

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

No. 9

September 2014

## Love of Agriculture Led Tomerlin to Career in Extension

### Retiree Spotlight

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Martha May*

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

**N**ora “Fran” Tomerlin was a recently divorced grandmother working as a floral designer when a friend asked what she planned to be doing four years hence.

“Well, probably sitting right here, doing what I’m doing,” Tomerlin replied.

Her friend encouraged her to dream a little about what a college degree might mean to her future. She suggested nursing. Nope. Teaching school? Tomerlin said no again. When Tomerlin’s friend mentioned agriculture, she lit up and decided that was something she’d definitely be interested in learning more about.

Tomerlin said her family moved around a lot, but right before her junior year in high school, they settled in Hamburg. Her dad raised a big garden, and she loved helping with the garden.

So Tomerlin decided to earn an agriculture degree and was pleased to start working for

Extension just a few months after graduating from UAM. Her first job was in Chicot County, where she was an agriculture agent based in Lake Village.

She worked there for nearly a dozen years before her position changed to working half the time in Chicot County and half in Ashley County. After another change, she started working as a 4-H agent in Chicot County exclusively.

She retired in June of 2012.

Tomerlin had only been retired for about three months when she started itching to work again. She’s currently the president of the Master Gardeners of the Delta and a gardening consultant. She landscapes, plans and plants ornamental gardens, maintains and prunes. She does it all.

With her boundless energy, Tomerlin’s children often remark



Nora “Fran” Tomerlin

that they hope they inherited the hardworking gene that she seems to possess.

“They say, ‘You just keep going,’” Tomerlin said with a laugh. “I say if you keep busy doing the things you like, you look younger and you act younger.”

She still gets phone calls from folks who have Extension-related questions and she’s happy to answer them. In her downtime, Tomerlin enjoys swimming, quilting and fishing for “anything that will bite my bait.” Tomerlin fishes Grand Lake in Eudora, Lake Village, Lake Chicot

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## Retired Staff Chair Martha May Still ‘Running’ the Show

After Martha May retired as staff chair in Walnut Ridge five years ago, she started running.

She completed 5Ks, 10Ks and then a half marathon. She has also added road biking to her list of hobbies and has twice ridden the Big Dam Bridge – Arkansas’ Largest Cycling Tour. When possible, May bikes with friends she met through the Women Can Ride organization.

May also likes making quilts, something she didn’t have time to do while she was working for Extension. About 2½ years ago, she started working for the Food Bank of Northeast Arkansas and oversees two programs: Backpacks for Kids and Senior Box. She does all the purchasing and works with volunteers who pack and distribute the food.

She recently began coordinating local efforts for a nationwide hunger study in the 12-county area that the Food Bank of Northeast Arkansas serves.

When May isn’t running, biking, piecing quilts, working at the food bank or taking part in a Bible study at church, she and her husband Mark are building a small cabin in Lawrence County. They tore down an old barn over



Martha May

the summer and are repurposing that wood for their cabin.

May is originally from Benton and retired to Jonesboro. She first started working for Extension in the 1970s as a county Extension agent - family and consumer sciences in Yell County after graduating with a master’s degree in home economics from the University of Arkansas.

She knew about Extension because her mother and grandmother had both been part of Extension Homemakers groups and May had been a member of 4-H as a child.

After about two years in Booneville, May transferred to Lonoke County for nearly

seven years. Then she moved to Newport in 1984. She worked for about three weeks, then gave birth to her son. Six weeks later she came back to work, where she remained in the county Extension agent - family and consumer sciences position for nearly 10 years. May then went to Craighead County for about eight years. She was then promoted to staff chair in Lawrence County and remained there for three years.

“I liked the variety of the work,” May said of Extension. “I liked the constant change.”

May recalled one trip in particular where she helped transport students to the 4-H O-Rama for the first time. She said one girl rode the elevator 85 times because she’d never been on one before. “The 4-H trips are some of my best memories,” she said.

The May’s two children are doing well out of the nest. Their son is a first-year medical student at UAMS, and their daughter works as an industrial engineer for Dillard’s.

To reconnect with Martha May, contact her at 870-930-9191, 4121 Stephanie Lane, Jonesboro, Ark. 72401. – *Shannon Magsam*

## Fran Tomerlin

(cont. from p. 1)

and various other good spots. She has also been the treasurer at her home church for about 20 years.

Tomerlin loves spending time with her family, which includes three children, two sons-in-law, four granddaughters and one great-grandson.

Tomerlin also keeps her florist skills up to date. She recently created all the flower arrangements for her great niece’s wedding in Heber Springs.

“I stay busy,” she said. “I get to do a lot of things.”

To reconnect with Fran Tomerlin, contact her at 870-940-0548, 260 Ashley Road 72, Hamburg, Ark. 71646.

