

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW  
WITH  
EUGENE SLOAN

17 JULY 1995

MURFREESBORO, TENNESSEE

INTERVIEWED BY REGINA FORSYTHE  
FOR THE Q. M. SMITH ORAL HISTORY PROJECT  
INTERVIEW #QMS.026

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

## **EDITORIAL NOTICE**

This is a transcript of a tape-recorded interview conducted by the Albert Gore Research Center at Middle Tennessee State University. The original recording and associated materials are archived at the center, whose collections may be accessed in person or via the web site [gorecenter.mtsu.edu](http://gorecenter.mtsu.edu). After a draft of this transcript was made, the interviewer, or in some cases another qualified staff member, reviewed the draft and compared it to the tape recordings. In a few cases, the interviewee also contributed editorial corrections. This final transcript incorporates the corrections and other changes suggested by the interviewee and interviewer. The transcript follows as closely as possible the recorded interview, including the usual starts, stops, and other rough spots in typical conversation. The reader should remember that this is essentially a transcript of the spoken, rather than the written, word. Stylistic matters, such as punctuation and capitalization, follow the *Chicago Manual of Style*, 15<sup>th</sup> edition. The transcript includes bracketed notices at the end of one tape and the beginning of the next so that, if desired, the reader can find a section of tape more easily by using this transcript.

## **RESTRICTION**

The interviewee has donated her or his copyright in this interview to the state of Tennessee through Middle Tennessee State University and has agreed that use of the recorded interview and transcript shall be governed by the director of the Albert Gore Research Center.

Researchers may read, quote from, cite, photocopy, and download this transcript without permission for purposes of research only. Publication is prohibited, however, without permission from the director of the Albert Gore Research Center.

## ABSTRACT



**ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW WITH  
EUGENE SLOAN**

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

**INTERVIEW #QMS.026**

**FORSYTHE:** This tape is part of the Q. M. Smith Collection designated as QMS.1995.26. This is Regina Forsythe. I am interviewing Mr. Eugene Sloan. Today is Monday, July 17, 1995. The interview is being conducted in the home of Mr. Sloan located at 402 Richard Road, Murfreesboro, Tennessee. The tape of this interview along with a transcription of the interview will become part of the Quintin Miller Smith Collection and will be available to the public. Future researchers may include portions of this interview in their publications. Is that all right with you, Mr. Sloan?

**SLOAN:** Yes.

**FORSYTHE:** What years did you work at MTSU?

**SLOAN:** What years I worked at MTSU? I came here in the fall of 1945. I worked 29 years [from 1945-1974]. I came here as a teacher of Journalism and Business Law. Due to the size of the student body, we at one time or another, taught a little bit of everything. I recall having several classes which were called introductions to Political Science. Actually it was a summary of Sociology Introduction, Political Science, some American History and various other introductory courses in college work. I found Q. M. Smith to be a very exacting, demanding administrator, wonderfully well qualified to have the situation that was developing at the time I came here. At that time, I was working with the Nashville Banner, and I came out here to introduce these courses in Journalism. Mr. Smith asked me to take over the reorganization of the Athletic Department to act as sort of treasurer of the Athletic Department. At that time, he brought Coach Charles Murphy to join Nancy Jordan, who had enlisted in the Navy. Everybody was a veteran. I'm sure you have examined the 1946 Midlander and noticed a large number of veterans there. Every student except five were veterans. Mr. Smith was a wonderfully fine employer. He expected the employee to deliver a full measure of work and to be earnest in dealing with students. I wish you would ask me and maybe I will be able to give you some information.

**FORSYTHE:** Can you describe your job interview with Q. M. Smith?

**SLOAN:** I was simply hired to try to introduce some classes in journalism, but he quickly demanded other things of me. I eventually became a treasure of the Athletic Department. I looked after the scheduling of places for the team to stay while we were on the road and sale of tickets.

**FORSYTHE:** Your daughter said you were sports information director.

SLOAN: Well, that developed very quickly from sports to general information. We soon started calling it Director of Public Relations. I arranged for Girls' State on the campus each year and various other group meetings for Agriculture, for sportsmanship. You must realize the fact that back when I came here, people who were coming back had largely been students at the outbreak of the war.

FORSYTHE: Your daughter mentioned that you got MTSU in the Ohio Valley Conference. Can you tell me about that?

SLOAN: For many years, the College had played sports---football, basketball and baseball, track to a limited extent, tennis, and a little golf with state colleges at Memphis, East Tennessee at Johnson City, Tennessee Tech, Western at Bowling Green, Kentucky, Morehead, Murray, and Kentucky. At that time, each one of these schools had an Athletic Committee. Our Athletic Committee consisted of eleven members. I would contact these committee chairmen at these schools that I mentioned. Among others, Evansville University at Evansville, Indiana and Marshall at West Virginia, one or two or three Alabama and Georgia state colleges. We worked out an organization where each one of these schools would play football and basketball with each of the others. It wasn't many years until we started meeting on a somewhat regular basis. The Chairmen of these committees, Foster, for instance, at Tennessee Tech was there for many years. So was the Chairman of the Athletic Committee at Western Kentucky. We worked out an organization. They named me as sort of Chairman of this group. We experimented with different names. We finally decided that Ohio Valley was a suitable name, and there were eight or nine of the schools that went into this organization. We played everyone every year in football, twice in basketball, two or three times in baseball. We tried a track meet on a limited scale. It just grew into the Ohio Valley Conference. I was a member of it representing Middle Tennessee State for about 29 years. During that period, I served as Committee Chairman. That is how the Ohio Valley Conference developed, among these schools that had long been rivals before World War II, but it never had any close, well regulated organization.

