

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW
WITH
DAN SCOTT

26 JUNE 1995

MURFREESBORO, TENNESSEE

INTERVIEWED BY REGINA FORSYTHE
FOR THE Q. M. SMITH ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
INTERVIEW #QMS.012

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

ALBERT GORE RESEARCH CENTER

MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT



**ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW WITH
DAN SCOTT**

Q. M. SMITH ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW #QMS.012

FORSYTHE: This is a continuation of the interview with Dr. Dan Scott by Regina Forsythe on Monday June 26, 1995. How has the department changed from the time you came?

SCOTT: Mostly it has just grown. When I came here, there was no graduate program what-so-ever. It was strictly an undergraduate program. There were two chemistry specialists, Doug Shields and Wade Gilbert; and then there were three of us teaching chemistry, Dr. Wisner, Exum Watts, and myself. That was in 1955. Most of the changes have come as the department has gotten bigger, and we have added some graduate courses and graduate degrees. The curriculum changed rather drastically. As the science of chemistry changes, the kinds of work you do changes particularly with instrumentation. Instrumentation is using computers for the collecting and calculation of data that you get so that what you do in a chemistry today is quite different than what you might have done in 1958. But the changes are gradual, so there are no drastic changes at any one time. But the main difference is the additional courses. Of the graduate courses that are offered, there is a masters in chemistry and a doctorate of arts in chemistry. The number of courses that are offered are much greater. The university as a whole has changed so much. It just keeps getting bigger, and that has been the main change about our department. It is so much bigger than it used to be. When I joined the faculty, you knew all the other faculty in the university; and you really knew all the students, even if you didn't have them in class, because the school wasn't that big. I had been here a year or so when the number [of students] finally got to two thousand, which was a big deal back then. Now, you don't even know all the faculty in your department, much less the entire university.

FORSYTHE: When was the master's program added?

SCOTT: There was a master's program in which the students could get a master's in education but take their course work in various disciplines. That was offered pretty early on either in the early 1950's or the very early 1960's. The regular MS in chemistry, which was strictly a chemistry degree, was added in the middle 1960's. At that point, they offered a degree where you could do all your work in chemistry. Up until that, there was a requirement that you had to either be certified to teach, or if you weren't, you had to take the courses to get certified, in order to get the master's. If somebody was already certified, they could do their work in a discipline, whether it be chemistry or biology, or whatever. If the student was not certified, then they needed to get that certification which meant they couldn't take quite as many courses in an academic discipline. When Dr.

Scarlett was president, he is the one that got the doctor of arts degree program started. At first the Doctor of Arts degree was limited to English, physical education, and maybe history. And later on, economics and chemistry was added. So that there are now doctoral programs in five disciplines. I think there are some other departments that would like to begin to offer doctorate level work, like math, biology, and psychology. Having been retired now three years, I am not quite cognizant of everything that is going on, but I do know that there is also considerable concern as to whether or not the Doctor of Arts degree might be changed to a Ph.D. degree. I have no idea what the thinking is on campus today about the D.A. programs to Ph.D. programs. But at that point, we did discuss that at sometime in the future the school might see what could be done along those lines.

FORSYTHE: Tell me about the athletic committee that you were on.

SCOTT: I replaced Gene Sloan. This was when Dr. Scarlett was president. But I had worked with Gene about a year before to try to learn all that was done because I knew that I was going to do this. Both the NCAA and the OVC have what are called faculty representatives which are people from the general faculty who have certain responsibilities with the department. They attend the meetings, set the rules, and enforce the academic eligibility rules. In the last few years before I stepped down from that position, the chairmanship got to be such a big chore that I really didn't have time to devote to it as I should. So I stepped down and was replaced by Joe Sawyer for a time. I think he has now been replaced by somebody else. A lot of the time consuming part of that was taken up with Cliff Gillespie. We spent many hours at this- going over a transcript of each athlete who was going to be on the eligibility list. When you stop and think of all the different athletic programs and then some of the big ones like football, which may have sixty or seventy people that are on a list, it takes a lot of time to check that; and you have to [be thorough]. You hear a lot of talk about something that is still referred to in the media as Proposition 48 which was simply the number of it when it came up and was passed at a meeting years ago by the NCAA. It is now part of a rule that is in the NCAA manual. It has to do with the fact that to continue to be academically eligible, a student has to pass so many hours in a specific major, and not just hours in general any more. What you have to do is take a catalog, look at the published curriculum in that major, and then the student has to declare that his major is say industrial studies or mass communications. Then you have got to make sure he has had enough courses to meet all the requirements. It takes a lot of time, and that is just part of your responsibilities as a faculty rep.

