

University of Arkansas,  
United States Department  
of Agriculture, and County  
Governments Cooperating

No. 8

August 2015

## Retiree Spotlight

*Robert Seay  
Kenneth Williams*

## Inside

*Reathel Hicks Dies*

*Ava Rodgers Dies*

*September  
Birthdays*

*From the  
Editorial Board*



**DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE  
RESEARCH & EXTENSION**  
*University of Arkansas System*

## Seay Remembers Unique County Assignments and Good People

For many years, Robert Seay wrote a weekly column for the Benton County *Daily Record* newspaper, and it was rarely difficult to come up with topics since Extension work is interesting on a daily basis.

Not to mention he had lots of material saved up after working in various counties through the years, all the while following the adage: "When in Rome, do as the Romans do."

"Every county is different," Seay noted. "Great people, just all unique."

Seay started working for Extension in 1973 as a 4-H agent in Independence County. He'd never even heard of Extension or 4-H until he transferred to the University of Arkansas to finish up his poultry science degree and then a master's in agriculture education. But he soon learned all about the organization.

After Independence County, Seay moved to White County for six years. While there, rice producers took him under their wing and taught him all about the crop. He said

the county was full of great people.

Next, Seay went to Izard County, which he said has "salt of the earth people."

"I really hesitated when it came time to transfer out of there," he said, noting that his oldest son was there during his formative years and, as a result, is now working for Arkansas Game & Fish in Newton County, which is a lot like Izard County.

Seay said what really helped him to become accepted in Izard County was a whole lot of time and, eventually, finding out that his grandmother's father had been born there. Suddenly, he was kin.

After Izard County, Seay was promoted to staff chair in Benton County in the summer of 1987. He enjoys reminiscing about the bermuda hay forage program that he helped start while in that office. He said for over 12 years, Benton County bermudagrass growers pulled in tons of national awards. Northwest Arkansas became known nationwide for its quality bermudagrass.



*Robert Seay*

Seay recalled the camaraderie he developed with the many producers in the area. He still gets calls from bermudagrass producers and enjoys chatting about the forage crop.

In 2012, Seay won the John W. White Award, the Division of Agriculture's highest honor.

Seay clearly has a wealth of knowledge on a variety of crops and likes to spin a tale in the telling. That came in handy when he started writing his newspaper column, which ran the gamut from nostalgic to humorous. He remains humble, though. He mentioned that Mary Hightower was a great editor.

*(Cont., page 3)*

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## Williams Fills His Time With Family, Community Service

Kenneth Williams and his wife, Mary, have visited 23 countries, several more than once, nine of those since he retired from Extension a decade ago.

Next summer the whole family, which includes the Williams' daughter, Heather, her husband, Chris, and their two children, will go to Hawaii together. Williams and his wife have been there nine times already and are solid "tour guides" by now.

The Williams' latest trip was a little more domestic. They went to Eureka Springs to celebrate their wedding anniversary on Aug. 9. The two visited the town on their honeymoon 40 years ago and wanted to reminisce.

The two got married about a year after Williams took a job with Extension as an assistant county agent in Lincoln County in 1974. Prior to that, Williams had been a farm manager in Newport. Prior to that, he had earned his bachelor's and master's degrees at the University of Arkansas.

Williams' second Extension job took him to Dumas in Desha County, where he was an associate county agent.

When Williams was promoted to staff chair in Ashley County in Hamburg, he and his wife knew they'd found home. They remained

there after Williams retired in January 2005.

Upon retiring, Williams immediately started helping his wife, who runs a community food pantry in Hamburg.

"I'm the chief go-fer," he joked. "I go for this and I go for that."

He continues to help her to this day.

He's also active in the First Baptist Church of Hamburg, and a few years ago, he led the campaign to raise a million dollars for a new family life center on the church campus. They paid it off in five years, which was an impressive feat.

Williams is also a deacon in the church, teaches a couple's adult Sunday school class and sings in the choir.

The Williams' are proud grandparents to a grandson, Christopher, who will be a high school sophomore this fall, and a granddaughter, Haley, who will be a senior. The two grands live in Texas with their parents.

The Williams' are also passionate about the Razorbacks football team. Kenneth Williams has only missed a handful of games that have been played in Arkansas since he was 10 years old. Raised in Northeast Arkansas,



*Mary and Kenneth Williams in Pisa, Italy.*

Williams went to all the Little Rock and Fayetteville games. Since retiring, he hasn't missed any of the games – home or away.

