**Oral History Interview**

**with**

**Loveta Hammond**

Interview Conducted by

Tanya Finchum

June 3, 2014

Spotlighting Oklahoma

Oral History Project

**Oklahoma Oral History Research Program**

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**Interview History**

Interviewer: Tanya Finchum

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The recording and transcript of this interview were processed at the Oklahoma State University Library in Stillwater, Oklahoma.

**Project Detail**

The purpose of the *Spotlighting Oklahoma Oral History Project* is to document the development of the state by recording its cultural and intellectual history.

This project was approved by the Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board on April 15, 2009.

**Legal Status**

Scholarly use of the recordings and transcripts of the interview with Loveta Hammond is unrestricted. The interview agreement was signed on June 3, 2014.

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**About Loveta Hammond…**

Loveta Hammond was born in Bristow, Oklahoma, in 1951, the second of seven children. She and her family lived on a farm where they grew multiple gardens, owned fruit orchards and nut trees, and raised their own cows and hogs that they could slaughter and smoke in their smokehouse. Her family always utilized the local Extension services, and her mother and grandmother both belonged to a local home demonstration club, giving her an early appreciation for the vocation. The family’s home life demonstrated the importance of being economical and practical, using what’s available, and being as self-sufficient as possible. Loveta was active in home economics and was a member of 4-H during high school, both of those factors playing a vital role in her future. She graduated from Bristow High School In 1969 and enrolled at Langston University, majoring in home economics.

After she graduated college in 1973, Loveta got a job with Oklahoma City’s Cooperative Extension Service where she learned how to be an effective home economist. She was responsible for twenty-five Home and Community Education groups for four years and then went on to be the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) Coordinator with the Community Nutrition Education Program. As the program grew and branched out, Loveta’s responsibilities multiplied, as well, as she worked in more and more counties. In the meantime, she also went back to school at the University of Central Oklahoma to earn her master’s degree. Regardless of job title or location, Loveta’s goals with Extension were always to educate youth and adults about food quality and economy, healthy food decisions within families, and making the most of what’s available, just as her family had always done. Since her retirement in 2006, she has continued to teach classes now and then, and participates as a judge at multiple county fairs. She has written recipe articles for newspapers, and stays active with neighborhood and senior citizen programs, continuing to educate people, staying true to the Extension principle that “you work until your job is done.”

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| **Loveta Hammond**  Oral History Interview  Interviewed by Tanya Finchum  June 3, 2014  Oklahoma City, Oklahoma |  |

**Finchum** *Today is June 3, 2014. My name is Tanya Finchum. I’m with Oklahoma State University, and today I’m in Oklahoma City to speak with Loveta Hammond, and this is in regard to our Spotlighting Oklahoma Project featuring Extension educators, so thank you for having us today.*

**Hammond** Thank you.

**Finchum** *Let’s start with learning a little bit about you, starting with when and where you were born.*

**Hammond** I was born in Bristow, Oklahoma, which is Creek County, March 1, 1951. We lived on a farm south of Bristow about eight and a half miles with my parents, Willie and Vivian Hammond, and my grandparents, J. J. and Willie B. Hammond. We were Extension users from the very start.

**Finchum** *Did you have brothers and sisters?*

**Hammond** Yes, I have two brothers and four sisters. I’m the second in the family. I have one older sister, and the rest of my siblings are younger than me.

**Finchum** *Where did you go to elementary school?*

**Hammond** Went to elementary school, I started at Rosenwald Elementary, which was the black school. Then we integrated, and I went to Washington Elementary. Then from Washington Elementary, went to Bristow Junior High, and then graduated from Bristow High School.

**Finchum** *In what year?*

**Hammond** In 1969.

**Finchum** *Did you have a favorite subject?*

**Hammond** Yes, I liked home economics in high school. I had a real neat home economics teacher that made learning fun.

**Finchum** *Were you a member of 4-H in high school?*

**Hammond** Yes, I was. My county agent was Mr. C. D. Ashley; he was a county agent in Bristow. Our club met fifth hour at the Bristow High School because we rode the bus to school because we lived in the country. We had to meet before school was out because we didn’t have any way back to town to 4-H.

**Finchum** *What did your parents do for a living?*

**Hammond** My dad was a construction worker, and my mom was a homemaker for a while. Then she went to work at the Gossard Artemis sewing factory in Bristow. Then it changed to the carpet factory, and that’s where she retired from.

**Finchum** *Interesting. So what did they sew?*

**Hammond** They made lingerie. The Gossard Artemis Company made lingerie.

**Finchum** *Okay. Don’t have too many sewers. Did you learn how to sew?*

**Hammond** Yes, I did. In 4-H, one of my projects was sewing. We started out with the headscarf and then the apron and then branched out on into clothing.

**Finchum** *You make some of your high school outfits?*

**Hammond** Yes, in home economics we had to make all of our garments.

**Finchum** *Did you participate in the county fair?*

**Hammond** Yes, we did. We took produce to the fair, and we also took baked goods and some canning. My parents were big on canning because we lived on a farm, raised all of our vegetables and fruits. We had fruit orchards, pecan trees, two black walnut trees. We had several different gardens and then garden patches such as a pea patch, okra patch, a corn field, and all of that. We raised lots of vegetables that we used ourself and shared with the community and then sold locally to different people that were interested in buying from us.

**Finchum** *So you learned to use a pressure cooker pretty early?*

**Hammond** Yes, I did. One of my jobs was to wash the jars because my hand could fit inside the jar. I had to wash all the hundreds of jars that my parents used for canning.

