

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW
WITH
ROBERT GARRIGUS

25 JULY 1995

MURFREESBORO, TENNESSEE

INTERVIEWED BY REGINA FORSYTHE
FOR THE Q. M. SMITH ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
INTERVIEW #QMS.034

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
ROBERT GARRIGUS**

Q. M. SMITH ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW #QMS.034

FORSYTHE: This tape is part of the Q.M. Smith Collection designated as QMS. 1995.34. This is Regina Forsythe. I am interviewing Dr. Robert Garrigus. Today is Tuesday, July 25, 1995. The interview is being conducted in the Gore Research Center in the Ned McWherter Learning Resource Center Room 111. The tape of this interview along with a transcription of this interview will become part of the Quinton 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?

FORSYTHE: What is your full name?

GARRIGUS: Robert R. Garrigus.

FORSYTHE: And your birth-date?

GARRIGUS: July 15, 1936.

FORSYTHE: And your birthplace?

GARRIGUS: Champagne, Illinois.

FORSYTHE: And your father's name?

GARRIGUS: Wesley P. Garrigus.

FORSYTHE: And his occupation?

GARRIGUS: He was head of the animal science department at the University of Kentucky.

FORSYTHE: Your mother's name?

GARRIGUS: Helen Robbins Garrigus.

FORSYTHE: Her occupation?

GARRIGUS: She was a schoolteacher.

FORSYTHE: Do you have any brothers and sisters?

GARRIGUS: I have a brother and a sister. My sister's name is Betty Baird, and she lives in Owensboro, Kentucky. My brother's name is James Garrigus, and he lives in Marietta, Georgia.

FORSYTHE: Your wife's name?

GARRIGUS: Janice Jones Garrigus.

FORSYTHE: And her occupation?

GARRIGUS: Housewife.

FORSYTHE: Do you have any children?

GARRIGUS: Two daughters...Pamela and Heather.

FORSYTHE: Did anyone else from your family come to MTSU?

GARRIGUS: Pamela did.

FORSYTHE: Did anyone else work here?

GARRIGUS: No.

FORSYTHE: What degrees do you have?

GARRIGUS: I have a PHD from the University of Kentucky.

FORSYTHE: What is it in?

GARRIGUS: Animal nutrition.

FORSYTHE: What was your dissertation?

GARRIGUS: The effect of soybean hulls on XXX calf performance.

FORSYTHE: Why did you choose to work at MTSU?

GARRIGUS: I was at Perdue University for five years before I came down here, and of course XXX University has put a lot of emphasis on research, and I was much more interested in teaching. I came through here while I was at Perdue. I just spent some time on the campus looking around just because I had a little time to kill. I liked the campus so much that I told the guy that was from Perdue that was with me that if there were job openings down here, I was going to apply for them. About a year later, this job opened up. I applied for it, and got it.

FORSYTHE: Do you remember you job interview?

GARRIGUS: No, I don't

FORSYTHE: Where was you office?

GARRIGUS: In the Stark Agriculture Building.

FORSYTHE: Has it always been there?

GARRIGUS: Well, the first year I was here, we had a Quansit Hut with an army barracks that is currently where the new nursing building. I spent a year in that, and then we moved the Startk Agriculture Building the next year.

FORSYTHE: Was that one of those wooden barracks things?

GARRIGUS: Cracks on the floors, and it squeaked when a student came in late. You could hear him all over the building.

FORSYTHE: So, you had classrooms in there, too.

GARRIGUS: Oh yes, we had that entire department in that building.

FORSYTHE: How did you all fit in there?

GARRIGUS: We had two classrooms and about six offices, if I remember right.

FORSYTHE: Did you have small classes?

GARRIGUS: yes.

FORSYTHE: What was your job title when you came?

GARRIGUS: Assistant professor.

FORSYTHE: And you duties?

GARRIGUS: I coached the lifetime XXXX team. I advised block and bridal club. I taught four classes each semester. I was consultant with the beef cattle operation on the University farm. I was on the faculty senate, of course a number of University committees.

FORSYTHE: What is the livestock judging?

GARRIGUS: The livestock judging team was when we train students to evaluate cattle, sheep and hogs. They have to be able to evaluate a live animal for muscling, fat, carcass

characteristics and things like that. Then, they have to defend their placing with an oral set of reasons. It's actually better than a speech class from the standpoint of the experience of the students because they have to remember what they saw and then defend what they did in front of an official that's an expert in the field. So, it's quite an experience.

