

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW  
WITH  
EDWIN VOORHIES

14 JUNE 1995

MURFREESBORO, TENNESSEE

INTERVIEWED BY REGINA FORSYTHE  
FOR THE Q. M. SMITH ORAL HISTORY PROJECT  
INTERVIEW #QMS.004

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Albert Gore". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

ALBERT GORE RESEARCH CENTER

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MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY

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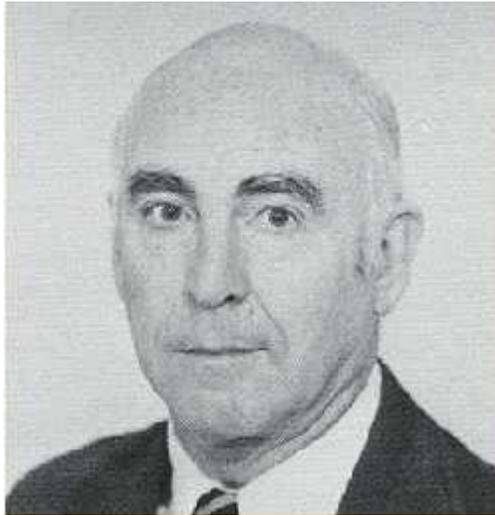
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## ABSTRACT



**ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW WITH  
EDWIN VOORHIES**

**Q. M. SMITH ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**

**INTERVIEW #QMS.004**

**FORSYTHE:** This tape is part of the Q. M. Smith Collection designated as QMS.1995.4. This is Regina Forsythe, I am interviewing Dr. Edwin Voorhies. Today is Wednesday June 14, 1995. The interview is being conducted in the Gore Research Center, Room 111 of the Ned McWherter Learning Resource Center. The Wright Music Building.

**VOORHIES:** The Wright Music Building is the only significant building built after the Murphy Center in the 1970s. The only one built in the 1980s was the Mass Communications Building. When I retired in 1985, we had about 12,000 students, and I thought we were loaded. Now, we have 17,000 [students], and these are the only three buildings that have been built since I retired including the Nursing Building. No, the Wright Building was built before I retired, but the Mass Comm and the Nursing Building are the only ones that have been built since. I don't know where they are putting all the students. What you read about is that we are going to get a new Business and Aerospace Building and a new library. These are sorely needed because classrooms, some laboratories, and offices were full when I retired when enrollment was fifty percent less[than it is now]. Now, having larger classes and extending the hours is the only way they have been able to keep up with enrollment. The Wright Music Building has a smaller auditorium with less than half of the seating capacity of the Tucker Auditorium. Tucker [Theater] is the Dramatic Arts part of the building named the Boutwell Building. We needed a smaller facility with acoustics for music to be used for recitals and concerts, which serves the music purpose much better than [Tucker Theater]. President Scarlett during his administration finally got together enough money to build that one building that had been needed for such a long time. [He did this] by getting help from the legislature in the form of appropriations. [We needed the building] many years before we were able to finance it. I'm sure it has served a good purpose. President Smith had hired Neil Wright and his wife Margaret Wright who were from Nashville to start the music program. He didn't have a strong music department until he hired the Wrights, and they were hired about 1947. They developed a good strong music program, a larger faculty, and a concert program for the community. The main need had been [a suitable] building, and that building has served those needs very well.

**FORSYTHE:** Tucker Theater.

VOORHIES: The Tucker Theater was originally in front of the Boutwell Building. It was named later because Mrs. Tucker had done such a good job in the Dramatics Program. It was all built as a part of the Boutwell Building.

FORSYTHE: Stark Agriculture Building.