FORSYTHE: I am going to ask you about the [MTSU] presidents. Q.M. Smith?

SCOTT: President Smith was a good president for MTSU at that time. Because there was no such thing at that time as the Board of Regents or anything, each school had to go to the legislature and make its case in order to get funding for operations.

President Smith was very good at that. He was a very persuasive person and had this ability to very concisely make a case. He was well known and liked by the public. He was gassed during World War I which resulted in a speech problem; and he had some difficulty speaking at times, but it didn't seem to deter him. Anyway, he was an excellent president. And I remember him very fondly. When Wisner called me, he asked if I was interested in a job over here. At that time I was teaching at Central High School in Fayetteville. So I came over, and we went to President Smith's office to meet with him. We talked about a lot of different things, and he knew a lot of people in Lincoln County where I was from. He had a farm somewhere, and he asked about farming practices. Finally, after about thirty or forty minutes of discussing every thing except the position here, he said, "Well, I guess I am ready to trade horses." That was his way of saying he was ready to get down to that. So we discussed what I would be teaching and what the responsibilities might be. Dr. Wisner had already told me that. And then President Smith offered me \$350 a month for ten months, and I took it. A few days later, I got a letter from him saying that there was no contract to sign or anything, and in September, I could start here for that amount of money. That was the way you were hired back then. We didn't have any of the paperwork we have now. I remember the last year I was chairman, and I was hiring some new faculty. It took weeks and months of going through the process of getting people hired with all the paper work that is involved.

FORSYTHE: What did you do for the other two months?

SCOTT: I went to graduate school. I had gotten drafted into the military during the Korean War for two years, and in the summer time I went to graduate school and started work on a doctorate. I had done that while I was teaching at Fayetteville. While I was teaching in the summers, I would go on the GI Bill to graduate school, so I continued on here. Although in 1958 and 1959, I did get a grant in aid. That program is still in effect in the state, and I think some MTSU faculty still apply and get grants in aid to go back to graduate school and work on a doctorate. When that program got started, I had a grant in aid to go back to graduate school and did for a year.

FORSYTHE: How did the students relate to President Smith?

SCOTT: Students liked him very well, and the school was so small then. 1800 students, most everybody knew everybody else. The president was very visible on campus, and he would walk around and come through the buildings to make sure they were being maintained properly. As far as I know, students liked him very well. He didn't teach any courses, so they didn't have dealings with him as a faculty member. Students and faculty liked him very much, and he was very supportive.

FORSYTHE: What about Mrs. Smith?

SCOTT: She was a delightful lady, very vivacious and energetic, and very active in campus activities. They would come to all the social events, and she was very active in the Dames club which was an organization for female faculty and staff members, and wives of faculty.

FORSYTHE: What about Dr. Cope?

SCOTT: When he came to MTSU, Dr. Cope was Commissioner of the Education Department for the state. The school really began to grow rather rapidly during that time. Dr. Cope was very instrumental in getting a number of buildings built particularly dorms. He really enjoyed being a school administrator, and I think he enjoyed the operation of the physical plant quite a bit. He left the academic side to Dr. Kirksey who by then was the Dean of the Faculty. Later, he became the Vice- President of Academic Affairs. President Cope was instrumental in getting a lot of the buildings that we have built.

FORSYTHE: How did the students relate to Dr. Cope?

SCOTT: Very well. Dr. Cope was president during the 1960's when a lot of the student sit-ins and demonstrations came about. We didn't have much of a problem with that here, and he was not at all sympathetic to that idea and those kinds of activities. Students got along with him all right except there wasn't really a lot of contact. He was more involved with the school getting bigger. The president really should be involved in every aspect of operations of the campus like President Smith, so students really didn't have the same contact with President Cope like they did with President Smith.

FORSYTHE: How did the faculty relate to him?