**Finchum** *And they had a cellar?*

**Hammond** Yes, we did have a cellar and a smokehouse because in the fall we butchered animals that we used during the winter months for food, cows and the hogs and…

**Finchum** *You actually smoked the meat?*

**Hammond** Yes, smoked the hams, yes.

**Finchum** *That’s some good eating, too, I understand.*

**Hammond** Yes, it is.

**Finchum** *Did you make quilts, your mother or grandmother?*

**Hammond** Yes, my mother and grandmother belonged to the Newby Home Demonstration Club. They met at the [church] lunchroom. My sister, just this weekend we were talking about going to the quilting parties that they had at the lunchroom. She said every week they made a different quilt. She said, “I wonder what they did with them.” I told her I’m probably sure each one of the women got a different quilt, and then some of them they probably took to the county fairs, and some that they probably sold to people that wanted to buy a quilt.

**Finchum** *Did you happen to end up with one yourself?*

**Hammond** No, I did not. I think my aunt got the last of my grandma’s things that was left after she passed away.

**Finchum** *Well, can you talk a little about the home you grew up in, the physical building, the house?*

**Hammond** Well, the first home, eight and a half miles south of Bristow, burned in the ’50s, and then my parents built another home just coming north and west of that. It was a three-bedroom home. We had just lots of fun at home. We canned; we gardened. The yard, everyone had a portion of the yard that they mowed because we had a huge land around the house, and we were just, probably, five hundred feet from the highway which passed right past our home. There was lots of traffic in front. Of course, the yard was gated and fenced in so that we could not get on the highway, but we lived on a busy highway, Highway 48.

**Finchum** *All that work, what did you do for fun?*

**Hammond** Oh, in the summertime our cousins came from different cities, and we gardened. We did lots of chores, feeding the animals, trying to keep the kids from chasing the animals, trying to keep them out of trouble because they were not used to farm animals, and just keeping busy doing laundry, cleaning, and the general things that you do in the country.

**Finchum** *Did you play any games like Kick the Can or whatever?*

**Hammond** Yes, we played checkers, marbles. We made our own little bowling games outside with tin cans. We had bicycles. We played softball, and we rode horses because some of our neighbors had horses.

**Finchum** *What role did church play in your childhood?*

**Hammond** Church was very vital. My grandmother was very religious. We went to church every time the door opened. We were involved in Sunday school, BYPU [Baptist Young People’s Union], youth activities. We also participated in congress that was held in Tulsa with different churches in the different areas that were Baptist denomination. We were heavily involved in that. We sang in the choir, just did all sorts of things at church.

**Finchum** *Music was important to you, then?*

**Hammond** Yes, it was.

**Finchum** *Play any instruments?*

**Hammond** We took piano lessons, but we were not that good. We didn’t take them very long because they got to be expensive and my parents had to take us to town to the music teacher’s house. That didn’t last very long.

**Finchum** *But singing was always available, huh?*

**Hammond** Yes, singing was, right.

**Finchum** *So once you finished high school, then what did you do?*

**Hammond** Went to college at Langston University. I graduated in ’69. That summer my dad said, “You either need to find a job or go to school,” so I started at Langston the summer of ’69, and I went to summer school every year thereafter. I graduated in 1973 from Langston. I graduated a semester early, and my county director, Mr. Ashley, encouraged me to apply for an Extension position. I applied for an Extension position early in the year, and March 1, 1973, I was hired by Cooperative Extension Service in Oklahoma City.

**Finchum** *What was your major at Langston?*

**Hammond** Home economics.

**Finchum** *Home economics, okay.*

**Hammond** Yes, a home economics major.

**Finchum** *So once you—as I understand it, back in those days, too, you couldn’t work in the county you lived in?*

**Hammond** Lived in, right, you had to work in a different county.

**Finchum** *So that’s maybe why Oklahoma County was where they hired you for.*

**Hammond** Yes.

**Finchum** *Do you remember the hiring process?*

**Hammond** Yes, I came to Oklahoma City to the federal building with Jo Ann Brannan and Ed Gregory, interviewed, and then after a few weeks they contacted me saying I had the position. At that time, there were two positions available: one in Oklahoma City and one in Tulsa. Another girl, Linda Murray, had interviewed also, and she was closer to Tulsa. Since both of us were going to have to move, there was a choice. I could choose Oklahoma City or Tulsa. I chose Oklahoma City, and Linda went to Tulsa, so we started that same year.

**Finchum** *Your first day on the job, do you remember much about it?*

**Hammond** Yes, my first day, Clara Kelly was the new home economist. She had been, I think, down in the southeastern part of the state, and they had moved her to Oklahoma City. She helped me learn the ropes and get to know the different functions of Extension and how to be a home economist.

**Finchum** *How long did you do that?*

**Hammond** When I first went there, we were responsible for the HCE [Home and Community Educators] groups. There were twenty-five that I was responsible for, and twenty-five that she was responsible for. I did that work from ’73 to ’77. I helped service the extension groups. Then in 1977 the food and nutrition program, Community Nutrition Education Program, needed a home economist. Every time their home economist left, I filled in because I had nutrition background. In 1979 Ed Gregory approached me and said, “Would you just like to be their home economist because you know all their forms, their records? You could teach them nutrition,” so I did. They changed my job title to the Expanded Food and Nutrition [Education] Program (EFNEP) Coordinator.

**Finchum** *And then after that?*

**Hammond** After that in 1980, in the ’80s, (I’m not sure exactly what year) the community nutrition program expanded to different counties, so then I became a area person. I worked three counties: Oklahoma, Canadian, and Grady.

**Finchum** *Hopefully you got a pay raise with that.*

**Hammond** Yes, I think there was a little pay raise that came along.

**Finchum** *And then after that?*

**Hammond** Well, after that I retired in 2006.

**Finchum** *So thirty …*

**Hammond** Thirty-four years, eleven months, and twenty-six days. (Laughter)

**Finchum** *Did you earn your master’s along the way?*

**Hammond** Yes, I did. In 1979 I went to UCO, University of Central Oklahoma, and got a master’s degree in home economics education.