FORSYTHE: The Block and Bridal Club...

GARRIGUS: The block stands for the meat...the block butcher's used to cut meat on and the bridal goes with the horse. This is now the science club that all major universities across the United States that have animal science programs have a block and bridal club. So, it's a national organization. About seven years ago at the national convention in Houston, Texas, we had the most active Block and Bridal chapter of 83 of the United States. We've got a real good group of students here.

FORSYTHE: How has your department changed since you've been here?

GARRIGUS: Of course, it's expanded number wise from the standpoint of the faculty. We took a drop in students about eight or nine or ten years ago. Since that time, we've doubled the number of students, and a lot of people wonder about that because agriculture is becoming so vertically intergrated and everything. A lot of people think agriculture is strictly farming, but agriculture is a lot more than farming. There's a lot of agribusiness and research and extension work and things like that that are tied in with agriculture other than just the farm itself. I was talking with an A economist in Georgia last week and he said that fifty percent of the jobs in Georgia that are involved tie in with agriculture in one way or another....Fifty percent of the entire labor force in Georgia is tied up in one way or another in agriculture.

FORSYTHE: Can you tell me about the school farm?

GARRIGUS: The university farm used to be entirely here on campus. Then, as the campus expanded, we had to move to other land and Dr. Stark was head of the department here at the university. When he retired, he had some land out off the interstate west of town that was sold to the state, but sold at a very reasonable price. Although it wasn't truly a gift, it was in a sense a gift. That land has been developed as part of the university farm ever since then. Then, at the veteran's administration hospital, there was quite a bit of land out there they were not using. They let the university use it, and then, after a period of time, they decided they'd never use it. So, they deeded that land to the University. So, the University actually owns that farm now. Actually, we have three farms. The dairy and the crops are primarily out at the Stark farm. The cattle and hog operation are out at the VA hospital, and most of the horses are here on campus. .

FORSYTHE: Do you grow anything? Which crops do you grow?

GARRIGUS: We grow some Alpha-alpha. We grow some oats. We grow quite a bit of corn. Corn is used for grain and XXX both. I try to raise most of the crops to feed all of the livestock. The only thing that is purchased is mineral supplements and protein.

FORSYTHE: So, you support yourself?

GARRIGUS: Pretty much so. Then, the milk is run through a processing plant in the back of our building. It is used to produce 2% milk, whole milk, soft serve ice cream, chocolate milk, and now we have strawberry milk.

FORSYTHE: So, where does the milk go?

GARRIGUS: The milk stays here on the campus. So, if you get any kind of milk or soft serve products here on campus, it comes from the University farm. Now, in the summer when there is excess milk because there's not many students, that milk is sold as surplus to ODHI and some other dairy cooperatives.

FORSYTHE: The Livestock Pavilion Horse Facility...where was that?

GARRIGUS: Tennessee Livestock Center originated somewhere around twelve or thirteen years ago. There was not a facility in the state of Tennessee to exhibit livestock...horses, cattle, whatever. I saw Tommy Burnette, who was a state legislature in Nashville one day and suggested that we do such a thing. He told me to talk to John Bragg and get him to get in touch with him, and together, he'd see what they could do. Well, at that time, we had a small horse facility on the campus and so, the idea was to expand on that horse facility. We didn't get a lot of money that first time, so we didn't get to building very much of a facility, but later on, just a few years later, more money became available, and so, the facility was expanded to the extent it is today. Many national, regional, and of course, state livestock events are held in there. In fact, if you looked at the calendar right now, you'd probably find no more than one weekend in the next twelve months that is available for use. So, it's probably one of the wisest investments the state has ever made because there is a lot of out-of-state money that comes into the economy of this county and the state of Tennessee.

FORSYTHE: I want to ask you about the Soul Conservation Society and the Rodeo Club?

GARRIGUS: Don't have one.

FORSYTHE: I have some faculty members...I went through the annuals and catalogs...Robert Allen Alexander?

GARRIGUS: He was the department Chairman. In fact, he's the one that hired me. He passed away some years ago. He had an aneurysm that was pretty serious. He had some

brain damage, and eventually passed away. He was the department Chairman for many, many years and came from Louisiana.

FORSYTHE: Warren Lee Anderson?

GARRIGUS: Warren Anderson is our soul scientist. He got his training at Nebraska in Illinois. He is in the XXX area and coaches the XXX XXX team and teachers the XXXX classes.

