

Northwest Arkansas Oral History Project  
 Jerry C. Clark Interview Abstract  
 July 12, 2019

Interviewee	Jerry C. Clark
Year of birth	1938
Place of birth	Bentonville, Benton County, Arkansas
Interviewer	Camille Hatcher
Interview date	2019-07-12
Interview location	Bentonville Public Library; Bentonville, Benton County, Arkansas
Keywords	Clark, Jerry C. Black, John Black, Hugh 'Tater' Braithwaite, Willard Clark, Grace Grosvenor Clark, Willard Clinton, Bill Dickerson, Arthur (Rabbit) Fields, Harley Fields, Jewel Fulbright, J. McClellan, John L. Mills, Wilbur Tyson, Don Walton, Alice Walton, Bud Walton, Sam Hatcher, Camille Bentonville, Benton County, Arkansas Hindsville, Madison County, Arkansas Springdale, Benton County, Arkansas Arkansas Regional Airport; Bentonville, Benton County Arkansas Benton County Fair; Bentonville, Benton County, Arkansas Benton County Poor House; Bentonville, Benton County, Arkansas Airports Apples Beaver Lake Cemeteries Chinquapin (chinky pin) tree Communications Electricity KAMO (radio station) Liquor Newspapers Polio Politics Radio

	Railroads Roads Schools Small town life Sulky harness racing Telephones Television Theatre Weather Water supply World War II Rationing Stamps Program
Description	<p>A good title for Jerry C. Clark's interview would be "been there, remember when, knew them". Combine living in Northwest Arkansas for over 80 years, an interest in history, and a strong work ethic – the result is an interview of nonstop stories. Born in Bentonville in 1938, when Clark was three his parents moved the family to the 80-acre farm located near today's Highway 71/49 exit 88. Members of the family continue to reside on that land. In June 2019 the family had its 59<sup>th</sup> consecutive family reunion there. Family also continues to get together north of Hindsville where his parents, Grace and Willard, met.</p> <p>Clark attended the one room Valley View school. He tells why Mrs. Jewel Fields was a favorite teacher, of riding his horse to the nearby cave and creek to eat lunch from a gallon bucket, of participating in holiday programs on the school's stage, and sweeping up chinky pins. Everyone helped on the farm but there was time to have popcorn and listen to the Lone Ranger on the battery radio. Knowing the name of the Lone Ranger's horse won Clark a radio contest. Life meant living with a sister who had polio, bartering or using ration stamps, and living through the 1947 cyclone. There were trips to town (Bentonville) to visit with friends, listen to western swing on the Square, watch the trains, or check out the Japanese submarine at the Benton County Fair.</p> <p>By fourth grade Clark displayed his independent streak and willingness to work hard. He worked for a neighbor who paid him mostly with an Eskimo Pie. By ninth grade Clark had lived with a grandmother and a aunt to help out. He rented a room in Bentonville to attend city schools. Those were the days you could park your car between the goal posts to get the best seat at the football games, march in the Homecoming parade, see sulky harness races, and drag race out at the airport. Clark graduated in 1957 and remains the class's historian.</p> <p>Working with cars during his high school years led to a job as parts manager for Chevy in Springdale following graduation. He used the Sears catalog to learn the parts. After a partnership in an auto business, Clark moved to positions as a loan officer and in real estate development.</p> <p>Stories of Clark's life-long interest in radio include memories of</p>

	<p>station KAMO, teaching himself about radio communications, and assembling pagers. He turned this interest into a thriving business of building cell towers in Northwest Arkansas. Radio and television stations, along with fire and police departments, bought or leased transmission access on the twenty-nine cell towers his company built and operated. Six years ago, he and his wife sold their business.</p> <p>Always believing "if it's going to happen, it's up to you," Clark spent over twenty-two years holding civic positions in Springdale. Those included ones with the fire and police departments, city council, and the planning commission. Clark led changes to allow police to have their own official cars. He designed communication systems for Springdale and Benton County governments.</p> <p>Thinking about changes to the Northwest Arkansas area, Clark emphasizes water (Beaver Lake), money (the Walton and Tyson families), and the Regional Airport for current prosperity. He credits the role of federal, state, and local officials for their support.</p> <p>The interview shares stories of well-known local citizens including the Black Family (John and Tater), the Walton Family (Sam, Bud, and Alice), Albert 'Rabbit' Dickerson (the shoeshine man), the Braithwaite Family (Willard's fieldstone house), Rose (the telephone operator), and others who make Bentonville special. And, then there are stories about the Benton County Poor House, alcohol and Benton County, local newspapers, and using the honor system to pay for city utilities.</p> <p>Nineteen years ago Clark and his wife moved back to Bentonville from Springdale. With their communications business sold, Clark stays active working on his pieces of local property and spending time on their property in Winslow.</p>
Duration	100 minutes
Audio File Format	MP3
Images	Yes
Producer	Northwest Arkansas Oral History Project
Copyright	Pryor Center for Arkansas Oral and Visual History, University of Arkansas
Website URL	<a href="http://pryorcenter.uark.edu">http://pryorcenter.uark.edu</a>
Questions or Comments	<a href="https://nwaoralhistory.org">https://nwaoralhistory.org</a>
Interview sidebar	<p>A paradise for kids. That's what Clark calls Harley Fields's barbershop. "Back on the south wall there's a place to get your shoes shined...beside that a cubbyhole with display for your shaving mug, little square pockets where everyone who came in kept their own shaving mug and brush...the old timers didn't shave at home...they came in for their morning shave." [01:27:05]</p>