VOORHIES: As I mentioned previously, the Agriculture Center [consisted of] three of those little wooden buildings that came from Camp Forrest. [These buildings were originally to provide] married student apartments for the GIs in Vet Village. After we built some maintenance facilities, we had a little shop there for the agriculture people to use when maintenance moved out of it about 1950. The other two buildings were classrooms and offices for the agriculture program, and they also had an area that they were farming - small areas on this campus. [President Smith was very] interested in the agriculture program, and he [acquired more land for it as time went on]. We only had Mr. Gracy, who Gracy Hall is named after, who had been here twenty years when I came in 1949 and retired a little bit later. We did not have a Department of Agriculture then. He started the program in agriculture, and [put as much into it] as he could afford to finance. He began to hire people because he wanted to develop a Vocational Education Program. He knew what that was and had been interested in it for a long time. It was like the ROTC, and he had that in his mind when he wanted to develop it. He hired Vocational Agriculture teachers: Mr. Jaggars, Mr. Parks, and Dr. Stark, who was also a member, I believe, of the class that started here in 1911 when President Smith was a student. Dr. Stark had gone on to Cornell [University], and became the Chairman of the Agriculture Department there. [After he] retired there, he moved back to Hickman County, his home. President Smith persuaded Dr. Stark to come here, and he started the first organized Agriculture Department. He was chairman of it, and that's why the building is named after him. He did as much farming as he could. If you remember, I said where Memorial Gym is now was a cornfield. Wherever there were parts of the campus that they could farm, they farmed. They had a dairy barn where the Art Barn is now. They hired a Farm Manager, Joe Little who was the former captain of the [University of Tennessee] football team. He coached the football team, but he had a Vocational Education background. He ran the farm and lived in an old stucco house over there.

FORSYTHE: Where was that house located?

VOORHIES: Where the [Stark] Agriculture Building is right now. It was in a grove of oak trees at that time. When I came back here in 1957 after I had been gone a year, we lived in that old building with our three children for a year until we found a place to live. That was part of the deal in my coming back. I said, "I don't want to be rushed into buying a house. I want to take my time and buy where I want to buy." We rented that place for \$60 dollars a month including all utilities, and they kept the grass cut for me. It was a good deal. We lived over there by the dairy barn for a year. The farm had dairy cattle, and had some beef cattle too that they

bought and sold. But they milked the dairy cattle in that old barn [now the Art Barn], and sold the milk to the cafeteria. When we first came here, we lived over on Crescent Avenue, which is just a block from Memorial Gymnasium. They delivered milk to the faculty that lived around [campus]. It was about three-fourths cream. The richest milk I ever saw. That is the way they financed the farm operation - by selling the milk to the school cafeteria. Later on, they moved it out. Dr. Stark bought a farm while he was here. [It was] about 300 acres. The interstate cut it in two, and at that time it was still called the Stark Farm. After Dr. Stark retired, he gave that farm to MTSU, and now they still farm it. Now [Interstate] 840 is going to cut through it also. So, it is divided into four parts now, and there is very little left to farm. The dairy operation is still out there, and they are still milking cows out there. They have it computerized now where they measure the feed that each cow takes. If one cow gets too much feed and doesn't give enough milk, they sell her. That's the way the dairies operate now, and the students learn it that way. At the same time Dr. Stark gave us that farm, he also gave away 950 acres of hills and trees in Hickman County [Tennessee] [to MTSU]. He sold off a 300-acre farm along Duck River near Centerville, Tennessee. I made several trips down there [the Hickman property] trying to figure out what we could use it for. It is still there, and we are not using it much except that we allow the Hickman County School System to use it, to help students understand ecology and the environment. Dr. Stark got the Agriculture Department started and made a great contribution to the program. And that is the reason they named the building after him. We finally replaced the temporary buildings with the building that is there now. It is a very useful building; it was very well planned. We had nursing and agriculture in there. With a gift, we were able to build a Nursing Building. Now, Agriculture has it all. They have grown over the years and are still going strong. They have a good Agriculture Program, and have a good reputation. We finally achieved a Vocational Agriculture Program, after so many years of trying. President Smith helped. It was later on when we were able to hire Mr. Charlie Dunn that he finally got us the first state's approval for Vocational Agriculture.

FORSYTHE: The Tennessee Livestock Center.