FORSYTHE: Theodore Bigger?

GARRIGUS: Ted Bigger was the department Chairman before Dr. Alexander for just a few years. Then, he was the soul scientist until he retired, and then Dr. Anderson came in and took his place.

FORSYTHE: Ann Brezicky?

GARRIGUS: She teaches the horse equitation classes. She coaches the horse riding team that competes nationally. She teaches a lot of the equitation in our department.

FORSYTHE: Joe Diment?

GARRIGUS: Joe Diment has retired. He taught the last management class. He taught the poultry classes. He taught the dairy production classes. He's retired and lives out in the Las Cassass area.

FORSYTHE: Harley Thouch?

GARRIGUS: Harley Thouch got his training in Illinois and at Auburn University and is our department chairman at this time.

FORSYTHE: Earl New?

GARRIGUS: Earl New was in the Horticulture division and retired some years ago to Florida and passed away in the last few years.

FORSYTHE: Enri Rollins?

GARRIGUS: Rollins is our Ag. economist. He teaches the Ag. business classes.

FORSYTHE: Samuel Clifton Rickets?

GARRIGUS: Rickets is from Mt. Juliet and he teaches our vocational agriculture classes that train teaches to go out and teach vocational agriculture at the high school level.

FORSYTHE: James Staley?

GARRIGUS: He was the horticulturist in our department, but he took a job over in the maintenance division. They moved him over into the Murphy center. He's back in the maintenance division now, and I'm not sure what he is doing.

FORSYTHE: David Whittaker?

GARRIGUS: Dave Whittaker is our horse science public service coordinator which is kind of like extension. In other words, if you were at a land grant university, they'd call that extension work. We call it public service. He coaches the horse-judging team. They've won many, many, many national horse-judging contests. Then, he does public service work throughout the state of Tennessee. He helps put on horse-judging contests and things like that.

FORSYTHE: Jane Bruce Wilder?

GARRIGUS: She used to have Ann Brezicky's job, and she resigned and went in to work on her own, and I'm not sure what she is doing now.

FORSYTHE: Jerry Williams?

GARRIGUS: Jerry Williams is in the horse science area. He's been here longer than I have and teaches many of the horse science classes as well as the Elements Animal science class which is the beginning freshmen class for animal science students.

FORSYTHE: Joseph Young?

GARRIGUS: Young just retired this past May. He was in agribusiness area. He's retired, and we're in the process of hiring his replacement right now.

FORSYTHE: Let me ask you about the Presidents starting with Q.M. What do you remember about him?

GARRIGUS: Q.M. Smith was retired when I came here twenty-eight years ago, but he lived across the street from me. He had a farm at that time, and of course, being in the animal science area, I was intrigued by that farm. One day I went over and asked him if he would be interested in leasing the farm to me since the location was so close to where I lived. He thought a very brief few minutes and said, "Absolutely not." So, I waited until the winter came and caught him up in the barn loft throwing hay down. Of course, he was rather elderly at the time but getting along fine. And, I asked him again if he'd let me rent his farm, and he said, "No." I said, "Can you tell me why?" He said, "Well, I'm afraid if you rented the farm, you wouldn't let me bush hog or cut pasture with a tractor and a bush hog. And I said, "Dr. Smith, you can bush hog that farm anytime you want to while I'm renting it, no problem whatsoever." He said, "Well, if that's alright, then I'll just rent to you." So, at that time which has been close to twenty years ago, I rented

the farm and bought all of his cattle. I've been there ever since. He was a very caring type person. Just to show you what extremes he would go, sometimes we'd go out and fix fences together. Of course, I'd take him with me as often as I could because I knew he enjoyed it. He always wanted to drive the tractor. He had this little trailer he put in behind the tractor. And, he'd always insist that I sit on a cushion when I rode in that trailer as we went across the pastures. One day I asked him why he insisted that I sit on that cushion. And he said, "because I don't want you to have hemorrhoid problems." Q.M. Smith, of course, has been said to have bought the extra land way back when he was President here that has now allowed the University to expand like it has. Of course, foresight like that, a lot of people didn't have. But, if he hadn't done it, this University would have been in a lot of trouble. When he bought the farm out north of town, out off Pitts Lane, a lot of people laughed at him, and said, "My gosh, you're getting way out too far away from town. That's ridiculous to buy land out there like that." He sold off quite a bit of that land quite a few years ago, and that land is very, very valuable now, and it is in the city limits. Back when he bought that, people thought he was in another universe, but not it's in the city limits. So, the man had a lot of foresight. There wasn't any question about that.