Williams is also active in the National Association of County Agricultural Agents and is looking forward to helping Arkansas host the national meeting next year. The last time it was held in Arkansas was 1992 and Williams was the national annual meeting committee chair.

To reconnect with Kenneth Williams, contact him at 870-853-2334, 816 Pine Ridge Drive, Hamburg, Ark. 71646.

*– Shannon Magsam*

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## Reathel Hicks, Retired Administrative Support Supervisor, Dies

Reathel Virginia Hicks, 85, of Rogers, passed away Aug. 4 in Bentonville.

Hicks was a member of Black Oak Baptist Church. She retired as office administrator for the Washington County Extension Service after 26 years of service.

She was secretary of the Whitehouse Volunteer Fire Department and chairman of polling in her home precinct. She was a fan of the Razorbacks and the St. Louis Cardinals.

Hicks is survived by her daughters, Rebecca Wey of Rogers and Anita Jo Roberts of Springdale, and three grandsons.

Funeral services were Aug. 10 at Westfield Chapel in Springdale. Memorials may be made to the Arkansas Baptist Children's Home, 1925 Green Acres Road, Fayetteville, Ark. 72703, or Gideons International.

## Ava Rodgers, Former State Leader - Home Economics, Dies

Dr. Ava D. Rodgers, age 83, died July 7 at her home in Thomson, Georgia. The funeral service was July 12 at Dearing Baptist Church, Dearing, Georgia.

Rodgers taught home economics in Georgia, held several positions with the University of Georgia Cooperative Extension Service and was an assistant professor of housing and interior design at Florida State University before coming to Arkansas Extension, where she served as state leader - Extension home economics in Little Rock from 1969 to 1974.

She retired from the USDA as deputy administrator – home economics and human nutrition, Extension Service, in Washington, D.C.

Survivors include numerous nieces and nephews. Memorials may be made to Dearing Baptist Church or a charity of one's choice.

## September Birthdays

Kay Dickens, Sept. 1	Raymond Benz, Sept. 16
Alberta James, Sept. 1	Charles Albritton, Sept. 17
Vernon Wills, Sept. 1	Irene Carlock, Sept. 18
Diana Baker, Sept. 4	Steven Simpson, Sept. 18
James Denton, Sept. 4	Sherylon Mason, Sept. 20
Johnnie Younger, Sept. 5	Bill Jones, Sept. 21
Robert Blake, Sept. 6	June Williams, Sept. 21
Jean Crow, Sept. 6	Mike Wright, Sept. 21
Carol Sanders, Sept. 8	Tom Mertens, Sept. 23
Barbara Singleton, Sept. 8	Willie Booker, Sept. 25
Venetta Rice, Sept. 9	Stephen Vann, Sept. 27
Jerry Wooley, Sept. 9	William Dodgen, Sept. 28
Catherine Grills, Sept. 12	Don Plunkett, Sept. 28
Lee Hunter, Sept. 12	Henry Rice, Sept. 28
Bill Wallace, Sept. 12	Bettie Wilson, Sept. 30
Loretta Smith, Sept. 14	

## From the Editorial Board

The 2016 retiree luncheon will be held on Wednesday, March 17, 2016, at the Galaxy Conference on Petit Jean Mountain at the Winthrop Rockefeller Institute Conference Center.

Mark the date on your calendar and make plans to attend the luncheon and the conference, which is March 16-18.



The 2015 Arkansas Rice Expo was held Friday, Aug. 7, in Stuttgart. About 1,000 people attended this year's Expo, which is the Division of Agriculture's annual celebration of the rice industry.

The Expo included a rice recipe contest and children's activities and featured speaker Gov. Asa Hutchinson.



The Arkansas 4-H Shooting Sports team members were big winners in their first ever appearance at the 4-H Shooting Sports National Championship in Grand Island, Nebraska, on June 21-26. Surprising their competitors, they won six top 10 placements including first place air rifle team, first place overall individual and first place in the muzzleloader competition.

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## Robert Seay (cont. from p. 1)

"I could send her a horse biscuit and she could turn it into a polished apple," he deadpanned.

Seay is also an honorary Master Gardener for life in Benton County.

Mostly, though, he's PaPa who enjoys his wife, kids and grandkids. The Seays have been married for 44 years and have three children and seven grandchildren.

Benton County is his wife's, Lisa's, home county and that's where they have remained in retirement.

To reconnect with Robert Seay, contact him at 479-248-1922, P.O. Box 96, Cave Springs, Ark. 72718.

– Shannon Magsam



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