

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW
WITH
SAMUEL CRASS HASTINGS

18 JULY 1995

MURFREESBORO, TENNESSEE

INTERVIEWED BY REGINA FORSYTHE
FOR THE Q. M. SMITH ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
INTERVIEW #QMS.027

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
SAMUEL CRASS HASTINGS**

Q. M. SMITH ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW #QMS.027

FORSYTHE: This tape is part of the Q. M. Smith Collection designated as QMS.1995.27. This is Regina Forsythe. I am interviewing Samuel Crass Hastings. Today is Tuesday, July 18, 1995. The interview is being conducted in the Todd Library, Room 111. The tape of the interview along with the transcription of the interview will become part of the Quintin Miller Smith Collection and will be available to the public. Future researches may include portions of this interview in their publications. Is that all right with you, Mr. Hastings?

HASTINGS: Suits me.

FORSYTHE: Tell me about your being born around here.

HASTINGS: I was born close to Kittrell. I remember Uncle Dave Macon. He used to drive a freight wagon. When cars would drive up behind him and blow to pass, he had a horn he'd blow back at them. That was a little bit earlier. I started to school at Chrislow in Murfreesboro in the first grade. When I went in, the teacher Miss Anna McFadden came around taking names. "What's your name?" "Sam Hastings." She said, "Are you Willie's boy?" "Yes, ma'am. I am the son of William Clinton Hastings." My dad had been a student of that same teacher. I went on and went through, I believe the fourth grade at Chrislow, and my dad began working at University of Middle Tennessee as a fireman in the boiler room. From that, he developed into Maintenance Engineer. A building at the school is named for him. At that time, we moved over to this area of Murfreesboro. I believe we moved first to Creighton Avenue, and from there to Ewing Boulevard, just across the street from the girls' dormitory then. I began in the fourth grade and went through the seventh grade. I never did go to the eighth grade; I went from the seventh grade to high school. I had to wait for other students to catch up on algebra. I went on and took second year algebra, and the teacher had problems with the problems. She gave five points extra for anybody that could solve these extra problems. I went to town on that! I had had some outstanding teaching in the teacher training school.

FORSYTHE: Who were some of your teachers?

HASTINGS: Miss Ann Ordry, I believe, was one. In fact, she was still my teacher when I came back and got my degree here at the University.

FORSYTHE: What was she like?

HASTINGS: Wonderful. I can't remember my math teacher. I had it just a few minutes ago. He was son-in-law to the president.

FORSYTHE: Horace Jones.

HASTINGS: Horace Jones. On one occasion he came in and said, "Sam, I understand you made the Dean's List. I'll see what I can do about that." And he'd go out and play golf and leave me to teach his class and that sort of thing. I think I did a pretty good job of teaching his math class.

FORSYTHE: How old were you when you were teaching his class?

HASTINGS: I was, I guess, getting up around 18, 19 years old. From there, I went on. I started teaching, finished my degree. I enrolled in the University in 1930 and got my degree after summer school of 1933. I went right on through. That fall, I went to work at Hazelgreen, Alabama teaching. It was a consolidated school, and I could tell stories that would go and go. I moved from there to Lewisburg. And from there, after teaching a number of years there, to Tarbox in Nashville. I decided to drop out of teaching and go back to school. I got my master's degree at Peabody in Vanderbilt.

FORSYTHE: What did you get your master's in?

HASTINGS: Mathematics. I came back to Murfreesboro. Of course I was driving back and forth. I was in the Admin Building, and Dean Beasley yelled at me, "Sam, come here!" I went in, and he said, "Do you want a job teaching in a junior college teaching math?" I said, "Why, yes, yes." "Freed-Hardeman College needs a math teacher. Do you want to go?" "Why certainly. I want to go." "It's in Henderson, Tennessee." So I went and started teaching easy stuff like college algebra, trig, analytic geometry, calculus, physics, mechanical drawing. I taught there then several years. A little girl from Memphis, Tennessee came to school there and took math. After she finished her work there, we got married.

FORSYTHE: What was her name?

HASTINGS: Evelyn Bomar from Memphis, Tennessee.

FORSYTHE: When did you all get married?

HASTINGS: In September of '41. Then I finished out in '42. I took a job at Naval Air Station in Pensacola as a mechanical engineer. I graduated at the head of the mechanical department. It was good, easy work like sewage treatment plants, power plants, generating electricity, water distribution, water wells, air conditioning, heating,

plumbing, and of course, good, old air conditioning. I worked there a few years---36, to be accurate. Finally, I retired. I am an old, retired man! I don't get any vacation, no days off, none of that.

FORSYTHE: What is your full name?

HASTINGS: Samuel Crass Hastings. My dad was made an orphan when he was nine years old. He and his twin brother, Wilburn and his sister Mary moved from, I believe it was White County to Murfreesboro. Wilburn was able to stay with Mary, who was a seamstress, and my dad William Clinton Hastings became a lodger with an old German by the name of Ambrose Crass. My name is Samuel Crass Hastings. An interesting side light, while I was working as a mechanical engineer in Pensacola, a young man from Tennessee came down to work for me in my division as a draftsman. His name was Samuel Crass.

FORSYTHE: Was he related to Ambrose Crass?

HASTINGS: He didn't know. He came from East Tennessee, up in the mountains. We were very close, good friends.