FORSYTHE: What did he do with his farm before you rented it?

GARRIGUS: He strictly had pasture and pull herd for cattle. He had no crops or anything like that. He just raised pull-herd for cattle.

FORSYTHE: How did he feel about his farm?

GARRIGUS: Of course he loved that farm because anytime you're President of a University or anytime you have administrative power, there's quite a bit of stress. The farm was an outlet for him, and that's why he wanted to bush hog that farm. He believed that exercise and getting out in the open spaces was just the way to get away from all the stress that was involved as a University President.

FORSYTHE: What kind of man was he?

GARRIGUS: He had a slight speech impediment. You had to really concentrate to hear every word he was saying, but I got to the point I could understand every single word that he said. He got along fine with that, and it's a credit to him that he reached the heights that he did with that particular problem. Of course, public relations and all those kinds of things are very important as a university President. But, he had a slight speech impediment that he just didn't let bother. As I say, I got to the point I could understand everything he said with no problem whatsoever.

FORSYTHE: Dr. Scarlett, was he the President when you were hired?

GARRIGUS: Dr. Scarlett advanced this University extremely well. I know he's primarily responsible for bringing in the journalism department. Of course, this is expanded

into Mass Communications and all the other areas of media skills that are involved here at the University. He hired some football coaches that were controversial, but got along fine. Most of those coaches worked out well. I think Dr. Scarlett advanced this university tremendously in the years that he was here. There wasn't any question about that.

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

GARRIGUS: There was some pressure put on Dr. Scarlett at one time, and the faculty stood up in his favor and supported him very strongly. Dr. Scarlett did a good job while he was here. There was no question about it. In fact, I've been putting on some effort to get a building named after Dr. Scarlett at the University.

FORSYTHE: President Ingram?

GARRIGUS: Dr. Ingram...I was kind of close to him because he was in the cattle business, too. In fact, when he retired, the foundation board presented him a XXX bull. They called me and asked me if I would supervise that. The retirement was scheduled at the Garden Plaza Hotel here in town. They wanted to present him that bull in the hotel. I started to think that that could cause all kinds of problems, but we took some astro-turf and put that down in one of the meeting rooms, and then took some portable panels and took over. Then, when the bull got there, we gave him some tranquilizers and put him in that pen, and at the appropriate time, the petition was divided and there was this bull in the Garden Plaza. That was a big surprise! He used that bull for three or four years, and the bull made a real contribution to his beef cattle operation. He was a real good bull.

FORSYTHE: What kind of President was Dr. Ingram?

GARRIGUS: Dr. Ingram watched the money strings very close. He was extremely tight with his money. He didn't want to waste any money. He had a very open door policy. People from town, people from out of the state had open access to Dr. Ingram as well as faculty. He had a very open policy as far as his administrative style was concerned. Of course, I appreciate that. That's the way it should be.

FORSYTHE: Dr. Prescott?

GARRIGUS: Dr. Prescott was here as a sort of interim between Dr. Ingram and Dr. Walker. I had some dealings with Dr. Prescott. Of course, he was only here a couple of years. When it was time for him to move on, I thought some much of him, I told Dr. Prescott that he should say. Of course, he was retiring and not of that particular notion to stay with the University, but I thought he did a tremendous job, and I thought he should stay ten years or more. I think he would have really made a contribution to this University .

FORSYTHE: Did he say why he didn't want to stay?

GARRIGUS: He had retired from Tennessee Tech., and there was that period of time, just a couple of years that we needed someone to run the University, and they asked him to do it. So, he essentially came out of retirement and did it. He had already been in retirement when he came here, so he wasn't about to stay much longer. He was an outstanding person.

FORSYTHE: Dr. Walker is going to move this University far and make it advance very, very rapidly. Dr. Walker has tremendous public relations skills. Since he's been here, the University has expanded and grown tremendously. I think the image of the University has improved considerably since he has been here. He's hired a number of administrators who have helped the University in its expansion. The university is growing so fast that we're running the risk of getting impersonal. We've got to have more people in administrative position to handle the growth of the University, and I think he has allowed for that.

FORSYTHE: What do you remember about Joe Nunley?

