

*Middle Tennessee
State University*
Albert Gore Research Center
Learning Resource Center
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Fall 2001

From the Director



It was a busy summer for the Gore Center, and Fall 2001 is shaping up to be just as busy. In July, the Gore Center's pictorial history of MTSU was published. It is currently available from Phillips Bookstore on campus or from www.arcadiapublishing.com. Ten percent of the proceeds from the sale of this book will come back to the Gore Center to support our preservation activities.

This fall, Holly Barnett returns to us as a graduate assistant. (See the Fall 2000 newsletter for a biographical sketch). She will be assuming responsibility for our photographic databases. Rich Hutchins has also joined us a graduate assistant and will be working on the Jim Cooper papers. (See this edition of the newsletter for a brief biography of Rich.) In addition to Holly and Rich, eleven undergraduate student workers are providing assistance to the Gore Center this semester. Their work includes transcribing oral histories, re-folding the Gore Papers, scanning photographs, encapsulating manuscripts, and humidifying and flattening Chancery Court documents for the Rutherford County Archives.

The 2001-2002 academic year promises to be an exciting and productive time for the Gore Center. Please continue to check our website for updates!

Dr. Lisa Pruitt

Oral History Project Continues

Staff from the Gore Research Center continue conducting interviews in an effort to record stories that capture the history of Middle Tennessee. Rose Witherspoon Spence agreed to share her memories of serving in the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (later renamed Women's Army Corps - WAC). Spence did her basic training in Des Moines, Iowa and was later stationed at Douglas Air Force base in Arizona where she served as message center chief. In recent years,

Spence has been actively involved as a field representative for the Women in Military Service for American Memorial Foundation Inc.

Rose explains that WWII changed the roles of women forever.

"It was new in our psyche. Because men were trained to be men, and women were trained to do what men said. And the war brought out, for women, the ability to dictate how they would accept change. Once a woman learned that she can command a group of women on a military base, it was no question that once she became a civilian, she could run a university. She could run an office. She could manage a church. She could run the household, and those experiences changed society."



Rose explained that military service enriched her life in many ways.



"There's Joe Lewis. That's when I met him. I met him right on the line and this is the officer who greeted him. That's Joe Lewis, and I drove him back to headquarters. And, in my job as sergeant major, when you flew into my base, when generals or important people, then he would send me down in the jeep to pick you up and bring you back to headquarters."

Rose enjoyed playing basketball while she served at Douglas Air Force base.

"It was a part of the physical training exercises. We not only did the exercises, we played sports like the men do. And we traveled to base to base and played with other women on other bases. And that was an experience because we flew all over.....I played at Camp Hood and Fort Haucha and other places around in Arizona and Texas. And so, it was a great experience. That was what I did when I got off of work."



Rose also shared her feelings that the nation learned some early civil rights lessons during WWII.



"If two soldiers are shooting, and standing side by side, and they both get killed, they are two soldiers. It's only after you look at them that you discover one is black and one is white. We learned that, and we had a job to do in our country to tell them it will not take away, it will enhance you. Because we proved it."

If you want to know more about Rose Spence's story, or perhaps you are interested in participating in the project, contact the Gore Research Center at (615)898-2632. If you would like to read more stories check the [Middle Tennessee Oral History Project](#) page of the Exhibit section of our website.

Margaret Lindsley Warden Equestrian Collection

The [Warden Equestrian Collection](#), one of the premier collections for the study of equestrian sports and businesses, is now open for researchers to use. Jennifer Beisel, a graduate student in Public History at MTSU and knowledgeable horse enthusiast, has finished processing this large and diverse body of research materials. Margaret Lindsley Warden, a former reporter for the Nashville *Tennessean*, donated her hand-written notes, rare books and newspaper clippings to the Gore Center

in 1998. Her column, "Horse Sense," ran in the *Tennessean* from 1939 to 1994. In addition to 900 monographs (some dating back to the 16th century), 3000 volumes of serial publications, and 2500 photographs, the collection includes 30 linear feet of Miss Warden's own research files. Those files contain newspaper clippings, brochures and flyers, correspondence, stud records, and much information about farms and plantations in the Middle Tennessee region.

Tennessee Legislative Conference

The Gore Center cooperated with the office of Dr. Barbara Haskew, Vice President for Academic Affairs at MTSU, in mounting a conference on September 8 to kick off the Tennessee Legislative History Project. The conference theme was "Creating a Legacy:

The Coming of Age of the Tennessee General Assembly." Moderator John Siegenthaler was joined by former governors Ned McWherter and Winfield Dunn, journalists Duren Cheek and Joel Kaplan, former State Representative and

Senator Anna Belle Clement O'Brien, and Congressmen Bill Jenkins and Bart Gordon. The luncheon address was given by the Honorable Tommy Burnett. Conference participants joined with the many people attending MTSU Founders' Day events to honor retired State Representative John Bragg. Gore Center graduate assistants Holly Barnett and Rich Hutchins prepared a six-panel exhibit on Bragg's life. Gore Center Director Dr. Lisa Pruitt researched and wrote the text of a commemorative publication highlighting Bragg's career as a legislator.

The conference kicked off a new, permanent program of the Gore Center: The Tennessee Legislative History Project. The Tennessee Legislative History Project seeks to preserve the history of the Tennessee General Assembly as represented in the papers of individual legislators and in their memories as captured on audio and video tape. The project also helps educate college students about the history of politics and public policy in Tennessee and promotes general civics education for the electorate on matters related to state government.



John and Susan Bragg stopped by the Gore Center to take a closer look at the six-panel exhibit that was on display at the Tennessee Legislative Conference.

The Albert Gore, Sr. Biography Project

The Gore Research Center has commissioned Professor Anthony Badger to write a scholarly biography of Albert Gore, Sr. Badger is the Paul Mellon Professor of American History at Cambridge University in Great Britain. A specialist in post-World War II Southern political history, Badger has already conducted significant research into Gore's stand on civil rights in the 1950s and 1960s and served as a panelist for the 1997 conference on "Albert Gore, Sr., and the New South." Professor Badger will be making regular research visits to the Gore Center over the next three years and expects to spend several months in residence in 2003.



Dr. Tony Badger and Dr. Lisa Pruitt

In addition, Michael Martin has joined the project as a full-time resident research assistant. Martin is completing his Ph.D. at the University of Arkansas. His dissertation focuses on one of Gore's contemporaries, Senator Russell Long of Louisiana.



Meet Rich Hutchins

Rich Hutchins is serving the Gore Research Center as G.T.A for the 2001-2002 academic year. With a Bachelor of Arts in History, Rich is currently working toward a Master's Degree in the field of Public History.

With an interest in archives, Rich states that "the door to the future is opened by using the keys of the past, and understanding the proper use of archives and the archiving process gives the historian a head start in the intellectual exercise known as historical inquiry."

Prior to becoming what Rich amusingly calls a "professional student," he worked for seven years in upper management in the business world.



Rich with former Tennessee State Representative John Bragg.

Celebrating Tennessee Archives Week October 1—7

In honor of Tennessee Archives Week the Gore Research Center held a reception on Friday, October 5, 2001 for the staff of the Development Division. The feature exhibit for the event was

"Documenting a Political Life: John Bragg." Other exhibits included materials from various collections at the Gore Center.

