

*Middle Tennessee
State University*

Albert Gore Research Center
Learning Resource Center
Room 111
P.O. Box 193
Murfreesboro, TN 37132



Spring 2003

From the Director



Spring has finally arrived at MTSU and, with it, another opportunity to update the campus community about the work of the Gore Research Center.

Since November, the Center has had mounted in the foyer an exhibit of materials related to veterans. Most of the display consists of colorful publicity material depicting women in World War II, but other items illustrate the history of the WWII maneuvers in Middle Tennessee and a few things touch on World War I. Please come by soon to view this display – it will come down by the end of April.

The next Gore Center exhibit will focus on a significant anniversary. Rutherford County celebrates its bicentennial this year, so we will be displaying material in the Center's collections that illuminate the County's history. The Bicentennial Celebration culminates in late October with coordinated

community-wide events. Watch this site and the *Daily News Journal* for more information in the coming months.

One of our projects this spring has been to come up with new ways to encourage MTSU faculty and students to use the Center's collections. In this issue of *The Document*, an article by graduate assistant Heather Bailey highlights some of the valuable resources that the Center has to offer researchers.

Other features in this issue include an update on exciting news from the Rutherford County Archives by County Archives graduate assistant Van Zbinden, an article by Gore Center graduate assistant Kevin Cason describing his work processing collections, and a report on the continuing Gore Biography Project by project research assistant Michael Martin.

Dr. Lisa Pruitt

Gore Biography Project Update

Tony Badger continues his work on the scholarly biography of the late Albert Gore, Sr. Tony and his research assistant, Michael S. Martin, have sifted through much of the Gore Center's resources, working both topically and chronologically through the House and Senate Collections. The research is ongoing, however, and the focus is gradually shifting towards newspapers, oral history interviews, and other archival collections. Thus far, Tony or Michael have worked through materials at the Franklin D. Roosevelt, John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson presidential libraries; the National Archives at College Park, Maryland; the Library of Congress; and various collections of Gore's political contemporaries.

While research is ongoing, the writing process also has begun. Tony presented papers before the Tennessee Conference of Historians (September 2002) and at Vanderbilt University (February 2003). On April 5, 2003, he presented a major paper entitled "Albert Gore, Sr., and the Politics of the Modern South" to the Organization of American Historians.

The Gore Biography Project is actively seeking Gore's friends, business colleagues, and political associates for interviews. If you would like to participate, or if you know of someone who might be interviewed, please contact:

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Rutherford County Archives Update

The Rutherford County Archives is moving. For those who have not heard, the Rutherford County Commission voted in December to designate the old county health building as an Archives facility. This was welcome news, since the Archives has been in urgent need of space for quite some time. The Rutherford County Historical Society, led by Dr. E. C. Tolbert, played a key role in advocating for the move, while County Executive Nancy Allen actively supported the measure. A County Archives Implementation Committee, chaired by Gore Center Director Dr. Lisa Pruitt, is working out details for renovating the space to make it accessible to the disabled and to bring safety and security features up to modern standards. In February, Middle Tennessee State University donated a large amount of shelving from the old Todd Library for use in the new facility. Target move-in date is January 2004.

Taffy Hall came to the archives in the spring of 2003 from the Center for Historic Preservation. She is preparing for comprehensive exams in April and working on her thesis. More exciting news though is that Taffy has accepted the position of Archivist at the Southern Baptist

Historical Library and Archives in Nashville. She assumes her new position in May. We hate to see great workers like Taffy leave but certainly wish her the best in this exciting new opportunity.

Van Zbinden continues as the senior graduate student at the archives. On the “three-year-plan,” Van has committed to another year at the helm of the Rutherford County Archives. He is working closely with the Rutherford County Government, Implementation Committee and Dr. Pruitt at the Gore Center to further the goals of archives.

Van Zbinden

New World War II Resource Guide at the Albert Gore, Sr. Research Center

The Albert Gore, Sr. Research Center has recently developed a topical online resource guide on World War II. Prepared and designed by Graduate Assistant Kevin Cason, the guide features individual collections at the Center that relate to broad subject areas on World War II. The subject areas include “Aviation,” “Home front,” “Maneuvers,” “Memorialization,” “Oral History,” “Political,” “Popular Culture,” and “Women at War.”