FORSYTHE: What was your birth date?

HASTINGS: December 26, 1911.

FORSYTHE: You were born here in Murfreesboro?

HASTINGS: Close to Kittrell, about seven miles east of Murfreesboro.

FORSYTHE: How did your father get the job here at MTSU?

HASTINGS: He knew steam. He was a farmer. He used to farm a lot on Allen Lane, if that means anything to you. It is now a subdivision. He grew watermelons up on the hill there. During the winter, he worked for the City of Murfreesboro as a steamroller operator where they were building asphalt roads. During the harvesting season, he would drive the steam-driven tractors. Steam. He could put one of those machines, big tractors, pulled by a belt, threshing machines, he could put it anywhere that he wanted to put it. He applied for a job as a fireman in the boilers at Middle Tennessee Teachers' College, as it was called then. He even taught me how to use a coal scoop to make the coal spread out evenly over the firebox. From there, he took in all of the work except teaching---electrical wiring, plumbing, heating, air conditioning. I did a lot of his computation for him; he only had an eighth grade education, not quite that much. He taught classes at the Teachers' College then.

FORSYTHE: Even without a high school diploma.

HASTINGS: He didn't have a grammar school diploma, but he knew plumbing and electrical wiring, and the boys adored him. They'd come back to visit him after they had graduated. From that, I worked on the campus, even before I got into school here. I checked in fall of 1930.

FORSYTHE: Where did you work on campus in what years before attending school here?

HASTINGS: When my dad came to work here, he put me to work. I remember working with Ira Daniels. We were digging lines for sewage lines, and we dug manholes that were much over our heads, pitching the dirt out. I painted, mowed grass, whatever was needed that I could be used, I worked on it, even when I was in grammar school at the training school here.

FORSYTHE: So you went from fifth grade all the way through high school at the training school.

HASTINGS: No, through the seventh grade, and then went from the seventh grade into high school at Chrislow over on Maple Street.

FORSYTHE: What was your mother's occupation?

HASTINGS: She was a seamstress and worked as a seamstress when we were on the Allen Farm. We drove an old, open, one-seated buggy. My dad made a little extra money pulling people out of a mud hole on Allen Lane. I'm talking about pulling cars out.

FORSYTHE: What was your wife's occupation?

HASTINGS: Housewife.

FORSYTHE: Did you have any children?

HASTINGS: Yes, three boys---William Bomar Hastings, Robert Wayne Hastings, and Phillip Allen Hastings.

FORSYTHE: Did any of your children attend here?

HASTINGS: No.

FORSYTHE: What did you study while you were here in 1930?

HASTINGS: Mathematics and science, biology, chemistry and physics, easy stuff.

FORSYTHE: Did you practice teach anywhere besides Horace Jones' class?

HASTINGS: No. How about that? That Horace Jones was something else. He loved to play golf. He drove a big car, I mean a big one, a Lincoln. I mean a big Lincoln. He lived down here on the boulevard, on Tennessee Boulevard. He lived over on the right-hand side going toward Main. He really taught his math, no question about it. He did a good job of it. Lyon was Jones' father-in-law. Jones could get away with a lot of things.

FORSYTHE: Tell me about Dr. Cope.

HASTINGS: He had a brother, Jim Cope who became president of Florida College down at Temple Terrace. The year that Jim Cope went in as president there, I went on the board down there---a few years ago, '49. The last board meeting that I attended was in May 1995. I haven't missed many board meetings or many lecturers that come in January and February.

FORSYTHE: You said you knew Quintin Miller Smith.

HASTINGS: Along with my work, I have done a lot of preaching where I was needed to go. In fact, a little town 20 miles from Pensacola by the name of Baghdad, they asked me, "We've lost our preacher. Would you come and work with us for three months?" "Sure, glad to." Sunday morning classes, preaching, Sunday night, Wednesday night. I went, and seven and a half years later, I had trained a man to preach for them. I told him that a congregation in Pensacola needed somebody to help them get started and had asked me to come. One of the leaders in the congregation said, "Sam, I sure hate to see you go, but I guess they need you even worse than we do." I went to North side, worked with them for four and a half years. I got them started, got them from a garage of the Smiths, Bill Smith. Then I helped them buy a building, and they moved over on North side, 402 North 9th Avenue. After four and a half years, I got Randy Pickup to come and work with them. But Andelusia xxx lost their preacher. "Sam, could you come and work with us until we get a preacher?" Four and a half years later...

FORSYTHE: What do you remember about President Lyon?

HASTINGS: Not just a whole lot, except he ruled the roost. It was odd. The last time that Sunday fell on the 26th of December---I'd have to look it up to remember, but it was in the '90's---I preached.

FORSYTHE: You have a long career as a preacher.

HASTINGS: Yeah, let's see, about three weeks ago I preached.

FORSYTHE: Let's talk about some faculty.

HASTINGS: The chemistry teacher here wanted me to take a scholarship over in the Carolinas. I declined and went to work teaching at Freed-Hardeman College. He was disappointed in me. I don't remember his name.

FORSYTHE: Miss Mary Hall.

HASTINGS: I remember her. She lived at Kittrell at one time. We went to church, my mother took me to church where she was. Actually, she was sitting back in the audience, but they didn't have a song leader. She could pitch that tune and could sing loudly enough that it was as good as if she had been up front. She had a beautiful voice.