VOORHIES: The Livestock Center was conceived by the agriculture people here primarily by Dr. Bob Garrigus and John Bragg, who both had a lot to do with it. Dr. Garrigus and a lot of the other faculty in the Agriculture Department had been actively working with beef cattle people, horse people, and swine groups from all over the state. They needed a center to have their meeting. [Because MTSU is near] the geographical center of the state, they were able to sell the state on building a center on this campus. The state appropriated the money to build a Livestock Center to help those organizations so that animal science people throughout the state could have a central place to hold their meetings. It has been expanded over the years. They have a place to seat several thousand [people] for a horse show, and it is air conditioned now. There is something going on over there just about every weekend all year round even during the week in some cases. The horse

program grew out of that whole thing. For the public service horse program, we brought one young man named Dave Whittaker to serve as Public Service to the horse people. This is the Tennessee Walking Horse Center. From that we got what might be a \$20 million grant because the man who gave that grant was interested in the horse program and knew we were doing something with it.

FORSYTHE: Bragg Graphic Arts Building.

VOORHIES: President Scarlett deserves a lot more credit than he receives. His background is in Mass Communications. President Scarlett spent the money some of the other presidents accumulated. The reason he did it was because he was vitally interested in academic programs. Anytime somebody could improve the academic program, they would go to him and ask for money. He would give it to them. Sometimes he almost over did it. As a matter of fact, he ran short of funds, whereas, President Smith and President Cope had been very careful of expenditure of funds. Dr. Ingram, after Dr. Scarlett, was very good about conserving funds and having them when you needed them for important things. Dr. Scarlett was so interested in developing an academic program, he didn't watch the budget as closely as he might have done. In realizing that, Vice President Bass was hired and took good care of the program and kept him out of trouble on that score, so it worked out all right. Two good reasons the enrollment of this institution is what it is now are the Mass Communications and Aerospace Programs. Dr. Scarlett took good care of those two programs. I know because I was here, and I helped. Aerospace was an extension of what President Smith had done. He built the foundation, [established] a base, and hired Miller Lenoir who later became state administrator for Aerospace and developed a lot of influence. Later on he came back to MTSU. Upon that base, we started the Aerospace program when I was chairman of the Department of Industrial Studies as part of the Industrial Studies Department. As soon as it got big enough, we made a department out of it. It has grown ever since. Mass Communications started when I became Dean of Basic and Applied Science, which was created because we wanted to get the Business School accredited. So, we separated all the departments that were in the School of Business and Industry and left all the departments in the School of Business that were going to be a part of the accreditation. We moved math and sciences in with it. The Department of Journalism was without a home, so I got that too. President Scarlett had a background in journalism, so he was very much interested. In 1971, we hired Ed Kimbrell as the one journalism teacher. We created a department when we hired a few other people. Now it [Mass Communication] has four departments, a school and about 2,500 majors, all from that one faculty member we hired in 1971. Dr. Scarlett deserves a great deal of credit for that because that is where a lot of our enrollment is coming from now. He helped to create the Aerospace Department, and he helped build it into such a program that it has established a national reputation and attracted students from all over the country including a deal with the city for an airport. They have a laboratory for training Aerospace people to be aircraft mechanics, so they are qualified and certified to go into work

in addition to the regular programs of Flight Instruction and Aerospace Administration and so forth. Dr. Scarlett also deserves credit for the doctorate programs we have now.

FORSYTHE: Midgett Business Building.

VOORHIES: That was part of the building that used to be the gymnasium. It had a dressing room on the first floor and gymnasium on the top two floors. I recall when I was in high school at East High in Nashville we used to have teams that won the district championship five years in a row. We came up here to play in the regional tournament held on the MTSC campus. They started playing basketball at 6:00 in the morning and played until midnight to handle that regional tournament. They didn't have any seats in the place. They had railings at the top, and you stood up there to watch the ballgames. When we built Memorial Gymnasium, we gutted that part of the building and built three floors of classrooms and office space. Then we turned it over to Mr. Midgett who was Chairman of the Business Education Department. The Business Department broke up into Business Administration, Marketing and Management, Accounting, and Business Education. Business Education was back there in that part of the building. Mr. Midgett was a former football coach, and a graduate of Tennessee Tech. He had quite a reputation as a football player. President Smith knew him at Tennessee Tech and hired him to coach here. Midgett's last year [coaching] was 1946, and then [Pres. Smith] hired Coach Murphy. Mr. Midgett had a business background, and when he quit coaching, Mr. Smith named him head of the Department of Business. He had his offices in that building, so they named that building after him.