The site is intended to let researchers and others who are interested in the history of World War II become aware of relevant collections that can be found at the Center. Some of the collections, such as the Vickie L. Riggan Collection, are quite extensive, while others such as the Community Collection have only a few items. The following photographs are some of the images one can find in the collections that relate to World War II.

Kevin Cason

Newly Processed Collections at the Albert Gore, Sr. Research Center

As part of an effort to benefit users, Graduate Assistants at the Albert Gore, Sr., Research Center organize collections and prepare finding aids. This activity is called "processing." Since acquiring and processing collections are important aspects of the archive, it seems useful to describe the steps that are involved.

The Gore Center acquires its collections through donations from alumni and other interested individuals. When a collection is received, a graduate assistant inventories the contents. When the donor signs a deed of gift, he or she receives a copy of the deed of gift with a copy of the inventory attached.

The next step is processing the collection to make it usable for researchers. In this step,

the processor often discovers some type of arrangement made by the original creator. Usually, the items are grouped together by type of item or the content of the material. This grouping forms the series in the collection. If no discernible order exists, the processor organizes the materials in the way that makes them most useful. The processor then places all items in acid-free archival folders and boxes. Sometimes, the items in the donated collection may also need to be flattened or encapsulated with mylar in order to help preserve the materials.

After organizing and rehousing the collection, the processor develops a finding aid. This guide usually serves as an overview of the collection and includes the size and type of materials, date range, biographical sketch, a scope and content note, series descriptions, and a file or container listing of items.

Over the past Fall semester and the current Spring semester, Graduate Assistant, Kevin

Cason, has processed and prepared guides for five collections. They are:

[Eugene Holloway Sloan Collection](#)

[William Beasley Collection](#)

[Buford Ellington Collection](#)

[Vickie L. Riggan Collection](#)

Currently, Kevin is processing the James Gillespie papers, while Graduate Assistant Heather Bailey is processing the Mabel and Homer Pittard Collection, [John Jay Hooker Collection](#), and [Community Collection](#), and making corrections to the guides for the Warden and Hoover Collections.

Kevin Cason

Research Opportunities at the Gore Center

Tired of trying to come up with a new twist on a topic that has been worked to death? Wish you could surprise your professor with a paper on something fresh and new? This does not have to be a problem and students do not need to go far out of their way. The Albert Gore Research Center has a wealth of primary sources just waiting for someone to write about them. We have political, community, equestrian, and university collections and these materials cover just about any topic. The community collection is strong in local history, folklore, business history, literature, education history, and transportation history. The equestrian collection contains items on the history equestrian leisure events, medicine, and the American leisure class. Our political collection not only covers the careers of influential Tennessee politicians, but also gives an insight into the hot topics during their political careers. And our university collection not only holds information on the history of MTSU, but of different departments and clubs, and the development of education in Tennessee.



