

Northwest Arkansas Oral History Project
 Constance Virginia Waddell Interview Abstract
 February 20, 2019

Interviewee	Constance Virginia Waddell
Year of birth	1929
Place of birth	Bella Vista, Benton County, Arkansas
Interviewer	Camille Hatcher
Interview date	2019-02-20
Interview location	Waddell home; Rogers, Benton County, Arkansas
Keywords	<p>Waddell, Constance Virginia Linebarger, C. A. Linebarger, Regina May, Whitey Norton, Ferris Waddell, Don Hatcher, Camille Bella Vista, Benton County, Arkansas Bentonville, Benton County, Arkansas Bentonville High School; Bentonville, Benton County, Arkansas Devil's Hole; Bella Vista, Benton County, Arkansas Hendrix College; Conway, Faulkner County, Arkansas Mount Sequoyah Retreat and Conference Center; Fayetteville, Washington County, Arkansas Wonderland Cave; Bella Vista, Benton County, Arkansas Carnivals and Fairs Churches Death Penalty Focus (Organization) First United Methodist Church; Rogers, Benton County, Arkansas Hila Morgan Tent Theatre Medicine Ms. Senior Arkansas Religion "Sally and Me" (Book) Theatre United Methodist Church U.S. Civil War</p>
Description	<p>Constance Waddell calls her life one of 'adventures'. Readers of her book, "Sally and Me", enjoyed her childhood adventures living in Bella Vista. That time was only the beginning of her adventurous life. What followed were high school years spent in Bentonville, finding love and purpose at Hendrix College, and living in forty-one places (so far) as an adult. Not surprising, Waddell's ancestors were adventurers. There was the Civil War surgeon and a grandmother known for traveling Arkansas' backroads to deliver babies. Another grandmother instilled Waddell with a life-long faith. Waddell's father left home at twelve years of age to join the Hila Morgan</p>

Tent Theatre. The family homestead is on the National Historical Register, with Waddell's son living there today.

In this interview, Waddell revisits several of the stories covered in her book, adding memories of the Bella Vista Resort's winery, stable, Sunset Hotel, Pavilion, Plunge and Devil's Hole. In a favorite memory, she describes how water made its way to the cottages. In another, she remembers summer nights with Mom dressed in a gown as the 3000 summer residents danced on a floating dance floor or in the Wonderland Cave's night club. Dad became close to the Linebarger family, with Waddell referring to them as Aunt Re and Uncle C.A.

When Waddell's father, Whitey May, bought a combination store and gas station and moved the family to Bentonville, new adventures awaited. Waddell quickly learned to do everything but change oil. These teenage years meant attending Bentonville High School, having parties with the JUGs (just us girls), and beginning to date at 13. Her dates quickly learned if they wanted a date, they were expected to attend the Methodist church with her.

Waddell's adventures continued when she met her first husband, Ferris Norton, at Hendrix College. Already Waddell realized her life would revolve around full-time Christian service. She and Norton married and began work together in Methodist churches in Texas, Missouri, and Arkansas. They were active in marriage and family ministries. These would be the years where the Norton's, and their four children, found time to design sets and perform in local theatre. Waddell loved playing *Auntie Mame*. Ferris, despite failing health, continued his pastoral counseling studies and duties.

Two and half years after Ferris' death, Waddell married Don Waddell. A Methodist minister, they came to Fayetteville Arkansas in 1985, rejuvenating the Retreat and Conference Center at Mount Sequoyah. Then came their adventures serving the church in Chile and Texas. Later Don's health led them to relocate in Bella Vista where the couple could be seen on their daily walks.

Waddell's later adventures included being chosen Ms. Senior Arkansas and a finalist for Ms. Senior America. The speaking engagements that followed gave her a platform for 'Positive Aspects of Aging.'

Waddell's adventures were far from over. Next came her experiences when she and Don worked with the First United Methodist Church (Rogers Arkansas), took another posting to Chile to set up a retreat center there, and lived in California. During the California years Waddell worked with Mike Farrell on the Death Penalty Focus. Favorite occasions were the trips to Costa Rica and time spent with their blended family of seven children, ten grandchildren, and seven great-grands. Along the way Waddell fulfilled a dream, and promise, to write her book. Now Constance (aged 89) and Don (aged 92) are truly 'retired'

	(maybe?), living in Rogers near to their special First United Methodist Church and not too far from Constance's special Bella Vista.
Duration	118 minutes
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Questions or Comments	https://nwaoralhistory.org
Interview sidebar	While serving at the Mount Sequoyah Center, Waddell noticed lots of people coming up to the cross that stands there. "One day a woman sent me \$1,000 in honor of her son... She told me to use it for something beautiful. Under the cross on cement, I chose three scriptures like "lay aside your guilt and sins and feeling of woes...and go out with singing." To this day it gives her pleasure to see people reading it. [01:07:00]