

Northwest Arkansas Oral History Project  
 Richard Irvine Daniel Interview Abstract  
 June 10, 2019

Interviewee	Richard Irvine Daniel
Year of birth	1926
Place of birth	Detroit, Wayne County, Michigan
Interviewer	Beverley Helton
Interview date	2019-06-10
Interview location	Apple Blossom Retirement Home; Rogers, Benton County, Arkansas
Keywords	<p>Daniel, Richard Irvine          Daniel, Jane Anne Lyons          Barkley, Jane          Jones, Martha          Helton, Beverley          Plymouth, Wayne County, Michigan          Rogers, Benton County, Arkansas          Daisy Company; Rogers, Benton County, Arkansas          First Presbyterian Church; Rogers, Benton County, Arkansas          University of Michigan; Ann Arbor, Washtenaw County, Michigan          University of Notre Dame; Notre Dame, St. Joseph County, Indiana          "A Christmas Story" (Film)          Depressions, economic          Rotary (Organization)          U. S. Chamber of Commerce          V-12 Navy College Training Program          Walton Family Foundation          World War II</p>
Description	<p>In 1958 Daisy Manufacturing moved from Michigan to Northwest Arkansas. What began as a temporary move to Rogers for its employee, Richard Irvine Daniel, resulted in a lifetime of business and community leadership. To acknowledge his influence and contributions, the Rogers Rotary Club created the Dick Daniel Distinguished Citizen Award.</p> <p>Daniel's family history includes ancestors who came to the United States from Ireland, Scotland, and Germany. Family members settled in the Detroit Michigan area, some working for Henry Ford. After sharing family stories about these ancestors, the interview continues with stories of Daniel's life and career. Daniel's family moved from Detroit to nearby Plymouth. Here he, his brother and sister grew up during the Depression years. While Daniel's dad always had a job, he remembers friends whose families struggled to survive. School was not easy for Daniel, but with help from his mother his grades improved. Graduating from high school during World War II, Daniel was admitted to V-12 Navy College Training program at Notre Dame. This program was designed to supplement the force of</p>

	<p>commissioned officers in the United States Navy during the war. Daniel provides stories about his time in the V-12 program and later serving at sea. When the war ended, Daniel finished his engineering degree at the University of Michigan and married his first wife, Jane Anne. They moved back to Plymouth where he went to work for King-Seeley, making parts for the Ford Motor Company. Daniel's first assignment was to design the switch to alert drivers to low pressure.</p> <p>When a research engineer position at Daisy Manufacturing in Plymouth was offered, Daniel took it. He could walk to work. Little did he realize he would soon move cross country to Northwest Arkansas when Daisy relocated its plant to Rogers. Daniel's stories of his career at Daisy include first-hand accounts of the activities that brought Daisy to Rogers, his tenure as President of the Company, and decision to leave in 1983 when Daisy was sold. The interview describes Daniel's work setting up standards for air guns, Daisy's mission to further gun safety, and how Daisy became involved with the making of the beloved movie, "A Christmas Story."</p> <p>Only 59 years old when he left Daisy, Daniel was far from retirement. He joined what became FM Corporation. His leadership helped bring it back from bankruptcy and saved hundreds of jobs.</p> <p>During his tenure at Daisy and FM, Daniel experienced changes in manufacturing that he believes led to better productivity and helped contribute to the industrial development of the area. Throughout the interview Daniel provides his assessment on the changes Northwest Arkansas has experienced, noting specifically its residents desire for growth and community development. He notes their commitment to opening NWACC, hospital expansion, and the Waltons' support for first-class arts centers.</p> <p>Retiring when he was 72, Daniel stayed active serving on several boards, including the Arvest Bank, CEI Engineering, and the University of the Ozarks. He served as President of both the Rotary and Chamber of Commerce. Daniel discusses his work on the Chamber of Commerce committee to get improved hospital facilities and attract more doctors to the area. In the 1990s, as a member of the First Presbyterian Church, he helped build the new building on New Hope Road.</p> <p>Today [2019] Daniel lives at the Apple Blossom Retirement Home. He considers his life has been a good one. But, it has not been without losses and disappointments and family tragedies. He stays in touch with family of multiple generations, enjoying each of their stories about living in Arizona, China, or Mexico; their successful careers in the banking, automotive, and retail fields; and upcoming graduations. The Daniel Family stories and genealogy continues.</p>
Duration	57 minutes
Audio File Format	MP3

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Questions or Comments	<a href="https://nwaoralhistory.org">https://nwaoralhistory.org</a>
Interview sidebar	Daniel says of the Daisy employees "when we moved here [1958] it was a collection of people who were independent, competent, underemployed...our employees had farm backgrounds...when we needed to fix something they knew how to fix it...we were surprised how invested they were in wanting to make the company successful." [00:49:03]