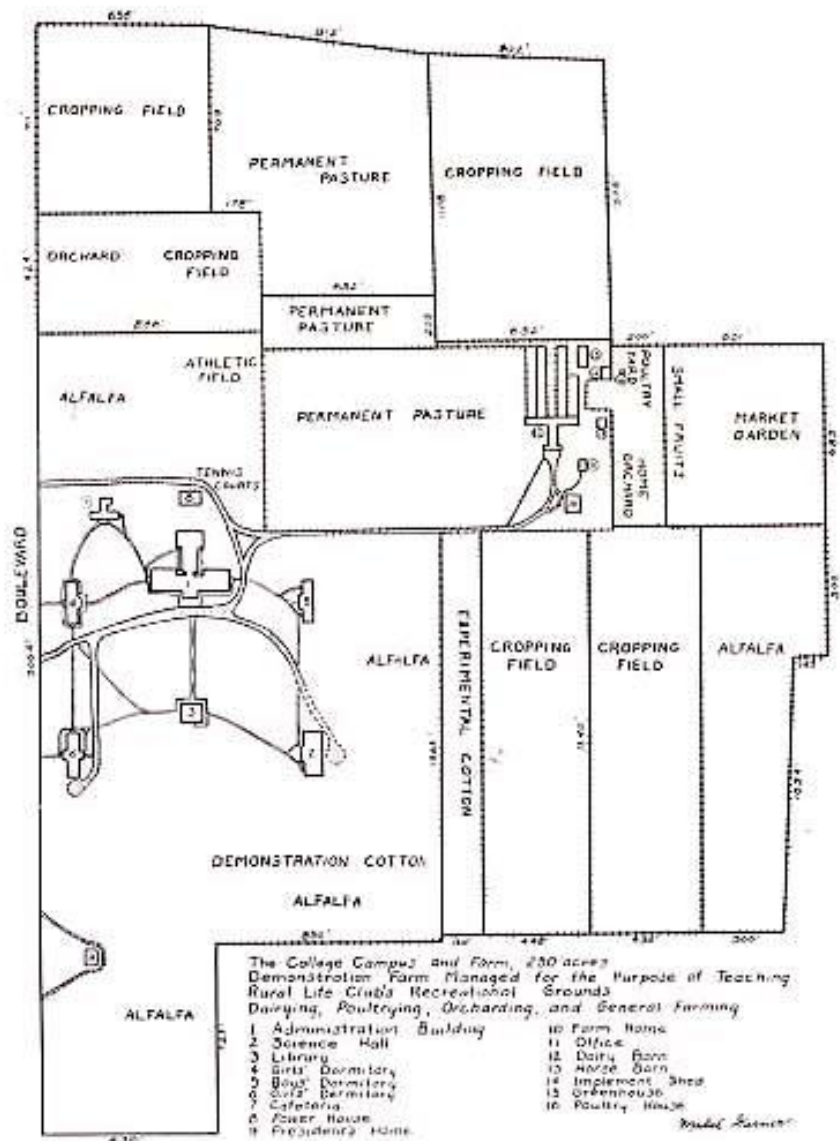
Primarily our archive contains documents, but we also have many photographs, memorabilia, and multimedia items. The people who donated their collections to us did so with the intention that their information would be available to the public. We want to encourage the public (and especially students) to tap into this wonderful resource that is right here on campus. Gone are the fears of boring papers and trying to scrounge together enough sources. Here is an opportunity to learn about something new, write an entirely original paper using material no one else has published, and get out of the same old rut.

Heather Bailey

MTSU History Corner

This campus map was included in the 1931 Midlander. It shows the location of the campus buildings and the various crop fields located on the campus. The legend states: The College Campus and Farm 250 acres. Demonstration Farm Managed for the Purpose of Teaching; Rural Life Club's Recreational Grounds; Dairying, Poultrying, Orchardring, and General Farming.

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|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Administration | 5. Boy's Dormitory | 9. President's Home | 13. Horse Barn |
| 2. Science Hall | 6. Girl's Dormitory | 10. Farm Home | 14. Implement Shed |
| 3. Library | 7. Cafeteria | 11. Office | 15. Greenhouse |
| 4. Girl's Dormitory | 8. Power House | 12. Dairy Barn | 16. Poultry House |



Oral History Project Update

“Well, here’s the first letter from your “WAVE”! This is the first line from a collection of letters written by Elinor “Lin” Johnson Folk to her mother and sister during WWII. Lin was among the first group of trainees for the newly formed military branch of the Navy WAVES – Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service. Young women came from every state, except two, to form the first unit trained at Cedar Falls, Iowa. Lin’s 150 letters written from December 13, 1942 through December 4, 1944 are now a part of the Veteran’s Oral History Collection housed at the Gore Center. Lin’s letters paint vivid descriptions of her excitement and anxiety as she travels from her home in Los Angeles, California to Iowa for basic training; on to

Atlanta to become a link trainer instructor; to assignments in Pensacola and Whiting Field in Florida. Along the way a romance blossoms and the letters detail Lin's marriage to the officer who would eventually bring her home to Tennessee. A sample letter is provided below.

