

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW
WITH
SAMUEL CRASS HASTINGS

20 JULY 1995

MURFREESBORO, TENNESSEE

INTERVIEWED BY REGINA FORSYTHE
FOR THE Q. M. SMITH ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
INTERVIEW #QMS.030

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.030

FORSYTHE: This tape is part of the Q. M. Smith Collection designated as QMS.1995.30. This is Regina Forsythe. I am interviewing Sam Hastings. Today is Thursday, July 20, 1995. This interview is being conducted in the Gore Research Center, Room 111 of the Ned McWherter Learning Resource Center. 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. Hastings?

HASTINGS: Certainly.

FORSYTHE: You have a story about Q. M. Smith?

HASTINGS: I have one on the president of the school. It had to do with the bleachers at the football field. At that time, we had to put the bleachers up for football games and take them down so that the field would be available for other use. Then we put the bleachers back up. The bleachers were being put too close to the edge of the playing field to suit President Smith. He said, "I want this moved back." They'd move it back a bit. "I want it back further. And further and further." On another occasion, they put them down too close. He said, "Fellows, I want you to come here on the front row, sit down in a normal position." Then he walked across in front of them, stomping on feet. As he walked, he said, "Now do you understand what I mean when I say that they need to be further back?" Odd, they never put them too close again. Other things are about teachers, and I love to tell these. About Prof. Woodard. He was the woodworking and mechanical drawing teacher and a superb teacher. He had men across the state of Tennessee from Memphis to Knoxville. These men were outstanding woodworking teachers. I had my woodworking shop under Prof. Woodard. He taught us the use of hand tools; he made us make projects just with chisel and hand plane. Then we learned to use power tools also. I had an outstanding friend from high school, and we took shop together, Clarence Peyton. I believe he still lives here in Murfreesboro. We made cedar chests; we sold them to help pay for our schooling and that sort of thing. I mean they were beautiful chests. I made one that was large enough for a quilt box and beautiful--Tennessee red cedar chests. Also, we made four-poster beds and spool beds out of walnut, out of

cherry, and out of just about anything that you'd want to use. That man taught us how to use tools. I recall sort of a sad incident. A young man was using a joiner. This is used to glue pieces together and sometimes we used the joiner to shape small pieces. He pushed a piece through, and his thumb was in the way. It clipped the end of his thumb. Of course, he hollered and all of this, and somebody asked him, "How did you do that?" And he took a piece and ran it through and clipped his left thumb then. He had to bandage up two thumbs. Now after Prof. Woodard, there was Nooby Freeman. Many of you may remember Nooby Freeman. I worked in his shop, woodworking and used a power lathe and all of this. I enjoyed that. Later on, of course, I taught woodworking. We got to be friends, along with my dad. We liked to quail hunt with Freeman; that was his hobby. He had a bird dog, a pointer that was just an outstanding dog. But he was mean. And he couldn't put another dog in the pen with him; he'd kill him. He used his dog for a stud fee and a puppy was given to him. He gave the puppy to me, and I named him "Buck". We lived not far. We had moved off of the campus by then and lived just three or four blocks beyond Professor Gracy. This puppy sometimes would get out and go down to the old dog's place and get in the pen with him. They'd play and just have a big time together. I wondered if that old dog knew his puppy. It seemed that he did. On another occasion, we were out hunting, Freeman and Dad and I. The old dog pointed. The puppy was playing around in back of him, and he got too close. The old dog turned his head and growled at the puppy, and the puppy fell to the ground just like you had hit him with a stick. To the best of my knowledge, that puppy, after he grew up, never deliberately flushed a bird. That old dog told his son what was what! On another occasion, Freeman and Dad and I were out hunting. My puppy had grown up. And we came to a big grass, wheat field. Three fellows came out and said, "There is no need of going in there. Our three dogs have hunted that field out, and nothing is in it." Freeman said, "What is our puppy doing out there?" He was on a dead point. We went out there and got up a big covey of quail. These fellows said, "What'll you take for that dog?" Freeman said, "It'd take a black land farm to buy that dog." We just had a marvelous time with that teacher of this college. Back to the campus. My dad had trouble with his little office---mice cutting holes in the wall and all of that. So he rigged him up a device, a shocking device and set it. He killed a mouse or two with his shocking device. It could be adjusted. He was somewhat a prankster, and the boys liked him and would come to him and talk to him. He took a chair and bronze tacks and set them at strategic points on the chair. He took his shocker and connected where the tack came through on the bottom side. The boy would come in and sit down. He'd just touch his shocker and somehow the boy would get up. He'd go get somebody else and bring him. The boys just had a parade in. Mr. Byer heard about this, the farm manager. He came in and said, "Mr. Will, what's this about a chair you've got?" "Well, yeah, we've got one." And he looked at him,