SCOTT: I think the faculty related to him very well. He was instrumental in getting some pretty good raises that made the faculty happy. It was during his tenure that he pushed for getting paid for twelve months. The raise was two additional months' salary which was a pretty good raise. Now, a faculty member signs a contract, and it is only for the academic year. But they will get twelve checks, and then if they teach in the summer school, they get additional pay.

FORSYTHE: Dr. Scarlett?

SCOTT: Dr. Scarlett was the first president who did not have local connections to begin with. He had to learn about the way things are done in Tennessee. The board had to learn how he operated, and there were a few occasions when there was a little friction between him and some board members. But Dr. Scarlett had some great ideas about some things that the university could do. I think he really started the college of Mass Communications because it was his specialty. He began to push it. The building we are in now, the Learning Resources Center, was his idea. He

had some very excellent ideas and worked diligently to try to make MTSU have the characteristics of a larger university which he knew it was going to become.

FORSYTHE: What was the original purpose of Room 111 of the LRC?

SCOTT: It was going to be an environmental laboratory and also a planetarium. That is why the ceiling is a domed ceiling. In the process of building, like so many things, they began to run low on money; and so they decided they won't put the planetarium in right now. They would add it later. They built it so it could be added, and then of course they never had [the funds]. I pushed for it and tried to get it, but I never was able to get that done. It was to be an environment lab. I had been to some programs in there where they could control the temperature, and you could see a program where they had projections all around the wall, 360 degrees. If you have been to the programs at Epcot center, like the Canada or China exhibit, where you see things all around you, [then you know what it was like]. I remember a program on Alaska where they reduced the temperature and made it cold while you were watching, like being out on the snow fields. I remember going to a program where they showed a 360 degree projection on walking horses, which is a big thing in Tennessee. Supposedly, you were even supposed to have the aroma you get around a horse farm and this sort of thing. It was, for its day, a very high tech system.

FORSYTHE: How did the students relate to Dr. Scarlett?

SCOTT: I think Dr. Scarlett was very much student oriented. I don't remember any problems between him and student groups; although, during that time, students began to push for certain activities such as a little more open visitation in dormitories. These sorts of things just happened, and I don't think whoever had been president had anything to do with it. They would have happened anyway; they were just in the normal course of events that occurred.

FORSYTHE: What about the faculty?

SCOTT: I think the faculty appreciated Dr. Scarlett's vision of what the university could be. They were a little concerned at that time however because of some difficulties he had with one or two people on the Board of Regents. Maybe he didn't have as much influence with the board as he could have had which at that time was running MTSU. In general, the faculty appreciated his vision of what the university could and should become.

FORSYTHE: Tell me about Dr. Ingram.

SCOTT: He came from being Commissioner of Education like President Cope had done. Before that, Dr. Ingram had been here on the faculty. In fact, he came here as the Department of Education [chairman] when Dr. Bowdoin retired. In all the names you mentioned, his name was not mentioned. He was an important faculty

member here because he was in the Department of Education, and then he became chairman of it. Then, he was the first Dean of the School of Education. When he stepped up as Dean from the School of Education that is when Sam Ingram came as Chairman of the School of Education. I had some dealings with Sam because his youngest son and my youngest daughter were the same age. They were in the pre-school and Campus School together, and so I knew him from being on the parents' group at school, as well as from the college. When they started the community college system, Dr. Ingram left and became the first president of Motlow Community College. From there, he became Commissioner of Education. After Dr. Scarlett retired, Dr. Ingram came [to MTSU] as president. His strength was in the budgetary area. A lot of the construction going on was made possible because of the strong financial shape that President Ingram was able to get the university into. For his time, he was a very good president. Some of the faculty thought he pinched pennies a little too closely; but after being chairman of a department that had a large budget and expensive equipment, I appreciated the way he operated because when you really needed important things done, you were able to do it. He was able to make sure the money was there. I really enjoyed working with him when he was president.

FORSYTHE: Dr. Prescott?

SCOTT: He came in and did a really fantastic job for the time that he was here. In the process of hiring a new president, although Dr. Ingram gave the board plenty of time, the board was a little bit slow to act. His retirement date came and the board had not hired anybody, so they had to hire an interim. Dr. Prescott had also served as an interim at Tennessee Tech. I think he did an excellent job [as president of MTSU], and I enjoyed the time he was here. I was chairman of the department at that time, and things went on very smoothly. Programs that were moving along, he kept them moving. He really did a great job. I never did hear any faculty member have anything bad to say about him.