**Finchum** *And your title changed, but it wasn’t necessarily because they just changed the title of the same job, like went from agent to extension educator to whatever.*

**Hammond** Yes, the titles kept changing through the years to keep current with what was going on in the country.

**Finchum** *Did you have an opinion on that? Not really?*

**Hammond** Not really because they just approached us and said the titles will be changed to more reflect the programs that you worked, so when I changed from extension home economist to the EFNEP coordinator, that was the job title for that particular program.

**Finchum** *And the customers that you were servicing are customers or clients? How did you…*

**Hammond** We referred to them as homemakers.

**Finchum** *Homemakers, okay. Your work with them, did that change much during those thirty years?*

**Hammond** Yes, it really did. We worked with food stamps—well, first we worked with commodity recipients because those were the people that got the donated foods. Then from that, it changed to the food coupons which were food stamps. Then from that, it went to the [EBT, Electronic Benefit Transfer] card, where they accessed the card like a credit card. So, yes, the method of teaching changed because they were given the food, and you went to the home to see what they had, and then determined how to help them best use the products that were given to them and not to waste them, and make nutritious and economical meals for the family. We also worked with the youth. There was a youth component of the program, too, where we taught nutrition to low-income youth, kids that received free and reduced priced lunches. We went to the schools that had high percentages of children receiving free and reduced priced lunch, encouraging them to eat the school lunch. Then we did on-site demonstrations that showed them how to go home and show their parents what they had made at school and encourage the parents to buy the food so that they could make it at home for the family.

**Finchum** *Challenging.*

**Hammond** Yes, it was. The real challenge was after they stopped giving the donated food, then they gave the food coupon where the coupon could be used for anything edible in the store except alcohol. We were bombarded with people liking to buy chips and cookies and things like that that were not as nutritious as what they should be buying. That was a challenge, keeping them making a grocery list and buying the essentials first and then some things that they like to eat. Then the [EBT] card was pretty much the same as the food stamp issue, too, because with that card it was just a matter of swiping the card. They could still buy basically the same foods except they could not buy hot foods that were already prepared and ready to eat. That was different, too.

**Finchum** *Because they cost more?*

**Hammond** Yes, they do. They were pretty costly for what the family received.

**Finchum** *So you did some budget work as well as nutrition work.*

**Hammond** Yes, budgeting, food management, teaching them how to, if they had any skills in gardening, helping them do container gardens and things of that nature to help stretch the food budget.

**Finchum** *Any success stories that stick out in your mind?*

**Hammond** Well, yes. We cooperated with the kids that lived in the country, like Spencer-Jones area. They had community gardens, and we helped them harvest the product that they raised in the garden. I did jam and jelly classes, teaching them how to use the produce and make jams and jellies. I also did pickle classes. The funny thing about the pickle class was you got the cucumbers, you a made the quick pickles, and they had to stay overnight. I told the children the pickles needed to cure at least three to four months before they could really eat them and they would taste like a pickle. Well, the next day the center director calls and says, “All these kids are at the door. Everybody wants their jar of pickles, and as they go out the door, they’re opening the pickles and eating them.” They would not let the pickles cure, but that was a learning experience for them. It was good for them to see that produce that you produce can be preserved for future use.

**Finchum** *And did you take some of those children to the county fair?*

**Hammond** No, they didn’t have any product left; they ate it. (Laughter) Their product was not available when the county fair came because they ate the product before fair time.

**Finchum** *When years passed and other projects like jams and jellies, did…*

**Hammond** Now, some of those kids, yes, those children did bring products to the fair.

**Finchum** *A little bit different. Do you still can today?*

**Hammond** Yes, I do. Since I retired, I’ve been teaching some of the home canning programs for Metro Tech. They haven’t been so successful because we have to use the kitchen that my sister uses at the Vo Tech, and the classes have to be in the summertime when the produce is growing. That’s the time that you should be at home canning, so people really don’t like to come to class. They like to have the knowledge of home canning before the produce comes in so that they can stay at home and can during the summer months. The classes have been pretty small, but the people that have come have really appreciated the fact that they can get hands-on knowledge because we actually canned everything: jams to jellies, the fruits, the vegetables and pickles.

**Finchum** *It’s a dying art, so I’m glad someone’s still doing it.*

**Hammond** Yes, it is a dying art.

**Finchum** *Do you have any students that have gone on to do similar type of work because of the work you did with them?*

**Hammond** Yes, I had a friend who had a daughter that was interested in being a home demonstration agent. (Laughs) That was years ago. She went on to school at Okmulgee Tech and got into the culinary program. She took the culinary route, so she’s a culinary instructor.

**Finchum** *Well, back in the day when C. D. Ashley was your mentor or person you looked up to for this, was there anything particular about what he did that inspired you to do this type of work?*

**Hammond** Well, yes, they always came to our community and worked with my dad in the agricultural side of it. Then his sister-in-law, Artis Fuller from Boley, came and worked with the women and was very instrumental in helping them learn to can, learn to sew, doing home improvement projects, and home gardening, and that type of thing. That really was very influential in helping us to learn how to take care of a home and take care of a farm.

**Finchum** *They did some upholstery classes, I understand, back in those days.*

**Hammond** Yes, they did.

**Finchum** *Did you do any of that?*

**Hammond** No, my parents didn’t do any of those things.

**Finchum** *Well, once you were in the occupation, did you attend conferences and such as that with…*

**Hammond** Yes, I did. My first year, Jo Ann Brannan said, “You will be a part of your professional group,” so there was not an option not to join. Since I was employed, I’ve been a member of our professional organization every year. I have won numerous awards and recognition. I remember winning the Newsletter Award because to my families we wrote a newsletter that the nutrition [educators] passed out monthly to the food nutrition program, so I won an award for that. Then I applied for the Irma Manning Professional Development [Fund] because Irma Manning was one of our state food nutrition specialists, and she granted money to observe programs in different states so that we could see how other states operated the nutrition program. I won that award. Then I cooperated with some of my fellow extension educators, and we won the Dean Don Felker [Financial Management] Award in money management. I was quite active.