FORSYTHE: Why did MTSU have a strong rivalry with Tennessee Tech?

SLOAN: I think at that time, they felt that Tennessee Tech was sort of like Georgia Tech was to Georgia. It was supposed to grow into a technological super teacher's college training ground and offer technical courses that were not offered at East Tennessee State or at Memphis State. It is really difficult to answer your question because everything was in a sort of organizational experiment basis through those years.

FORSYTHE: Let me ask you about being advisor for the Sidelines or the Midlander.

SLOAN: Well, those were things that Mr. Smith turned over to my attention. All publications were to come under my supervision. There was simply a variety of interest and organizational staff for the paper, the Sidelines, and the Midlander. The collection

of pictures and information about things you found at that time among all your college groups, a sort of general history of that year. The Midlander was a pictorial collection largely, and the Sidelines was a weekly. The staffs usually applied directly to me, and we got together and organized the staff in each of those papers. They used my office, which was the basement of the old Administration Building [Kirksey Old Main] for organizational and for filing and for general staff work in the weekly newspaper and the annual.

FORSYTHE: Were there any controversies? Did you ever print something that someone had a big problem with in the Sidelines or Midlander?

SLOAN: Oh yes. Oftentimes, we had disagreement with members of the faculty on things that we published or didn't publish. And when the student body brought up questions, some of which developed into organizational conflicts, it would require a conference with Mr. Smith on what policy to follow in regard to publications.

FORSYTHE: I am going to ask you about some people that you knew, if you have a story or some memory about them. Bill Smotherman.

SLOAN: Mr. Smotherman and I worked together on many things. My association with the Athletic Department of course led me to have a close relationship with the coaching staff. Miss Buleah Davis was the woman member of the Athletic Committee at Middle Tennessee. She contributed a great deal to the development of the women's program there. I have always been rather proud of what they did. Nance Jordan had been an instructor at the outbreak of the war. He came back as an instructor in English on the faculty, and he also had charge of women's athletics. Among other things, he organized a women's basketball league made up largely of Nashville schools, business organizations, and Middle Tennessee State. For about two years, we played a regular schedule where Coach Jordan and I transported the players, usually in our cars. We played a regular schedule, oftentimes playing organizations of Nashville women, like the business college down there and several other things. We had a sort of women's league, MTSU being the only real college in the organization, although two or three Nashville business colleges had basketball teams too, women's teams. I attribute the success of the women's organization to Nance Jordan's ability to organize and to keep it functioning.

FORSYTHE: What about Joe Nunley?

SLOAN: Joe was one of the most loyal faculty members, until his untimely death. He was largely responsible for what we used to call the Linden Tree. Early in World War II as groups enlisted and went off to war, the men and their girlfriends would meet in front of the dormitory there where this tree was, and Joe soon started to call it the Linden Tree. That name stuck. Immediately after the war so many of the men were coming here, so many of whom had been students and had met their girlfriends here and sang songs just before they went off to enlist. He had a great deal to do with

building a genuine alumni force. Joe owes a great deal to the loyalty of those veterans. They came back in such large numbers.

FORSYTHE: Miss Mary Hall.

SLOAN: Miss Mary Hall is more than a institution. Miss Mary was one who was consulted for teaching positions and she had been in the State Board of Education. She was invaluable in helping recruit students and to visit high schools on a regular basis every year and to talk to students about coming to Middle Tennessee State. We kept in very close touch with them in Alumni Affairs.

FORSYTHE: Tell me about Miller Lanier.

SLOAN: You mentioned Miller Lanier. Miller was an aviator in the war and came back in a Chevy.

[Side B]

SLOAN: During that period, Bealer Smotherman organized the summer programs that became known all over the United States. They began to make a tour every year, and one year Dr. Cope and I roomed together on this visit to Europe. That year, we had lots of very enlightening and interesting experiences. For instance, in England we had an opportunity to talk with and interview pilots who had fought in several battles for London. When we were in Germany, we had the opportunity to get the other side of it, pilots of German aircraft that had raided London and had fought the British. We were very close to the war. It was so recent in the experience all of us, and Dr. Scarlett, I can't say enough of his contribution to the University. There are certain areas that he virtually built into the University organization. We had a very close relationship for all of the ten years that he was there. I regard Dr. Cope as one of the best administrators in the history of higher education in Tennessee. Quill Cope was a remarkable man in every respect.

FORSYTHE: Do you want to continue?

SLOAN: I think that Mr. Jones, the math teacher at the time I came here, was one of the most capable instructors that I have ever known. I succeeded him as Chairman of the Athletic committee. At that time, the Athletic Committee wasn't around the athletic program in these colleges like Western, Murray, East Kentucky, East Tennessee, and Memphis State. It is almost impossible for people today seeing the well organized and very functional Athletic Departments to realize what a relatively unimportant part athletics were playing. For instance, Midgett was coaching football and basketball when the war came on. He came back, and along with Nooby Freeman and Nance Jordan returning, and they brought in Coach Murphy. Murphy was a good organizer. Perhaps I can give you a little more functional interview when you come back the next time.