

Northwest Arkansas Oral History Project
 Robert (Dodie) Evans Interview Abstract
 May 10, 2018

Interviewee	Robert (Dodie) Evans
Year of birth	1935
Place of birth	Sulfur Springs, Benton County, Arkansas
Interviewer	Connie Fetters
Interview date	2018-05-10
Interview location	Kindley House; Gravette, Benton County, Arkansas
Keywords	<p>Evans, Robert (Dodie) Evans, Louise Hall, Billy Dr. Fetters, Connie Beaver Lake Bella Vista, Benton County, Arkansas Gravette, Benton County, Arkansas Hiwasse, Benton County, Arkansas Sulfur Springs, Benton County, Arkansas Arkansas Regional Airport; Bentonville, Benton County, Arkansas John Brown University; Siloam Springs, Benton County, Arkansas Kindley House; Gravette, Benton County, Arkansas, Gravette Historical Museum; Gravette, Benton County Arkansas Gravette Public Library; Gravette, Benton County, Arkansas Pea Ridge National Military Park; Garfield; Benton County, Arkansas Ozark Community Hospital; Gravette; Benton County, Arkansas Quorum Court; Bentonville, Benton County, Arkansas Airports Annexation Depressions, economic Doctors Education Future Poet of Arkansas Award Hospitals Newspapers Poetry Politics Shelling plants Small town life Streets Transportation Walmart Water supply</p>
Description	Residents of the western areas of Benton County likely know Robert (Dodie) Evans as the longtime owner and editor of the Gravette News Herald newspaper or as the official serving

	<p>Gravette and Benton County residents. How many know his family immigrated from Turkey, he grew up in Sulfur Springs, and he was once named Arkansas' Poet of the Future? Listen to this interview and hear Evans discuss these events.</p> <p>Evans grew up in Sulfur Springs. Life in Sulfur Springs was good, even during the Depression years. He continued to live there after he graduated from high school in 1952, went to John Brown University, and got a job at the newspaper in Gravette. Evans remembers riding his bike to that job until he bought his first car, a Ford. That led him to become a 'lawbreaker' -- not knowing how to drive a stick shift, he coasted through the stop light.</p> <p>In another story, Evans tells us he was named 1960 Poet of the Future for the State of Arkansas. This followed the publication of a book of his poems entitled, "Dark Days and Black Nights." Years later he would write the forward to the book for Gravette's Bicentennial in 1993.</p> <p>Evans bought the Gravette newspaper in the 1960s, owning it until the 1980s. During this time he became active in political life, serving on the Gravette City Council and Benton County Quorum Court. In the past 80+ years he's witnessed Benton County going from a population of 30,000 to about 250,000 and Gravette moving from an agricultural community to small town and city.</p> <p>Evans believes 'it takes change.' And change he has seen and continues to see. He sees a bright future for Gravette as new homes and business come to the city. More businesses will lead to added population and more employment.</p> <p>Growth in the western areas of the county may be slower than other areas, but Evans points to the impact of the changes he's experienced. While on the Gravette City Council he saw streets that had been covered with residue from the local shelling plant become paved. An article he wrote about the proposed annexation of Hiwasse spurred debate. The growth of Bella Vista brought changes to the Gravette School District. The reopening of a hospital in Gravette brought needed medical services. His part in Gravette's Bicentennial celebrations in 1993 help bring pride and people to the area.</p> <p>Changes during Evans' terms on the Quorum Court meant better funding and added development for both Benton County and Gravette. Gravette benefitted from access to a better water supply from Beaver Lake, the airport becoming a reality, and the opening of the Pea Ridge Military Park.</p> <p>Like other changes, Evans believes the growth of Walmart to be good and bad. It added employment opportunities, but negatively impacted some small businesses. Walmart has been supportive of the Gravette Library and Historical Museum, both organizations Evans and his wife, Louise, actively support.</p>
Duration	48 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	http://pryorcenter.uark.edu
Questions or Comments	https://nwaoralhistory.org
Interview sidebar	Evans observes `quite a portion of west Bella Vista is in the Gravette School District and that growth has enabled the Gravette School District to move forward to a level that I never expected... the Bella Vista people and the Gravette people work together well fostering this growth for the educational system.” [00:27:13]