

How the Gore Papers Came to MTSU

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After Senator Albert Gore, Sr., was defeated for reelection to the U.S. Senate in 1970, his old friend and former chair of the MTSU Department of Political Science, Dr. Norman L. Parks, and I had a conversation about the Senator's future plans. I had taken over the chairmanship in 1969 and had met Gore only briefly and did not know him well. Dr. Parks and I agreed we ought to take advantage of the fact Gore was an alumnus of MTSU and see about getting him to donate his papers to the university. His long career as a member of the House of Representatives and then Senator guaranteed a treasure trove of important papers should he donate them to the university.

Dr. Parks contacted Senator Gore and won his approval for the donation. I contacted MTSU President, Dr. Mel Scarlett to get his approval for the gift. He did not hesitate to agree to receive the papers.

I got a call from Senator Gore asking if I could recommend someone to appraise the value of the collection for tax purposes. I replied I had not a clue about that.

Soon canvas mail bags, addressed to me, began arriving at my office. Dr. Scarlett said they should go to the MTSU library. Liberian John David Marshall was not receptive to having custody of the papers. He was encouraged, presumably by Dr. Scarlett, to take charge of them anyway.

For some months I got calls from John Marshall asking if it was all right for some researcher or other to have access to the papers. Of course I said yes. By this time, the papers had been put into filing cabinets in the same order they had been filed in Washington. Dr. Jim Neal of the History Department took on the archival task.

Senator Gore held back the last five years of his papers for his further use in Washington. Dr. Parks and I decided it would be good to have the former senator teach in the Political Science Department as an adjunct professor. We went to Carthage and met with him and his wife, Pauline. He was quite interested in an adjunct position.

We broached the subject with Dr. Scarlett and he seemed positive about the idea and said he would make some inquiries.

Senator Gore had made enemies in the community over his opposition to our involvement in Viet Nam. In an MTSU lecture in the late sixties, he said the US was like a man walking into a swamp believing the water would get shallower and he would come out on dry land.

Dr. Kenneth Ezell, local dentist and member of the Board of Regents and Chairman of the Rutherford County Republican Party, was hostile to both Gore and Scarlett. Word came to me that the former senator would not be made an adjunct professor in the department.

Because there were still five years of papers in Washington, I was a little concerned Gore might feel so insulted about the rebuff from his alma mater, he might take back the papers or at least send no more. Senator Albert Gore, Sr. exhibited no annoyance at the withdrawal of the offer and when I next met him at a reception honoring him as a Distinguished Alumnus, he made no mention of the unpleasantness. We talked about his prize Black Angus cattle and other non-political matters.

Others can pick up the tale of the Gore Center from this point and it is worth a full description by some knowledgeable person. My tale is told.

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