I was an officer. I think I was treasurer for the association back in the late ’90s, and minority network person that helped them learn how reach and teach minorities. Then I also led an African American tour which originated here in Oklahoma City. The educators were wanting to learn how to reach African Americans, so I set up several different contacts here in the City. We went to the Freedom Center with Clara Luper, and she talked about the NAACP and the Freedom Center. My church, the musician at my church, did the history of Negro spirituals and how the spirituals were chants that African Americans sang in order to get the message out about what was going on in their community and in their neighborhood.

We also went to Tulsa. In 1921 there was a race riot where black Tulsa got burned down, and there was a grocery store named Banner Grocery. The lady was still alive that operated Banner Grocery, so she talked about operating a neighborhood grocery store. The African American church that burned, the preacher welcomed us there and talked about the history of the church as a role in the black family. Then we went to a little dollhouse, Ida Freeman’s Dollhouse. She had a collection of African American dolls. Then we ate barbecue at Latimer’s Barbecue which was the black barbecue place in Tulsa. We just took them to different places to let them see how African Americans operated their businesses.

**Finchum** *Neat. On the award that you went to observe in a different state, which state did you go to?*

**Hammond** We went to Arkansas.

**Finchum** *Much different than what Oklahoma was doing?*

**Hammond** A little. We were all doing similar things, but we did get lots of ideas on how to successfully reach the clients that we were trying to reach.

**Finchum** *About how many families would you have to keep up with?*

**Hammond** Oh, each nutrition person was responsible for—when the program was fully staffed there were as many as fifteen paraprofessionals. Each paraprofessional was responsible for teaching at least thirty families a month and working with about twenty-five to fifty children. Their caseload was quite a bit. Of course, they had to do entry paperwork to show where they started out, and then paperwork all along their enrollment in the program to show progress because we were charting how that ate, how they ate before you started working with them, and what improvements they made during the years that you taught them. Hopefully, we would have wanting everyone to be able eat four fruits and vegetables, drink two to three glasses of milk, four to five servings of breads and cereals, and two to three servings of meat a day, of course for all those choices to be healthy choices instead of junk food.

**Finchum** *Was weight a part of the…*

**Hammond** Yes, we found lots of overweight homemakers because they liked to eat conveniently and weren’t used to cooking. I remember one homemaker, we talked about the fact that beans were a meat substitute, and she says, “I don’t know how to cook beans. I don’t know how to make them soft.” I told the lady, “You haven’t had a hungry day if you don’t know how to cook beans because beans cook themselves. You just need to clean them, and season them, and just let them cook.” We taught lots of people how to cook things that they’d never experienced cooking.

**Finchum** *Like pinto beans, dried beans…*

**Hammond** Dried beans, right. It’s what she said she did not know how to cook.

**Finchum** *A lot of people today don’t know how to do that, either.*

**Hammond** That’s true. That is true.

**Finchum** *I do. I know how. What was some of the challenges, the biggest challenges?*

**Hammond** Finding people at home, finding people receptive because we had to go find the homemakers. We were not given a list until the late years of the program when DHS cooperated with us and gave us a list of people that we could contact for the program. At first we did what we call cold calling. That was just going to a neighborhood, looking for toys in the yard. That was a indicator that they had small children. Then knocking on doors, explaining the program, and then hoping the homemaker was receptive. When you tell people something is free, they look at us and say, “Nothing is free. At the end of this, you want some money,” or, “At the end of this, you’re going to do something that was not what you told us you were going to do.” So trying to tell the people that we had free education was really challenging.

**Finchum** *Did some of them just say no and shut the door?*

**Hammond** Oh, of course, yes, we had lots of rejections. I had to really employ Christian, strong women who were used to rejection. The church was a good source to find homemakers that were willing to reach out to other people and to teach young women, boys, and girls how to have a better life.

**Finchum** *The paraprofessionals, were they also knocking on doors then because…*

**Hammond** Yes, that was the job of the paraprofessional, to knock on the door to find the homemaker.

**Finchum** *So your territory was quite large?*

**Hammond** Yes, what we did, according to where the nutrition person lived, we assigned them a geographic area around their home. Since that was where they came from, they should know the church, they should know the neighborhood, they should know the community center. That was a easy way for them to get started in their own community, is trying to find the homemaker.

**Finchum** *And DHS didn’t call for it early on?*

**Hammond** Early on, no. Because of the Privacy Act, they could not give names and numbers. It was not until later years that the professional people got with DHS and really told them what the purpose of our program was, and the fact that we should cooperate because “you give the food and we give the education, so really should be working together.” Finally in the later years, they did give us the list that had addresses and phone numbers. Of course, another challenge was phones were not always working, so you still had to go to that address. These are the type of people that move a lot. They’re running from bill collectors and creditors. They may be here this week, but they may be gone the next week when you go to visit with them. The ones that were really interested would call the office and say, “Tell Mrs. so-and-so I moved. This is my new address.” A lot of them we really lost because of the fact they were so mobile.

**Finchum** *Were most of your clients or homemakers inside the city limits?*

**Hammond** No, we had people out in the Luther-Jones and the rural communities. Yes, they were spread out. We tried to hire nutrition assistants that lived geographically according to the city that we were working in. That was the same with Grady County and also with El Reno.

**Finchum** *So you had to have your own transportation and…*

**Hammond** Yes, had to have a reliable car.

**Finchum** *And then they reimbursed you for…*

**Hammond** For mileage.

**Finchum** *Mileage.*

**Hammond** Yes, right.

**Finchum** *A lot of miles put on your own car, then.*

**Hammond** Yes, lots of miles.

**Finchum** *How often would you have to trade yours?*

**Hammond** Oh, every, probably, five or six years.

**Finchum** *Would you do it all again?*

**Hammond** Yes, because I like helping people. We’ve always—we grew up helping people, so I’ve always been a person that liked to see success. It would be a good career to do again, I think.