and he felt of the tacks. "Those don't seem to be---they tell you you have to get up." He sat down. "I don't feel those tacks." He said, "Turn it on a little bit." My dad did, and instead of getting up, he slid out under the floor, and the boys had to catch him to keep him from hitting the floor. The boys just loved my dad. After I had left school here and went out teaching, I'd come back home for visits. It seemed that my dad had a brawny man, a powerful man who disappeared. He asked one of the other laborers, "What happened to Mose? He hasn't checked in for work lately." "Old Belzina got him." "Old Belzina? What is that?" "Oh, that's the rock crusher out on the county road. He's feeding that rock crusher." The law got him; he was working on the county road. Back then, a prisoner had to work to pay his keep. He worked on the roads and the rock crusher and all of that. Old Belzina got him. They had named that rock crusher "Belzina." After they had built what is now the training school across the boulevard, one of the janitors was assigned to take care of it. Of course that fell under my dad's jurisdiction. He went over, and he said, "Ed, you're not taking care of these terrazzo floors the way I want them kept." Ed said, "Mr. Sam, he told me exactly how to do that step by step. And I said, 'Mr. Will, I just don't have time to do those floors the way you say you want them.' Your pappy bowed his head and looked real sad. He said, 'I sure hate to hear that, Ed. I've just got to find me somebody that has time to do these floors the way I want them done.'" And Ed said, "Mr. Sam, I had time." He laughed real heavy over that. On another occasion, I was over in the Ad Building, and the auditorium was in that building then. I don't know where it is now. They had a program that was coming up. They had an old, upright piano, and they needed it in the auditorium for their program. They had a big crew because that thing weighed a great amount then. They built it out of heavy material. The strings were mounted on iron. The stairway was narrow. It was too narrow for the crew. They had men muscled up that they could have carried it up there, but they couldn't get around it and go up the steps. One big, brawny fellow said, "Fellows, if you'll tilt that piano over on the side and hoist it up onto my back and hips, I'll carry it up those steps." They did, and I stood and watched that without believing that that man was doing it. He walked up all the way from the basement to the first floor with that piano on his back by himself. I couldn't believe it. Concerning my dog, I named him "Buck." I hammered out a copper platter. It was about two feet long and about 18 inches wide. I etched a picture of Buck in the middle of that. I've had people that have come to my house and looked at that platter. "Why, that is Buck!" They recognize the dog from that etched image and the spots that I had put on there to match his. I enjoyed that dog. We kept him in the chicken yard. In cold weather, he'd sleep in his house, and the chickens would stand on him keeping their feet warm. He never hurt one chicken. My mother would bake cornbread and give him a pone of cornbread, nice and big. He'd hold it, hunt him a place to hide it because he knew I'd swipe it from him. Those were great days. Teachers here

were so helpful and so skilled in the presentation of their work. Mr. Gracy was the gym teacher, instructor. I had tumbling and mat work and horizontal bars and chinning, single bar, turning flips, and all that. I could do that then. I wouldn't dare do it now.

FORSYTHE: You said before you mowed this area.

HASTINGS: Oh, yes, we had a push mower, and I pushed it. I got some good pay for it, \$15.00 a week.

FORSYTHE: Were there flowers around the campus then?

HASTINGS: Oh, yes, beautiful. They took good care of the campus. Like I said, I dug many a manhole, I painted many a building back in the good old days.

FORSYTHE: Where was the library?

HASTINGS: It was about 100 yards from the Ad Building and facing the entrance to the Ad Building. I'm not oriented on the campus for now. I don't know whether that building still stands or not. There was a girls' dormitory toward the boulevard, toward Ewing Avenue, which is across the street. My dad lived just a half a block off of the boulevard here, back from the two big buildings that were at the entrance to Ewing Avenue. Our building, we bought it and I can't remember the man's name--Bouchiere, I believe it was. I used to play tennis with his daughter, Nadine. Incidentally, I may have mentioned it before. I played one and two position on the tennis team here. We traveled all over playing different schools, and we did some winning. I recall the men here in town that played tennis came out and challenged us. It fell to my lot to play against a man that was just real good on slicing undercuts that would hit and skid. We started, and my method of play was to his this line on the left side, this line on the right side. This man was a little bit overweight. I was placing my shots, just having a big time out of it, and he just gave out. I stopped and let him rest. One of his buddies came over and said, "What is wrong? What's happening?" He said, "I'm running for both of us." The number one man and I fought for that number one position. I'd win, he'd win. I'd win, he'd win. We beat some teams.

FORSYTHE: Where did you play on campus?

HASTINGS: The tennis courts then were paved, and they were across the street from the power plant. They were excellent courts. I wasn't too good on clay courts, but on that paved court, I played a pretty good game and enjoyed it. I'd manipulate my classroom schedule so that I could get as much time on the tennis court as possible. My hair would turn from dark brown to red from that sun exposure, no problem.

FORSYTHE: How did the team travel?

HASTINGS: We traveled on a bus.

FORSYTHE: Were you in the Rural Life Club?

HASTINGS: No, I believe not. My field was science---biology, chemistry, physics, math. I mentioned Horace Jones and his math, and I taught college algebra, trig, analytic geometry, calculus, physics, mechanical drawing when I went to Freed-Hardeman.