

Northwest Arkansas Oral History Project  
Tennie Russell Interview Abstract  
June 11, 2019

Interviewee	Tennie Russell
Year of birth	1924
Place of birth	Iceledo, Newton County, Arkansas
Interviewer	Camille Hatcher
Interview date	2019-06-11
Interview location	Russell home; Bentonville, Benton County, Arkansas
Keywords	<p>Russell, Tennie  Russell, Robert  Baggett, Mary  Clinton, Bill  Clinton, Hillary  Linebarger, C. A.  Taylor, Rusus  Taylor, Sara  Hatcher, Camille  Bella Vista, Benton County, Arkansas  Bentonville, Benton County, Arkansas  Iceledo, Newton County, Arkansas  Dixie Belle Café; Bentonville, Benton County, Arkansas  Newton County Academy  Tennie Russell Primary School; Bentonville, Benton County, Arkansas  Arizona Diamondbacks (Baseball team)  Canning and preserving  Education  Farming  Moonshiners  Sewing  U.S. Postal Service  World War II</p>
Description	<p>Tennie Russell grew up in a home that valued education. Due to the efforts of her father, Rusus Taylor, Tennie and her sister would finish grade school in rural Newton (AR) County and go on to graduate from high school. As an adult, Tennie would get college degrees, teach, and have a school named in her honor. Russell wishes her parents would have been alive to see her get her college degrees.</p> <p>Russell's father farmed and worked for the U.S. Postal Service. He also served as a Justice of the Peace, would read law books he got from a friend, and attended Newton County Academy. The neighbors looked to him for legal advice. One time the county sheriff came to take her father with him to check out the moonshiners. Russell remembers canning and sewing with her mother; mother had the only sewing machine in the community.</p>

	<p>Mother, Sara Taylor, served as postmistress. Russell's birth community, Iceledo, no longer exists. But when she was a child, it had a school that her father made sure she and her sister attended. When it came time for high school, Russell went to live with family and friends in Bentonville. There was no high school in her community.</p> <p>Life in Bentonville was quite a change for the girl from Iceledo. Her aunt and uncle worked for the Linebarger family in Bella Vista managing the swimming pool and cabins. There were three theaters and the Dixie Belle Cafe to enjoy with friends and dates. In a class of 55 students, a friend would introduce her to 'an older boy'. She married that boy, Bob Russell, when he returned from serving in the South Pacific in World War II. Following Russell's marriage, she and Bob raised a family. Both found time for college. She used her degrees, including a masters, as an elementary teacher, assistant principal, and principal. Russell loved teaching, sharing that third-grade students were favorites. The Tennie Russell Primary School is named to acknowledge her contributions to Bentonville education.</p> <p>Russell does not consider herself a politician but remembers an informal dinner with Hillary Clinton and attending Bill Clinton's inauguration. It was during the inauguration festivities that a police officer told her to get down from the tree she and friend, Mary Baggett, had climbed to get a better view.</p> <p>Russell's husband died in 1984. In 1990 she retired, spending good times with her family of (in 2019) three children, three grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren. She tells stories of those who live just 'across the pasture' and the one who works for the Arizona Diamondbacks. Russell has traveled around the world with her favorite destination being "wherever I was".</p> <p>When asked how she feels about the changes she's experienced in the Bentonville area, she responds they are both good and bad. While now she must navigate too much traffic, she is impressed with the continually growing caliber of the Bentonville School District. And one thing hasn't changed -- the Bentonville and Rogers rivalry.</p>
Duration	50 minutes
Audio File Format	MP3
Images	Yes
Producer	Northwest Arkansas Oral History Project
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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	Following high school graduation Russell got a job at an army

sidebar	hospital in Arizona. There a fellow said to her "you're a hillbilly [but] you don't act like what I thought a hillbilly would...and I said, well Joe you are from The Bronx and not what I thought the people from The Bronx were like...we learned we were just people." [00:16:01]
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