**Finchum** *Did a lot of paperwork…*

**Hammond** Yes.

**Finchum** *…wrote a lot of papers.*

**Hammond** Yes, there were numerous forms. We had to do six-month reports that charted progress that showed where the program was in six months, and then we had to do the yearly reports. These yearly reports went to Washington, DC, because our progress depended upon whether the program was funded for the next year. The paperwork had to be accurate. Yes, I did receive calls from Washington, DC, saying, “Go to form so-and-so and look at line so-and-so. Those numbers don’t add up.” (Laughter) They took the report seriously, and the numbers had to be accurate.

**Finchum** *Somebody was checking, then.*

**Hammond** Yes, they were. They really were.

**Finchum** *Were most of your training sessions at Langston or OSU or…*

**Hammond** Most of ours were at OSU. The state specialists were housed at OSU, and they came to the different districts according to what—the program was in several counties in the state. According to what district you were in, there would be district meetings. We met a lot at Chickasha, El Reno, and at our community office in Oklahoma City, our county office.

**Finchum** *Most of your work was with women. Did you have men homemakers?*

**Hammond** Yeah, we had some. Yes, we did have men homemakers. Men there had custody of their children…

**Finchum** *Okay.*

**Hammond** …and were in charge of feeding and raising the children, so we did have men enrolled in the program.

**Finchum** *Interested in cooking?*

**Hammond** Yes, they were, yes. At first, some of the women were apprehensive about going to work with a man, so we always sent them in twos to a home that was a man, or encouraged the man to meet them at a community center or at a church so that there would be no problems with the instruction.

**Finchum** *Well, were you also instructing men on the other end, too, not just men workers, but…*

**Hammond** Yes some single men, right, low-income men.

**Finchum** *How to—nutrition for them, too?*

**Hammond** Yes, how to cook, how to clean. We had pamphlets as simple as take out the trash, how to clean the toilet, how to clean the bathroom, how to clean the oven, making the bed, setting the table, everything that involved keeping a home.

**Finchum** *You were there for the time period when we went from paper to computers, then.*

**Hammond** Computers, yes, that was a challenge. (Laughs)

**Finchum** *How was that transition?*

**Hammond** Well, it went pretty slow. Lots of us had to take classes to learn to use the computer, but it got a little bit easier. I had a secretary that was really young. Every time I was trying to do something on the computer, I’d say, “Let me get my tablet, Angie. I want to write this down.” She says, “No! You are not going to use a tablet because every time you get ready to do it, you’ll be looking for the notes. You’re going to learn how to do it without a tablet.” I had a good teacher. (Laughs) She did not let me write things down. I had to remember how to do the reports on the computer. Then it came easier. The more you did, it the easier it got. Then, teaching the nutrition assistants to use a computer was a different story, also. They didn’t do their reports on the computer, but their nutrition instruction was put on a computer. That was challenging, too, so we had to have several training sessions to get them used to using a laptop computer for their training. They went from flipcharts to laptops, and paper pictures of foods and things like that.

**Finchum** *And change is hard.*

**Hammond** Yes, change is. Especially when they’re older women, change is really hard.

**Finchum** *Would they actually accompany the person to the grocery store and help them…*

**Hammond** Yes, we took them on grocery store tours, shopping experiences, farmers markets. Later on, when they started getting the credit card type thing for buying their food, they could shop at a local food market or vegetable produce stand, too, because those took the ETB cards. That made it easier for them to get fresh produce. Produce and milk were really the things that families were lacking in. We found out they ate lots of sandwiches, so that was meat and bread, very little fruits and vegetables because they were too expensive, and they did not drink milk. It was soda, lots of soda.

**Finchum** *Price-wise, milk—well, I don’t know. Back in those days, it was probably comparable to soda. They just preferred…*

**Hammond** They preferred the taste of soda versus milk.

**Finchum** *Did they come to you often, or you always went to them?*

**Hammond** Some of them—we tried to have groups at community centers. The Extension center here in Oklahoma City was located way on the west side of town, and most of our population was in the center part of the city. Transportation with them was a problem. If we could get them to come to a local community center in their area, we had meetings at centers or at churches or anyplace that would give us space. But, yes, we did try to get some of them familiar with the Extension center. Then once a year we have what we call Community Nutrition Education Program Graduation, where we brought everyone to the Extension office and gave them their certificate, had a little achievement program and light refreshments so that they could be honored. For some of them, that was the first award they had ever received in their life, so it was a big deal, real special to them.

**Finchum** *Did you see multiple generations?*

**Hammond** Yes, yes we did. We saw grandmother with daughters and grandchildren. We tried to help them not to repeat the cycle of poverty, to learn to do better, eat better, and be better.

**Finchum** *Was your population a mix of African Americans and white and even Asians?*

**Hammond** Yes, it was. We had quite a few American Indians. We had Hispanics. I did employ Hispanic nutrition assistants because the Spanish population here in Oklahoma City grew rapidly, and we did have a good mixture of blacks and whites. Then in the late ’80s, we had the Hmong and the Vietnamese and that population. They were very interested, but language sometimes was a barrier. At some of the places, we had translators, so that helped.

**Finchum** *Had to resort to Show and Tell, I guess.*

**Hammond** Yes, a lot of Show and Tell. Let me tell you a funny story. The Cambodians and Laotians wanted to learn how to make fried chicken. They talked about going to the grocery store, buying the container of Crisco that had the picture of the fried chicken on it. They opened it up; they expected for the fried chicken to be in the container. They opened it up, and it was this white stuff. They didn’t know what to do with the white stuff. We had to teach them that labels don’t always tell you what’s inside the product. You sometimes buy things that show products that can be made from the package that you buy, but that’s not necessarily what’s in the package. We had to teach them how to make fried chicken using the white stuff from the can. (Laughs)

**Finchum** *Did you teach them how to cut up their chicken or get one already cut up?*

**Hammond** No, we taught how to cut up chicken, how to buy economical cuts, and a roast, how to take maybe a cheap roast and grind it to make your own hamburger, cheaper cuts of meat, low-cost, economical ways to make those tender using a lot of hands-on cooking.

