

Northwest Arkansas Oral History Project
 Troy Lee Almand Interview Abstract
 January 17, 2019

Interviewee	Troy Lee Almand
Year of birth	1933
Place of birth	Estancia, Torrance County, New Mexico
Interviewer	Camille Hatcher
Interview date	2019-01-17
Interview location	Almand home; Bentonville, Benton County, Arkansas
Keywords	<p>Almand, Troy Lee Almand, Joan Cunningham, Sadie Dranow, Alan French, Harrison French, Rhonda Jones, E. Fay Keith, E. L. Linebarger, C. A. Shewmaker, Jack Shewmaker, Melba Walton, Sam Hatcher, Camille Cooper Communities, Inc. Harding University; Searcy, White County, Arkansas Bella Vista, Benton County, Arkansas Bentonville, Benton County, Arkansas Holiday Island, Carroll County, Arkansas Tucumcari, Quay County, New Mexico Architects Furniture making Homes and homebuilding Interior design Military Walmart</p>
Description	<p>When teenager Troy Lee Almand got on the bus in Tucumcari, New Mexico, little did he know the life, family, and "family of friends" that awaited him in Bentonville. He would find that with the people of the Ozarks...[there was] always someone who wanted to help.</p> <p>Born in 1933, times were hard. Almand learned at an early age to work hard and save, saying "you might never get it again." There were good memories: time spent with his older sister, games with Native American friends, and learning recipes from his grandmother. His enchiladas are still requested.</p> <p>Not long after arriving in Bentonville in 1950, Almand went looking for a job to make a little money. He impressed Sam Walton enough to give Almand a job at 30 cents an hour.</p>

	<p>Walton soon raised the wage to 35 cents an hour. Thus, began a relationship that lasted until Walton's death and continues today with the Walton Family and Foundation. He credits Walton with lessons learned and the comment "if someone brings something back they're not happy with, try to satisfy them". That became a part of Almand's business philosophy.</p> <p>In the years that followed, Almand would serve in the military, work for Kraft foods, and attend Harding University. He married Joan and they raised their family. These experiences added to his love of family, work ethic, and strong faith.</p> <p>During this time, Almand's gift for furniture making took him into a new path; that as a business owner for a company finishing home interiors. What began as cabinetmaking jobs evolved into working as a subcontractor for the Cooper Communities as the company developed Bella Vista. Almand looks back on working in the homes of the Billingsley and Basore families, along with other well-known Bella Vista area residents, C. A. Linebarger, E. L. Keith, and Sadie Cunningham. For some of these projects he collaborated with architects, E Fay Jones and Harrison French. Condos at Holiday Island and the Jack and Melba Shewmaker home in Bentonville were other projects of Almand's. With each project he added to his 'family of friends' – both homeowners and the artisans and craftsmen involved in the projects.</p> <p>Almand and wife, Joan, moved to another home in Bentonville about three years ago with help from daughter Rhonda French. The new home is smaller, but it has a shop. Here he continues to build furniture; now the pieces are for their children and grandchildren. He is close to both family and his 'family of friends'. Almand refers to them as "allowing him to be who he is and he allows them to be who they are...you learn from others and pass it along."</p>
Duration	84 minutes
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Questions or Comments	https://nwaoralhistory.org
Interview sidebar	<p>Walmart stockholders attending the 2015 Annual Meeting likely shook Almand's hand in their visit to the Walmart Museum. After writing an appreciative letter to the Walton Foundation that year, Walmart executive, Alan Dranow, asked Almand to be part of the 'meet and greet'. He's returned each year since. He describes 'drifting up [to the Walton Museum] when the buses start coming in', shaking hands and signing autographs.</p>