

Northwest Arkansas Oral History Project
 Faye Blair Interview Abstract
 September 4, 2019

Interviewee	Faye Blair
Year of birth	1946
Place of birth	Witter, Arkansas
Interviewer	Barbara Knotts
Interview date	2019-04-04
Interview location	Kindley House; Gravette, Benton County, Arkansas
Keywords	<p>Blair, Faye Autry, Gene Blair, Alfred Cleveland, Grover Dyer, Olin Hall, Billy Dr Smith, Bobby Knotts, Barbara Gravette, Benton County, Arkansas Witter, Madison County, Arkansas Boeing; Wichita, Sedgwick County, Kansas Gravette United Methodist Church; Gravette, Benton County, Arkansas McAllisters Grocery; Gravette, Benton County, Arkansas Peterson Farms Inc; Decatur, Benton County, Arkansas Chinquapin (chinky pin) tree Education Farming Hospitals Gravette Days Celebration Railroads Recreation Roads Small town life Water supply World War II</p>
Description	<p>Faye Blair tells stories that will interest everyone. Each listener will have a favorite -- from rattlesnakes to Gene Autry; from living in the 'backwoods' without modern conveniences to living for five decades in her Gravette home; from thoughts about what's changed to what's stayed the same in her lifetime. Blair was born in 1946 in, as she calls it, the 'backwoods' near Huntsville. A small baby, when she was about a week old her parents took her to a country store to be weighed. With a high death rate in the area, people came to see her. Blair's parents and relatives lived in homes they built around grandmother's home. That was how things were done. Her father seldom went to town. That meant navigating a path along the bluff and</p>

	<p>crossing creeks. Hard enough with a wagon; more hazardous when cars appeared. Water was hauled up by hand from the creek and beds had homemade quilts so thick they could almost smother you. Babies came frequently; siblings became responsible for each other. Blair and her brother Bobby played together as children picking chinky pins. They began a life-long love of farming. Today, Monday mornings find the two of them sitting at Blair's Gravette home discussing how good the hay is. Blair left the Huntsville area and moved to Gravette when she was four. Grandparents, the Porters, lived almost next door. No matter where Blair lived growing up she, her six siblings, and many cousins were allowed to be outside or in Blair's words "run wild. Family was near: it was safe. One time when rattlesnakes got too close to their homes, the family set the snakes' home (a cistern) on fire. To this day rattlesnakes are not her favorite. Married at age 15, Blair's first husband, Olin Dyer, was an mechanic from Oklahoma. He worked for Boeing, served in World War II, and for one project fixed the pedal in Gene Autry's airplane so he could wear boots. Blair raised her four children with the goal of giving them the freedom Blair experienced as a child. In a favorite story, one son wandered away from the house only to be found sitting on their cow swatting the flies. Other memories from those years include missing the weekly drawing at McAllisters to give birth to her fourth child, the changes in hospitals and schools, and learning to drive a car. Blair worked in research and development on chickens at Peterson Farms. This work added to her love of animals, especially birds.</p> <p>Blair and her family have called the farm on Gravette's Sixth Avenue their home for fifty years. The property includes land that is surrounded by a bluff and land parcels once owned by Dr. Billy Hall and the railroad. While now inside the city limits, the property's agriculture status allows Blair to continue farming. Following the death of Blair's first husband, she met Alfred Blair. Married for twenty-five years, she recalls their meeting when "my life lit up". Alfred is active in the Methodist Church, Gravette Day, and civic groups. Blair reminds listeners that farming does not allow much spare time. But when Alfred is involved in anything, she is there to support him. For her, women "take care of their husbands".</p> <p>Blairs discusses other changes: the value of the overpass, but her belief that railroad congestion is replaced by truck congestion; the trend of families, friends, and communities to grow and live apart; and the evolving Gravette landscape. For Blair life will always revolve around family and farming.</p>
Duration	65 minutes
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Producer	Northwest Arkansas Oral History Project

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Interview sidebar	Blair recalls as a child "having to walk down a hill and into a gully to get water out of a stream. We'd have to carry it up the stream in a bucket to grandma's house...boy that was a job. [I] was happy when they got a well." [00:2:08]