**Finchum** *Crockpots?*

**Hammond** Yeah, crockpots, electric skillets, all of that.

**Finchum** *Did microwaves come in while you were…*

**Hammond** They came in later, but they were expensive, and these families couldn’t afford a microwave. We encouraged families to tell their folks at Christmastime if you wanted a present, buy you a crockpot, buy you a toaster oven, buy you a electric skillet because those are things that you could put a meal in and not have to really watch. It would cook itself.

**Finchum** *And they still make electric skillets. I haven’t seen one in years.*

**Hammond** Yeah, yeah.

**Finchum** *I have not looked, either.*

**Hammond** Yes, they do.

**Finchum** *My mother had one. Made fried chicken that way.*

**Hammond** Yes, they do.

**Finchum** *Nowadays, too, or at least in my history, I remember chickens when you were cut up—you could get them already cut up, the whole chicken…*

**Hammond** Whole, yes.

**Finchum** *…in the package. It’d have a pulley bone.*

**Hammond** Yes.

**Finchum** *Now…*

**Hammond** No, you don’t see them.

**Finchum** …*I don’t ever see one.*

**Hammond** No, you sure don’t.

**Finchum** *And in your business, I guess you would notice changes like that, too?*

**Hammond** Yeah, changes in the packaging of the meat, the types of meats available and…

**Finchum** *Reading labels?*

**Hammond** Reading, right. Reading labels to know what was good for you, what was not, looking for products that contain lots of sodium because high blood pressure was a problem with a lot of these families, too. Diabetes because they ate too much sugary, starchy stuff. Encouraging them to eat fresh is really, really important.

**Finchum** *Did you have programs that focused on the elderly?*

**Hammond** Yes, we did. We had lots of senior nutrition sites that were interested in the program, and also senior retirement places where the families lived. Those were easy because they were a audience that was always there and eager for you to come and do their nutrition programs. A lot of them didn’t do a lot of cooking, but the ones that were able really liked to get in the kitchen and let you help them get their little supper meal together. Cooking small was a challenge for them, too. A lot of them had come from big families, so learning to cook just enough for one or two people became a challenge, too. We had recipes called “Cooking for One or Two,” and single pamphlets that dealt with small recipes and casseroles and things of that nature that would be easy to fix.

**Finchum** *Would they want you to try some of what they cooked?*

**Hammond** Yes, of course. Yes, yes.

**Finchum** *Partly challenging, too…*

**Hammond** Yeah, it was. At some locations it would be challenging. (Laughter) What we did if they wanted to make the featured recipe for the week or the month, we encouraged them to buy the ingredients, have them on hand, and let the nutrition person work them through the recipe. Therefore, you knew it was safe to eat because you helped them fix it and practice all the cleanliness standards that needed to be observed making that recipe and then cooking it correctly, too.

**Finchum** *And refrigeration.*

**Hammond** And refrigeration, too, was a big issue. Refrigeration was really a big issue with senior citizens because they like to cook in the morning, leave the food out all day, and then eat it in the evening. You really had to encourage them. If you’re going to cook something, you need to follow that two-hour rule: it cannot sit out more than two hours.

**Finchum** *To do some of the education, you said you mentioned newsletters.*

**Hammond** Yes.

**Finchum** *Did you do any radio?*

**Hammond** Not for this group, we didn’t. When I worked with the Extension homemaker groups, I did radio and TV. We had different chances to be on television to feature a recipe or feature some new thing that came out that we were trying to get people to learn about. I did a lot of microwave cooking demonstrations with my coworker Claire Powell when microwaves came out. We had a person that had a microwave store, and he encouraged us to use his microwaves to teach people how to use them. We would have two to three hundred people in the auditorium for our microwave demonstration when microwaves were very new. That was interesting, too. I also [taught] sewing. When I was the special projects home economist, I did a lot of sewing programs. When new sewing machines, like when the sergers came out, people were interested in learning how to use a serger. Mr. Ramsey from Hancock Fabrics would provide us with the sergers, and people could come to the demonstrations to see how to use one and get familiar with it.

**Finchum** *Good advertising for them.*

**Hammond** Yes, it was good advertising, right.

**Finchum** *Did you have to seek those out, or did they come to you?*

**Hammond** No, they contacted us saying, “We will train you how to use the microwave, and then if you would do programs, we would bring eight or ten microwaves that could be stationed around the room.” We could charge a small fee, buy the food, and have people practice cooking, or charge a fee, buy fabric, and have people make samples using the serger. It was really good advertisement, and then it boosted their sales.

**Finchum** *Sure. Did you do anything that did not quite work with the microwave, with an audience?*

**Hammond** Yes, people wanted to make breakfast, like cooking eggs in the microwave. Eggs explode if they’re not punctured. Those were a challenge, and then cooking things too long. Microwave was a fast method of cooking, so people had to get used to cooking things a minute or less, or two minutes, depending upon what the product was. Teaching them the basics and how the principle of microwave cookery worked, and that products could not be cooked five or ten minutes or else they’d be burned up or hard as a rock. (Laughs)

**Finchum** *Did they worry about the health aspect of the microwaves?*

**Hammond** Yeah, right, I think a lot of people that had pacemakers, that was a problem having a person in the room with the microwaves. Somehow they would interfere with the pacemaker. People were really apprehensive about what the waves did, and how the waves worked, and were they safe for the family and for themselves, too.

**Finchum** *So you might need to know how to do CPR?*

**Hammond** Yeah. (Laughs) We learned CPR because we had incidents at the office where people got sick, and we did have the Red Cross come in and teach us how to do CPR. Luckily, we never had to use it, though.

