

Northwest Arkansas Oral History Project
Robert Douglass Farner Interview Abstract
May 13, 2019

Interviewee	Robert Douglass (Doug) Farner
Year of birth	1939
Place of birth	New Jersey
Interviewer	Barbara Knotts
Interview date	2019-05-13
Interview location	Bella Vista Historical Museum; Bella Vista, Benton County, Arkansas
Keywords	Farner, Robert Douglass Farner, Marianne Anderson, Frank Christie, Peter A. Knotts, Barbara Bella Vista; Benton County, Arkansas Gravette; Benton County, Arkansas Hiwasse, Benton County, Arkansas St. Theodore's Episcopal Church; Bella Vista, Benton County, Arkansas The Citadel; Charleston, Charleston County, South Carolina Property Owners Association; Bella Vista, Benton County, Arkansas Annexation City government Cuban missile crisis Libraries Model railroading Politics Roads Textile industry Volunteerism U. S. Air Force Walmart
Description	When Robert Douglass Farner moved to Bella Vista from Dallas, he brought a background of military and business experience along with the 'desire for a 'working retirement.' It would not be long before his new hometown put those traits to work. Farner spent his childhood in New Jersey, Massachusetts, and North Carolina. High school included balancing studies with a night job at the textile plant. College years were spent at The Citadel developing the credo of truth he's used since, making the Dean's list thanks to a professor who taught him how to study, and getting a degree in accounting and business. Three years as an officer in the U.S. Air Force followed graduation. Stationed in Turkey during the Cuban missile crises, his was 'one of the fingers on the button.' Farner comments "that every young person should get out of the country and see how the rest of the

	<p>world lives.”</p> <p>After the military, career moves took Farner to Indiana; Memphis, Tennessee; and Dallas, Texas. He spent years in the financial side of the music business and running his own investment business. One constant, his love of model railroading, followed him wherever he called home.</p> <p>A 1992 Razorback football game against The Citadel paved the way for the Farners to move permanently to Bella Vista. Farner, his wife (Marianne), and fellow Texan Citadel alumni came for the game, staying in Bella Vista. For Farner and Marianne Bella Vista with its hills, trees, location fairly close to their daughters in Dallas, and cooler temperatures was the answer to their retirement plans. Or, maybe it was the fact The Citadel beat the Razorbacks.</p> <p>Within a year of relocation to Bella Vista, Farner’s retirement became his ‘working retirement’. He began by volunteering for Property Owners Association (POA) committees. Later he was elected to the POA Board.</p> <p>At this time there was momentum to incorporate Bella Vista, transferring it from a village to city. Farner explains he supported this as a way to acquire State funding for the community’s future. Farners’ stories take listeners into those days; with the need for election law changes, the 2006 incorporation election, his election to the City Council, and day 1 of the new City of Bella Vista in January 2007. He credits the success of those first days/years to first mayor (Frank Anderson) having a plan, the hard work of the five City Council members, and the community’s backing. Wards were set up, ordinances written, and relationships between City and POA formalized. The years that followed presented challenges, accomplishments, and disappointments. Issues he and the new City addressed included implementation of sales tax, upgrading Gordon Hollow Road, annexation of Hiwasse to Gravette, redrawing of community boundaries, development opportunities with Walmart, and election of mayor Peter Christie to follow Anderson.</p> <p>The move to Bella Vista may have been a ‘working retirement’, but it was also a time for “personal retirement”. He and Marianne remain active in community life fundraising for the Bella Vista Public Library’s expansion and participating in the growth of the St. Theodore’s Episcopal Church. But there is plenty of time for cruising, golf, visiting or having family visit, and more model railroading.</p>
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Questions or Comments	https://nwaoralhistory.org
Interview sidebar	Farner points proudly to his role in the passage of the ordinance that called for for the election of at-large City Council members. Each member had to live in the ward they represented but were elected by all the voters. "I really pushed for all to run at-large...every citizen voted for everyone...made me more responsive as an alderman and 'care about [what goes on in all wards'." [00:35:19]