Lin's letters are just another example of the fascinating memorabilia that is being placed at the Gore Center in conjunction with the Oral History Project. At the time of this writing there are 168 interviews in the collection. The stories cover a wide range of topics: veterans memories, MTSU memories, and regional history such as country stores and one-room schoolhouses. The project is ongoing. If you would like to be interviewed or if you know of someone who would be willing to share their memories for the project, please contact the Gore Research Center by email or by calling 615-898-2632.



Lin Folk and Leslie Royer

Leslie is one of the student workers who worked on the transcription of Lin's oral history interview and letters.

This letter was written when Lin Folk arrived in Atlanta to begin her training to become a Link Trainer instructor.

January 28, 1943

Hello yo'all-

Here ah is right in the hea't o' the deep South! Yes Irene and I are simply rolling in luxury here at the Atlanta Biltmore.

We arrived in Atlanta about 12:30 – last night and went to the Henry Grady Hotel. It is the next best hotel in town but nothing to rave about. This morning we had breakfast at noon and took Janet to her bus for Millageville. We had heard that we were to be quartered at the Biltmore so walked down Peachtree Street (remember in “Gone With The Wind”) to investigate. When we arrived we found Mildred Eaton and Susan Ahn already staying here. One wing of the fifth

floor is reserved for the 75 girls who are coming. So we walked in and out of all the rooms and chose the second best room for ourselves (Mildred and Susan of course got the best one). We have such wonderful comfortable beds – three in a room, plenty of drawers, lots of closet space, lamps, rugs, phone, desk, two dressers and a full length mirror and private bath. Now we're wondering just who our roommate will be. We're seriously thinking of sitting all day in the lobby so we can snare a good one when she comes in. I almost forgot we even have drapes and a hat and coat tree (or whatever you call it.)

Oh, I like Atlanta, the homes are so attractive – southern style with pillars. And the churches are beautiful. And it's such a thrill to see green grass again – the first grass I've seen since I left home. The weather is just about like our colder days at home although it does snow here every once in a while.

The hotel has a lovely garden in the back, which is a beautiful view, but we chose the other side so we could be across from Mildred and Susan. We can look out all over the city and see beautiful rolling hills beyond.

The Naval Aviation Cadets are staying on the one floor here and some Marines on another floor. (Don't worry - we never see them) and the remainder of the hotel is occupied by civilians. Lots of officers stay here and we wear ourselves out saying "good evening, sir: indoors and saluting outdoors.

Saluting is fun! We salute everything – Army, Navy, Marines, and Officers of any Allied or Neutral country. We've decided that the reason the Navy requires 20-20 vision is so you can spot the bars on an officer coming down the street. I'm just waiting for the day when I salute a policeman or doorman by accident.

Tonight the four of us ate dinner in the hotel coffee shop and had fun comparing our experiences on our respective travels. So far – Irene and I hold the record for being called funny things – we're the only ones that were called girls scouts and train stewardesses.

No one seems to know how long we'll be stationed here. It may be five weeks and it may be two or three months. I understand we will be trained downtown somewhere and not at Georgia Tech. And we will also spend some time at the Naval Air Base just out of Atlanta.

Gee, I'm so excited and can't wait to get started on our studies. We are really in with the "cream of the crop" and they are very interesting girls. But I'll bet Irene and I will really have to work to keep up with all those college educations.

This evening the house policeman opened up the ballroom for us and let us go in and play the piano. That is the place – the Georgian Ballroom – a huge room with pillars all around the sides and gorgeous crystal chandeliers – just like movies of Southern balls.

I just have to pinch myself to make sure this isn't all a dream. But if it is a dream – it's sure a good one! I felt the same way when we were staying at the elegant Palmer House. I have

never lived in such style before. But it won't spoil me, I know. And home will look awfully good when I get there. But as long as I can't be home right now I might as well enjoy all this.

Forward my mail on to me here. And be sure to send the picture. It's nice to feel settled again after so much roaming around. We have traveled through 13 states now.

Be sure to write me soon and in my next letter I hope I can enlighten you as to what we'll be studying.

All my love, Elinor