**Finchum** *Jack of all trades.*

**Hammond** Yes, yes we were.

**Finchum** *Do you have a couple of highlights?*

**Hammond** Well, let’s see. I really enjoyed my work in Grady County. Those ladies were really nice. Every year they would ask my nutrition assistant how they could help her. They always did a cooking utensil shower. They collected all these cooking utensils, and we passed them out to the families that we worked with. That was a highlight, a thing that I enjoyed.

**Finchum** *Cooking utensils like a spatula…*

**Hammond** Spatula, yeah, because you’d be surprised that the families you’d work with that didn’t have a bowl, a pot, a pan, a spoon, measuring cups, measuring spoons. As a reward if they did something that you taught the week that you left, and you went back the next week, you would say, “Because you did something great, I have a set of measuring spoons for you. I can give you measuring cups.” These things had to be donated to us because our program could not buy those things if the homemaker did not buy them themselves.

**Finchum** *Do you think the need is as much now as it was in the ’70s when you first started, for that type of thing?*

**Hammond** Yes, yes. You’d be surprised the people that don’t have the basic equipment to cook with, like pots and pans, a cake pan, a roaster to make a turkey, things like that. If they don’t cook that type of food, they wouldn’t have the equipment, a mixer, things like mixers, blenders, things of that nature.

**Finchum** *Masher?*

**Hammond** Yeah, potato masher, things of that nature.

**Finchum** *You don’t think about things you take for granted, don’t we?*

**Hammond** You really don’t. Today with the number of thrift stores, you can go to a thrift store and find things that you could use at home very cheap. Also, dollar stores are now carrying lots of things that are cheaper than going to Wal-Mart or to Macy’s or to Dillard’s to buy. I mean there’s no reason why you shouldn’t have the basic equipment if you want it.

**Finchum** *During that, over those twenty or thirty years, too, childhood obesity became…*

**Hammond** A big problem, quite a big problem, right.

**Finchum** *Then you had to do some…*

**Hammond** Education.

**Finchum** *…adjusting your programs and…*

**Hammond** Yes, education, teaching them how to eat a carrot stick instead of a lollipop, or how to eat a fruit instead of drinking soda. We really had lots of challenges.

**Finchum** *Any recipes you tried that didn’t quite work? I guess you’d practice before you did…*

**Hammond** Oh, of course, yes, we did a lot of practicing. I can’t really think of anything that we really made a mess of. One thing that I was proud of, one day I had to do a bread-baking demonstration, and why I wore a navy blue dress…. (Laughs) At the end of the demonstration, the audience said, “Ms. Hammond, you cooked everything, and you didn’t get a drop of flour on your dress.” I looked down, and I was like, “Oh, I didn’t!” I didn’t realize I didn’t have flour all over me like Martha Stewart. (Laughs)

**Finchum** *Did you wear an apron? Not that day?*

**Hammond** No, not that day, I didn’t, and it was an actual bread-making demonstration, so no.

**Finchum** *Did you carry equipment type things in the trunk of your car?*

**Hammond** Yes, everyone had their own sets of knives, measuring spoons, bowls, mixers, toaster oven, electric skillet, pots and pans, just in case you went to a homemaker that didn’t have that and you had to proceed. You had to be prepared at all times.

**Finchum** *And have a good trip.*

**Hammond** Oh, I can think of one disaster. We were doing a summer program, and we were going to do it at the parks. We selected two different sites: a park to be at in the morning, and a park to go to in the afternoon. We made these little four meals called hobo packs. It had vegetables and a little bit of meat, like slices of chicken in it. You wrapped it in a foil packet, and you cooked it on the grill. We had all the vegetables and a little meat, and we had the kid make their own hobo pack. We cooked them on the grill, and at the end of that particular session, we would be at the park, like, three or four hours, outside. Weber donated a lot of little portable grills for us to cook out. At the end of the first session, we got ready to get rid of the charcoal to move to the afternoon session. We were like, “We cannot put these hot grills in our car, so what are we going to do?” We had to cancel the afternoon sessions because the grills could not be transported. That was a learning experience. You don’t do two cookouts in a day, going to different locations with hot grills.

**Finchum** *You’d have to have two grills.*

**Hammond** Yes, you have to have two grills, right.

**Finchum** *So Weber donated. You had…*

**Hammond** Yeah, we had resources, right. We wrote letters, begging and asking for different things to be donated to the low-income cause.

**Finchum** *So when you retired, you had quite a paper trail left behind?*

**Hammond** Yes, I did. We had lots of things that we had accumulated that left with the office.

**Finchum** *Do you follow much of your own advice now?*

**Hammond** Yeah!

**Finchum** *Do you?*

**Hammond** Yes, I do. I have a nine-year-old niece, and she loves to cook, and she loves to sew. If I’m making something, she’s right there. “Can I sew that for you? Can I help you do that? Can I do that?” So, yes, we’re teaching her how to cook, how to sew, and she likes it.

**Finchum** *That’s good.*

**Hammond** She started a little cupcake business called Zoe’s Cupcakes, so in the spring she makes cupcakes for different people and sells them to them.

**Finchum** *Is she a 4-H member?*

**Hammond** No, she’s in Girl Scouts. No, she hasn’t joined 4-H.

**Finchum** *So no county fairs.*

**Hammond** No, not yet. This summer she wants to make some skirts to take to the county fair, so hopefully we’ll get that done.

**Finchum** *Do you still go to the county fair?*

**Hammond** Yes.

**Finchum** *Do you?*

**Hammond** Yes, I do a lot of judging. I do the canning, most of the canning judging, at Grady County, at Payne County, Canadian County, Grady County. I judge at least five fairs a year.