– *Shannon Magsam*

The Editorial Board would like to congratulate **Millie Collins** on her retirement in May of this year. (We inadvertently left her off last month’s listing of recent retirees.) Millie began her Extension career in 1983 when she accepted an appointment to Dallas County as a CEA – home economics. She served there for 10 years before moving to Sharp County, where she served as a family and consumer sciences agent until her retirement in May, after almost 31 years with Extension.

## Fran Arnold, Retired District Director, Dies

Mary Frances “Fran” Arnold, 72, of Little Rock died Aug. 29.

Arnold retired as associate director for Extension’s Southwest District in 1997. She worked briefly as an Extension home economist in Howard and Pulaski counties before settling in Chicot County. She spent 23 years in Chicot County, serving first as Extension home economist before being promoted to staff chair.

Arnold was the 1986 Arkansas recipient of the Continued Excellence Award for Home Economists.

She is survived by her husband of over 40 years, Richard; a brother, John Harrison of Prescott; two sons, Jon Richard Arnold of Tupelo, Miss., and James Anthony Arnold of Little Rock; and two granddaughters.

A memorial service was held Sept. 2 at Asbury United Methodist Church in Little Rock. Donations in her memory may

be made to Asbury United Methodist Church or Alzheimer’s Association of Arkansas.

— Laura Goforth

## Honorary and Memorial Gifts

The following honorary and memorial gifts were received to support professional development opportunities for faculty and staff of the Cooperative Extension Service. This list covers honorary and memorial gifts deposited August 1-31, 2014.

### Cooperative Extension Service Retiree Scholarship

*In memory of David Ibsen  
Fann Woodward*

Honorary or memorial donations may be forwarded to the Development Office, Cooperative Extension Service, 2301 South University Avenue, Little Rock, Ark. 72204. To ensure that proper notification is sent, please also include in whose honor or memory the gift is made and the mailing address of the person to receive the notification.

## From the Editorial Board

The date for the Retiree Luncheon for 2015 has been set for April 1 and will once again be held, in conjunction with the Galaxy Conference, at the Winthrop Rockefeller Institute on Petit Jean Mountain. Please save the date on your calendar, and plan to be there to reconnect with old friends and to celebrate with the 2015 scholarship winners.

Remember the Extension Retiree Scholarship Fund as you plan your giving for the rest of the year. Through the generosity of Extension retirees, scholarships have been awarded to two classified and seven nonclassified staff; seven county staff and two Little Rock State Office staff have received the award. The scholarships help Extension employees pursue degrees or attend professional development conferences.

Please consider making a donation to recognize Extension faculty or staff (current or retired), a county office or a local leader who enthusiastically supports Extension’s programs.

Thank you for your support of the Cooperative Extension Service Retiree Scholarship.

*Your editorial board*

### Editorial Board Members

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Mary Hightower, Editor

## NEWS BRIEFS

**ED RHODES, JR.**, retired Extension artist - illustrator, has been named by Gov. Mike Beebe to the Tobacco Prevention and Cessation Advisory Committee. The appointment will run until Oct. 1, 2017.



Retirees who were on federal appointment while employed by Extension are invited to join NARFE, the National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association. NARFE has chapters in all areas of Arkansas. Contact **STAN CHAPMAN**, 501-888-6148, for more information.



Cooperative Extension Service  
2301 South University Avenue  
Little Rock, AR 72204-4940

OCTOBER BIRTHDAYS

Portia Short, October 1  
Pat Hayden, October 2  
Larry Pryor, October 2  
Stan Carter, October 3  
Frank Jones, October 3  
Gerald Klingaman, October 3  
Patsy McDougald, October 3  
Jimmie Bowling, October 5  
Judy Riley, October 5  
Jim Lipsey, October 7  
Suzanne Wiley, October 8  
Carreather Perry, October 9  
Billie Coleman, October 10  
Glen Ford, October 10  
Lorene McGuire, October 10  
Beth Roberts, October 10  
Judith Ulrich, October 11  
Lloyd Westbrook, October 11  
Armenthia Willis, October 12  
Sue Coates, October 13  
James Hood, Jr., October 14  
Carroll Prewett, October 15  
Frank Roth II, October 16  
Hugh Plumlee, October 19  
Mable Tate, October 19  
Mary Shaver, October 20  
James Clower, October 21  
Mark Bryles, October 23  
Jean Frisby, October 24  
Janice Gooch, October 27  
Janella Pugh, October 31

Yes, I will subscribe to the *Extension Cord*.

	<b>Cost</b>	<b>Amount Enclosed</b>
<i>Extension Cord</i>	\$18.00	_____

Please make check payable to **UA CES** and mail to Martha Thorpe, Communications Department, 2301 South University Avenue, Little Rock, AR 72204-4940.

Yes, I want to support the *Advance 25K: Continuing a Legacy* fundraising initiative in support of the Cooperative Extension Service Retiree Scholarship.

Enclosed is my gift of ☐ \$20.12 ☐ Other \$\_\_\_\_\_

My gift is ☐ in honor / ☐ in memory of \_\_\_\_\_

Name/Address for notification of honorary and memorial gifts:

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