

Northwest Arkansas Oral History Project
 Susan Kay Holland Interview Abstract
 June 12, 2019

Interviewee	Susan Kay Holland
Year of birth	1946
Place of birth	Bentonville, Benton County, Arkansas
Interviewer	Connie Fetters
Interview date	2019-06-12
Interview location	Kindley House; Gravette, Benton County, Arkansas
Keywords	<p>Holland, Susan Kay Douglas, Bruce Maxwell Douglas, Mary Orpha Evans, Dodie Fetters, Connie Gentry, Benton County, Arkansas Gravette, Benton County, Arkansas Highfill, Benton County, Arkansas Gravette Historical Museum; Gravette, Benton County, Arkansas Bushwhackers Cemeteries Daughters of the American Revolution (Organization) Jehovah's Witnesses (Organization) Newspaper industry Newspapers Politics Radio Recreation Roads Small town life Television U.S. Civil War Water supply Westside Eagle Observer (Newspaper) World War II</p>
Description	<p>Long "a fan of a good story", reporter Susan Kay Holland, is known for her stories of people and events in Northwest Arkansas. In this interview, she shares personal stories about her family's deep roots and life in Northwest Arkansas, career in a changing newspaper industry, and views on the changes she's experienced.</p> <p>Interest in local history comes naturally to Holland. Her ancestors came to Northwest Arkansas from Tennessee. There are family stories of burials in the Douglas and Bethel Cemeteries, Civil War Bushwhackers taking the family food, farming in Highfill, her dad's collection of historical maps, and generations of family serving in political positions. Holland's dad served on the Gravette City Council and as County Tax Collector.</p>

While he served in World War II, Holland's mother filled the position. She later ran and was re-elected. Holland, born in Bentonville, moved to Gravette at age two. She lives there today. Both her parents were avid readers, an interest Holland shared with her brother and an uncle who read Braille books. Holland's stories of her childhood highlight her delight at growing up in Gravette, spending time on the farm, running in the fields with cousins, going to Noel with dad for cheaper gas, attending the Methodist church, listening to the radio, and watching sitcoms and cowboy programs on the family TV acquired when she was in junior high.

After receiving her bachelor's and master's degrees from the University of Arkansas, Holland taught briefly in Jay (OK) and Green Forest (AR). Her career path changed when her brother bought the newspaper in Gentry. As Holland says, 'the rest is history.' She would work in all facets at several newspapers; reporting, writing, proofing, editing, page building, taking photos, and printing. After working at the Gentry paper, Holland went to work for the paper in Gravette with Dodie Evans. She wrote what her editor called a folksy column, "Susan Says". While Holland would go on to write all types of stories, she considers the column a favorite assignment.

Holland's experiences in the newspaper industry illustrate how it continues to change. Digital editions and social media postings are common, small-town newspapers are closed or merged, and local offices are replaced with reporters working from their homes. Today, Holland's office is in her home. She is the only person covering Gravette, Siloam Springs, Maysville, and Hiwasse. People with story ideas leave them attached to a clothes pin on her porch. She calls the newspaper industry a 'fascinating business [that] kept me up with what's going on in the community.'

Holland shares her thoughts about changes in the Gravette community. Today the farming community she grew up in is more about industry, tourism, and new residents. With these changes come issues related to traffic and clean water. She voices concerns over loss of traditions and native crafts, stating 'no one sews.' Holland hopes families will use their roots and heritage to help preserve history and allow generations to stay connected. To promote this idea, Holland shares observations of the interest shown by Gravette Museum Commission members and her involvement with a Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) project.

In addition to reading and reporting, Holland and her husband go to the Gravette Kingdom Hall (Jehovah Witness) together. She enjoys a quilting class, mostly for refreshment and fellowship. A people-person like her dad, Holland loves working and talking with people. Gravette is changing. But people continue to greet each other and share their "clues for stories". For Holland, living here is better than in any large city.

Duration	89 minutes
Audio File Format	MP3
Images	Yes
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Website URL	http://pryorcenter.uark.edu
Questions or Comments	https://nwaoralhistory.org
Interview sidebar	Holland says of her column " <i>Susan Says</i> "..."I wrote it for many years...I wrote about things I liked; what I was reading, interesting people...a lot about cooking and eating...people said 'I like reading your column to see what you had for supper last week.'" [00:36:25]