
Place of birth	Houston, Harris County, Texas
Interviewer	Beverley Helton
Interview date	2019-05-06
Interview location	Bella Vista Historical Museum; Bella Vista, Benton County, Arkansas
Keywords	<p>Farner, Marianne          Farner, Robert Douglass          Helton, Beverley          Bella Vista, Benton County, Arkansas          Hot Springs Village, Garland County, Arkansas          Houston, Harris County, Texas          Bella Vista Public Library; Bella Vista, Benton County, Arkansas          Midwestern State University; Wichita Falls, Wichita County, Texas          P.E.O. (Organization)          St. Theodore's Episcopal Church; Bella Vista, Benton County, Arkansas          Texas Woman's University; Denton, Denton County, Texas          Book clubs          City government          Libraries          Management          Volunteerism</p>
Description	<p>Marianne Farner remembers her parents teaching her valuable life lessons. Her father passed along his love of reading, art, and an ongoing curiosity. From her mother, came the goal of being kind to everyone. Farner listened!</p> <p>Farner tells of her maternal grandparents' families leaving Germany to farm in Texas. Her paternal grandfather tells the story of the illegitimate English Duke ancestor who, arriving in pre-revolutionary America, took the name Hooke after the family estate on the hook of a river.</p> <p>Born in Houston, Farner lived in a "airplane bungalow" with her dad's art studio in the home's one upstairs room. Farner has several of his paintings in her home in Bella Vista. She remembers the two of them reading from a set of Encyclopedia Britannica each night. As a family, they became members of the local Episcopal Church.</p> <p>Following her college years at Baylor University and Midwestern State University, Farner had a successful career in education and raised a family. In 1988, she and Doug Farner married. Together they share four daughters, eight grandchildren, and five great grandchildren. It was Doug who encouraged Farner to</p>

	<p>go back to school. At age 50, she received her master's degree in Library Science from Texas Woman's University. Farner taught English and later served as librarian in the Richardson (TX) School District.</p> <p>The Farner's original plans included retiring to Hot Springs Village. Those plans changed when the couple visited Bella Vista in the 1990s. They fell in love with its 'absolute beauty' and location away from the big city, but not too remote. In 2002, the Farners moved permanently to Bella Vista. Farner considers change a part of life, pointing to the transition of Bella Vista from a village to a city and changes of the role of the Property Owners Association. What hasn't changed are the many opportunities to get involved.</p> <p>Not ones 'to sit on their hands' the Farners quickly became, and remain, an active part of NWA and Bella Vista. Early days meant long rides in the surrounding area, shopping at the local Harp's or Bentonville Walmart, and becoming active in St. Theodore's Episcopal Church.</p> <p>Farner's background in libraries (and love of reading) led her to volunteer to shelve books at the Bella Vista Library. That lead to her becoming a member of the Library's Board of Trustees and serving as Library Director for six years. There were successes, along with challenges, as the Library transitioned from a private to a public city library.</p> <p>Farner shared her favorite stories of those years including finding funds to keep the Library functioning, appreciating the work of library volunteers, and inviting the 'library dog' to visit. She enjoyed those years, letting her philosophy to "treat people the way they deserve to be treated' guide her interactions with library patrons, staff, and officials. Many consider that she saved the Library and helped it move forward.</p> <p>Today Farner serves on the Library Advisory Board and is actively engaged in the current library expansion project. Other reading-related endeavors include assisting library staff with book selection, giving book talks, and participating in several book clubs. She can also be found giving her time to various ministries at St. Theodore's, being a member of P.E.O., and supporting Doug's civic involvement. Yet, there is always time for family...she and Doug enjoy cruising and regularly plan family visits.</p> <p>A life of reading, curiosity, kindness, and family...yes, she listened.</p>
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Questions or Comments	<a href="https://nwaoralhistory.org">https://nwaoralhistory.org</a>
Interview sidebar	Farner's love of reading continues. She does what she calls book talks. "I take some of the books I've read in my book discussion groups and create a program where I describe a bit about each book. I give the group a bibliography...and they can check off if it's something they'd like to read. They have been well received. I am happy to do it." [00:29:27]