

Northwest Arkansas Oral History Project
 Charlene Taylor Bennett Interview Abstract
 July 10, 2019

Interviewee	Charlene Taylor Bennett
Year of birth	1938
Place of birth	Rogers, Benton County, Arkansas
Interviewer	Barbara Knotts
Interview date	2019-07-10
Interview location	Taylor Bennett home; Springdale, Washington County, Arkansas
Keywords	<p>Taylor Bennett, Charlene Bennett, Gerald Truman Knotts, Barbara Huntsville, Madison County, Arkansas Springdale, Washington County, Arkansas Drakes Creek Regular Baptist Church; Huntsville, Madison County Arkansas University of Arkansas; Fayetteville, Washington County, Arkansas Arkansas Farm Family of the Year Bushwhackers Depressions, economic Education Farming Folklore Fox hunting Future Homemakers of America (FHA) Medicine Rheumatic fever Roads Teaching methods U.S. Civil War Vocational education Water witching World War II World War II Rationing Stamps Program</p>
Description	<p>Charlene Taylor Bennett is remembered by many as their favorite teacher. This dedication to life-long learning, family, and students is clear in the stories she shares during this interview.</p> <p>No one is more surprised than Taylor Bennett that her career includes 28 years as a literature teacher at Huntsville High School. As a child she missed many months of school recuperating from rheumatic fever. Even when she could attend class, activities were limited by her health. Time was spent at home reading. Getting her college degree meant balancing the challenges of married life, raising three children, and studying. Yet Taylor Bennett's perseverance, along a memorable practice</p>

	<p>teaching experience, resulted in the unexpected: she became an enthusiastic teacher.</p> <p>Throughout the interview Taylor Bennett compares teaching methods and curriculums. There are stories of her student experiences at the vocational high school during the 1950s. Working in actual settings, girls learned the skills of home economics and boys of working in agribusiness. By the time Taylor Bennett began teaching the methods changed. Taylor Bennett adopted her own teaching methods. She required students to write essays on how culture, music, and art influenced the literature. She showed movies, brought in foods, and took students to Britain. Less memorization and reliance on grammar: more on learning.</p> <p>In another story, Taylor Bennett remembered a folklore class she took in college. The assignment was to present 100 items such as recipes, tales, and artifacts. This project led her to explore her family history including her parents Madison County roots, life in the Depression and World War II, her Dad's water witching skills, Grandmother Morris and the Bushwhackers, and the 'cemetery song.'</p> <p>Taylor Bennett's husband, Gerald, owned a truck line that delivered commodities for schools and county seats. That meant living and moving in the Little Rock and Huntsville areas. Then the family moved to the country about 18 miles outside Huntsville. Taylor Bennett tells of life on the Fox Hill farm: building the home; sharing it with the fox hounds, driving on red clay Highway 275, raising cattle, church at Drakes Creek Regular Baptist, and enjoying the view that reaches from Fort Smith to Fayetteville. She recalls time spent with her girls traveling to and from school and trips with the Future Homemakers of America...'for little country girls it was fantastic.' Those same girls made sure there were appetizers and homemade ice cream when the judges came to interview the family for Arkansas Farm Family of Year...the family won!</p> <p>After her husband's death Taylor Bennett moved to Springdale to be nearer her daughters (Samantha, Stacey, Diana). Thanks to wonderful neighbors who lease the land, bought the cattle, and shared her bulbs, Taylor Bennett and her girls continue to enjoy the beauty of Fox Hill Farm. In her words, "her cattle still roam".</p>
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Interview sidebar	Charlene Taylor Bennett remembers her high school years in the vocational technical program: "The home ec cottage...consisted of hardwood floors, living room, kitchen, dining room, and classroom. We were taught everything from nutrition to daily life...we learned how to set a table, all the better things of life..." Every summer the teacher visited each girl to check their home project. [00:36:18]