**Finchum** *You can do as many as you want, I guess.*

**Hammond** Yes.

**Finchum** *Describe a typical day for us, like the last ten years of your work, a typical day. I know there are not too many typical days, but…*

**Hammond** No…

**Finchum** *You’d get to the office by…*

**Hammond** Eight o’clock, yes, the phone would be ringing. We’d get lots of questions, depending upon the season. If it was summertime, we got lots of food questions. If it was a holiday, you get food safety questions, food cooking questions, how to cook a turkey, how to thaw a turkey. “I left my turkey in the freezer. Will I have turkey for Thanksgiving or Christmas.” (Laughs) Or, “Give me your favorite recipe for a pecan pie or a chocolate cake, or a salad,” or whatever. You’d be on the phone quite a bit. Then you’d have office visitors in the summertime. We tested pressure cookers and pressure cooker lids for safety. People would bring in sewing machines, saying, “My sewing machine is clogged up. Can you help me get it untangled?” If you had time, you’d do that.

**Finchum** *And you knew how to do that?*

**Hammond** Yes, I knew how to do all of that. Or they’d bring in something, a clothing project that was stopped. “How do I finish this?” There was never a dull moment.

**Finchum** *You kept a tickler file with recipes in it?*

**Hammond** Yes, , and we also had USDA recipes, recipes from Stillwater. Then we had resource cookbooks. We always were given a list of recommended sources of accurate information that we could pull from.

**Finchum** *Tried and true recipes.*

**Hammond** Yes, tried and true, right.

**Finchum** *Did you do a cookbook for any of your recipes?*

**Hammond** Yes, we did specialty cookbooks for our families. We did cakes and pies, recipes for fruits and vegetables. Whatever the program we were doing, we would do a little specialty pamphlet-like thing, three or four pages. Then one year my nutrition assistants wanted to do their favorite recipes to give to the families, so we did a small cookbook that each of the enrolled families received, a recipe booklet from the nutrition assistant. All of them signed the recipes.

**Finchum** *So I guess you’re pretty good. If you see a recipe, you can read through it real quick and say, “Oh, that’s not going to work.”*

**Hammond** Yes. (Laughs) Then after I retired, the black newspapers wanted me to be their recipe person. I did that for a few years, but then that got old because I had to search out lots of recipes to put in a weekly paper. Finally I told Carol, I said, “I’ve run out of recipes.” (Laughs) I haven’t done that for quite a while, so people at church say, “I don’t see your recipes in the paper.” I told them I had to stop doing that; I kind of ran out.

**Finchum** *Would you cook them before you put them in the paper?*

**Hammond** Of course, yes. They were definitely recipes that I knew worked, right, yes.

**Finchum** *What do you miss most about the job?*

**Hammond** The people, meeting lots of people. I still run into people that say, “You were the nutrition person at OSU,” or, “You were the so-and-so,” or, “You helped me do so-and-so.” I don’t have a clue who they are, but people know you because they came to the programs that you did and recognize you out. I saw a lady at the garden center the other day in Edmond, and she was like, “Loveta!” I was like, “Yes?” She said, “I haven’t seen you since you left the Extension office.” I told her, “Yes, it’s been eight years.” I hadn’t seen her in eight years, but they recognize you.

**Finchum** *Did you remember her name?*

**Hammond** Yes, I did, Donna Sharp.

**Finchum** *I’d have had to say, “Can you remind me?” (Laughs)*

**Hammond** No, I knew who she was. She was in one of the groups that I serviced when I worked.

**Finchum** *Well, it’s a career where you touch a lot of lives.*

**Hammond** Yeah, you really do.

**Finchum** *Some you don’t realize how much, I guess.*

**Hammond** How much, you don’t, sure don’t, but you make a difference in people’s lives, and they remember it.

**Finchum** *So from 2006 on, what have you been doing besides that with recipes?*

**Hammond** I was very active in my neighborhood association. I think I was president for, like, three years after I retired. I volunteered with RSVP [Retired and Senior Volunteer Program], volunteered to do calling for the political side. I joined Triad, which is a group that helps seniors learn about scams that happen to you. I sub for my sister at Metro Tech some. Let’s see. What else did I do?

**Finchum** *So not really retired?*

**Hammond** No, no I’m still busy, still doing a lot of things.

**Finchum** *If someone came to you and said, “I’m thinking about doing this…” how would encourage them, or would you encourage them?*

**Hammond** To be in Extension?

**Finchum** *Yes.*

**Hammond** Well, yes, I would tell them it would be a great career if you are a person who likes to help people. It would be excellent. Just get in there and give it your all.

**Finchum** *And it’s not a forty-hour-a-week job?*

**Hammond** No, it’s more than forty. We were told, “You work until your job is done,” so you would—a lot of late evenings, a lot of programs. We did Lunch and Learn programs, and then we also did night programs because we had to meet all the audiences that were interested in whatever you had to offer. So, no, the job does not end at five o’clock, so you have to be flexible.

**Finchum** *And do you get comp time?*

**Hammond** No, no, there was no such thing as comp time.

**Finchum** *You get rewards other ways, I guess.*

**Hammond** Right. I think the new generation is used to going to work from eight to five, so they’re kind of finding it difficult to stay at work after the five o’clock hour. I think a lot of the Extension officers are trying to offer flex time and different ways in which you can get your forty hours in.

**Finchum** *They’re changing, trying to keep up with the times, too.*

**Hammond** Yes.

**Finchum** *You were in the business at a good time.*

**Hammond** Yes, I was, right.

**Finchum** *Anything else you want to add before I ask my last question?*

**Hammond** Well, no, I’d just like to say how it had been a interesting career. I’ve enjoyed it, and I would do it again if I were younger. (Laughter)

**Finchum** *Well, I usually end my interviews with having you tell me when history’s written about you, what would you like for it to say?*

**Hammond** Well, let’s see, that I enjoyed my work, I like helping people, and, I don’t know, I was dedicated to my job, I guess. That would be what I would like for them to say.

**Finchum** *In the state of Oklahoma, too.*

**Hammond** Right, right.

**Finchum** *Well, I thank you for your service, and for your time here today. It’s been a pleasure meeting you.*

**Hammond** Well, thank you. I’ve enjoyed it.

***------- End of interview*** *-------*