GARRIGUS: Joe Nunley is one of my favorite people. He was as loyal to this University as anyone I've ever known. He was a sports enthusiast up until his last few days. He would come out to baseball games. He was a railbird which is one of the staunch baseball supporting groups that has supported the baseball program here at the University. He had some land up near McMinnville. He'd had groups of faculty and townspeople up to his farm to tell stories and have a good time. Joe Nunley was one of the fine, fine people that has ever been associated with this University.

FORSYTHE: What do you require your students to do?

GARRIGUS: That depends on the course, but a lot of our students go into veterinary school. So, we have to expose them to enough hands on experience. They have to be able to handle horses, cattle, sheep and hogs and do all of the management practices that are involved such as identification and castration, dehorning and all those kinds of things. In our XXX and feeding class, we try to expose our students to balancing rations so that animals get fed properly. So, it depends on the course itself, but we try to prepare our students not only for veterinary school, but also for positions in the animal science area.

FORSYTHE: Let's talk about your students.

GARRIGUS: People think agriculture is just farming, but our students get exposed to some many leadership qualities and communication skills through our clubs and activities within the department that they can go out and get jobs in a number of different areas. One of my students has been the head coffee bean buyer for Coca-Cola in Houston, Texas which requires him going out and buying over a million dollars worth of coffee beans a week or at least having that much lined up

so they can be delivered and used. We have a young man that is in charge of nineteen Phd researchers at the Livestock Research Station in El Rino, Oklahoma. We've got a young man that is president of a bank. We've got a man who is a XXX consultant out in Kansas. He consults with a lot of the big beef cattle feed lots in the Kansas and Texas areas. Our students go into extension work, vocational agriculture teaching. They get in with money lending agencies such as farm credit service and production credit and places like that. Our students travel extensively this past March. I took ten students out to Kansas and Oklahoma, Iowa and Nebraska to visit livestock operations in that area. Our livestock judging team travels extensively into Texas, Missouri and Kansas. Anytime our students get out and get exposed to the livestock industry and the people involved in the livestock industry, this opens up opportunities for them.

FORSYTHE: This is a continuation of the interview with Dr. Robert Garrigus by Regina Forsythe on Tuesday, July 25, 1995.

FORSYTHE: Do you want to tell me about the Tennessee Livestock Center?

GARRIGUS: Tennessee Livestock Center has been acclaimed by many who have used it as the finest livestock facility on any college campus. In fact, we had some people fly in here from Michigan State University in the last couple of years looking at it for ideas as to how they might build something similar to it. It is used extensively. It's got a lot of flexibility to it so that it not only is a large facility, but it is a multi-purpose facility which allows for many, many things to be used in it. Over the past five or six years, we've had the national junior cattle organization represented in XXX. The people who rotate these conferences around the country have chosen to come here to MTSU and use our facility for their events on a national basis. So, it's recognized throughout the country as one of the finest facilities on any college campus. Our block and bridle club which represents the animal science area has been acclaimed as the most active chapter in the U.S. about seven years ago at the national convention in Houston. Our students get involved in a number of activities. For example, this past January, the national cattlemen's association held there at convention at The Opryland Hotel in Nashville, and they asked our group to come up and help coordinate a team pinning competition which involved people on horses rounding up cattle. These people brought horses from California and all of the United States in for this, and they asked us to help coordinate as well as help feed those people. So, we fed about a thousand people that night, and then worked with them during the convention at the Opryland Hotel. We put on a number of events ourselves...showmanship contests, steer sales, and all different sorts of things that exposed students to accepting responsibility, developing leadership and communication skills that helped them prepare themselves for life on the outside.

GARRIGUS: Our pre-veterinary program at the University has developed students that have been extremely successful in the veterinary practices. Auburn University accepts ten students from throughout the United States after they've met their needs from

Kentucky and Alabama. This past year there were two hundred ninety-four students that applied for those ten positions from California to New York. Two of our students applied for those positions, and both were accepted. So, two out of ten throughout the United States were accepted at Auburn University. We had a total of eight students apply to vet schools...Mississippi State, Auburn, and UT, and seven of those were accepted. One year, I know we had eight out of ten accepted. So, the acceptance rate of pre-vet students at Middle Tennessee State University in veterinary schools is extremely good. Once these students get into veterinary school, they are very successful. Many of these are out in practices in the southeast with veterinary clinics, research, teaching and things like that in the veterinary field. I think a number of people would agree that veterinary students at Middle Tennessee State University are extremely well-prepared for the profession.