FORSYTHE: Cummings Hall.

VOORHIES: Cummings Hall was the first high rise dormitory we built. We needed more dormitory space, and especially more space for women. We ran out of room where Rutledge Hall, Lyon Hall, and Monohan Hall were located, so we had to move to this side of campus. We built a couple of those dormitories behind the Bragg Building. We had that Fire Training Center in between, so we built some women's dormitories on the other side of it. On this side of it, we built Cummings Hall. We did it to conserve ground space. Then we built the other one, Corlew Hall, in line with it because that worked out pretty well. We were trying to get more rooms for women, because men could stay in town a little easier. That Bragg Building, I got off track. When we started the Mass Communication Program, we expanded journalism into several things Public Relations, Graphic Arts, and Music. All those were under one department in the beginning - Mass Communications. We couldn't afford to buy what we needed in order to teach Graphic Arts in a way we should teach it. So, we got connected with the Graphic Arts Association in Nashville and got their backing. John Bragg owned Courier Printing. That was his business, and now his son has it. He went on to the State Legislature. He was in the national organization of printers, which is very strong,

and very interested in backing educational institutions that teach printing. We became closely connected to them and became part of that group. We hired an instructor who was a member. We moved Harold Baldwin, who was teaching in the Industrial Studies Department and was very much interested in photography to the Mass Communications Department where he taught the photography part. We hired Mr. Hill to teach the printing part. The Graphic Arts Association made donations, and they put the equipment in that building. We got some of the most up-to-date printing equipment of that time, which was given to us. We were crowded for space, and we needed a printing and photography area. So we moved out the Fire Instructional Program, and moved [printing and photography] in that building. We remodeled that building later on and named it after John Bragg, who was responsible for getting a lot of that done. As a State Representative, he has gotten any number of things done that couldn't have been done any other way except with his help. Dr. Kimbrell, who became Chairman of Mass Communications Department and Dean of the School, and John Bragg went to work for two or three years trying to get enough money from the state government to build a new Mass Communications Building.

FORSYTHE: Corlew Hall.

VOORHIES: Corlew Hall was just another high rise dormitory that we found a need for and built beside Cummings Hall. Cummings Hall had worked out so well, we just duplicated it and put it in the only space we had. We went east with it.

FORSYTHE: Felder Hall.

VOORHIES: Those are wings on Lyon Hall, and McHenry. Ms. Felder was in charge of all the ladies who stayed in dormitories. Housemothers, we called them at that time, or dorm mothers. Ms. Felder was the head dorm mother, and she controlled the others, and they named it after her.

FORSYTHE: Wood Hall.

VOORHIES: That's just another men's dorm named after a fellow named Randy Wood. We had another Randy Wood who was chairman of our Aerospace Department for awhile. He was one of the first instructors we hired, and then he became chairman. This Randy Wood [that Wood Hall is named in honor of] was the owner of Dot Records in Gallatin, but he was a graduate of MTSC. He used to live in the dorm and sell sandwiches. He paid his way through college like that. He was a resourceful fellow. He built a big record industry, moved it to California, and made a lot of money. He donated a lot of money as alumni to this campus, so they named [Wood Hall] after him.

FORSYTHE: Gore Hall.

VOORHIES: That is named after Senator [Albert] Gore, Sr. It's just another one of the men's dorms in the area. President Smith laid out for the development of men's dorms.

FORSYTHE: Deere Hall.

VOORHIES: Same thing. [It was] named after Jack Deere, who was the Assistant Football Coach and long time teacher of physical education. He was very popular with faculty and students, and he helped the athletic and alumni programs. He was one of the more popular instructors we had. He made a lot of contributions to the place. He was also a graduate of MTSC. Because he made a lot of contributions over the years, after he died, we named the building after him.

FORSYTHE: That is the end of this tape.