FORSYTHE: Tell me about Joe Nunley.

SCOTT: He was a very close friend of mine. We went back a good many years. I first got to know him when I was at Sewanee as an undergraduate. A fraternity brother of mine there, Dave Hoover, had known [Joe] all his life. That is how I first got to know him. When he joined the faculty here, we both had a number of common interests- one being that we are both baseball fans. We were instrumental in starting up what came to be known as the Railbirds which were a group of people that supported athletics in general but baseball in particular. We had a lot of common acquaintances around the Mid State area. He grew up on a farm also, so we could speak the same language about a lot of things. We liked to do the same kinds of activities, and he was just a very close friend. I really miss him.

FORSYTHE: How did the Railbirds get that name?

SCOTT: Because at that time, around the baseball field there was just a railing. They didn't have the seats like they do now, and a group of us we would just sort of lean on that rail and watch the games. So that is just a term that we referred to ourselves as.

FORSYTHE: Tell me about Dr. Homer Pittard.

SCOTT: I did my practice teaching down at Central High School where Central Middle is now. Homer was the principal down there, and that is where I first got to know him. Then he joined the faculty here, and Homer was very instrumental in starting some things. He got the foundation started, for example, and was very active in it. He was a Civil War buff and was very interested in history. At one time, he was president of the Rutherford County Historical Society. Homer has been active in education all his life.

FORSYTHE: Robert Abernathy?

SCOTT: Robert was a public relations man when I came on the faculty. He was the one that would go around to the various high schools in the state to recruit students to come to MTSU. He was very good at it. He was a great public speaker, and he had a wonderful sense of humor. If he ever heard a joke, he could remember it forever. There wasn't a situation that would come up when he couldn't think of a joke that applied. He was just a fun person to be around.

FORSYTHE: Dean Keathley?

SCOTT: He ultimately became the Dean of Students. As the school grew, I guess the first thing that he got involved in really was financial aid for students. Later, he hired Winston Wrenn as his assistant when his office got bigger. He was a very student-oriented person and even after Dean Beasley retired, Dean Keathley carried on that tradition. Dr. Beasley got to know the students. And if any of them had any problems of any kind whether personal, financial, or disciplinary, he would go that extra mile and work that out for the students.

FORSYTHE: Charles Pigg?

SCOTT: I have known Charles all my life 'cause he grew up on a farm about two miles from where I grew up. And he is younger than I am. Charles spent many years here over what is called plant and planning. So most of the buildings that went up on campus during the period of major growth of the university, he was involved in. Charles was the university representative that worked with the architects and the contractors. He might at some time have taught some courses in industrial studies, but I am not sure.

FORSYTHE: What have you been doing since you retired?

SCOTT: I am an avid gardener, and I still keep the garden plots that the faculty have over here at the university. I got emeritus status when I retired, so I got all the privileges of faculty. So I can do things like keep a garden spot. My wife and I travel quite a bit; we take one big trip every year. Since we have retired, we have been to China, Thailand, and Hong Kong. We have been to Italy, Greece, and the Middle East, including Egypt, Israel and Turkey. This summer we are going to Alaska, and next year we plan on going to Spain and Portugal. We travel some and then take short trips the rest of the year. We generally take a long trip sometime in the summer and take three or four day trips to visit cities. I have been active with the retired teachers group. And this past year, I have been president. We are both so busy. She is very active in the American Association of University Women. We both wonder how we ever had time to come and work over here every day. I am still active at the university. I still come to all the ballgames, the plays, and the concerts, and the picnics, and dinners. I don't have the problems. I don't listen to students gripe about the faculty. And I don't listen to the faculty gripe about the workload I assign them. I just come for the good stuff.

FORSYTHE: Can you think of anything that I haven't covered that you want to talk about?

SCOTT: No, I guess not. You have covered most everything. I just want to comment that the university and the area have grown so, and I don't see that it is going to slow down any time soon. I hope the people that are in positions to make decisions will realize that the university and Rutherford county is just going to grow and get bigger. And we need to plan for the future.