

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW  
WITH  
BAXTER HOBGOOD

25 JULY 1995

MURFREESBORO, TENNESSEE

INTERVIEWED BY REGINA FORSYTHE  
FOR THE Q. M. SMITH ORAL HISTORY PROJECT  
INTERVIEW #QMS.036

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

ALBERT GORE RESEARCH CENTER

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MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY

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## ABSTRACT



**ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW WITH  
BAXTER HOBGOOD**

Q. M. SMITH ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW #QMS.036

FORSYTHE: This tape is part of the Q.M. Smith collection designated as QMS.1995.36. This is Regina Forsythe and I am interviewing Mr. Baxter Hobgood. Today is Tuesday, July 25, 1995. The interview is being conducted in the home of Mr. Hobgood at 214 Tyne Ln. in Murfreesboro, TN. Do you want to finish telling me about your aunt?

HOBGOOD: I was telling you about our trips to Hendersonville to see J. Elmer Malone and Dr. Ezell was usually with me. We took him this Greek salad and invariably before we left, he would start to raise his hand and point one finger up as I started to leave. He was saying that we met each other first on the state teacher's campus. He was a basketball player with a scholarship and me with a kinky-headed little guy with a lot of things to look forward to. The Sunday after that, we went to his home and had a tremendous meal and brought enough back to last us a couple of days. It was a very joyous day as far as I was concerned.

FORSYTHE: I'd like to ask you what your uncle's name was before I forget.

HOBGOOD: Hezikiah Hamilton Harrison Hobgood. That's a lot of name, isn't it?

FORSYTHE: I want to ask you about the faculty when you were a student. Dorothy Bactell in Biology?

HOBGOOD: I didn't have many classes in the science department, but I remember her. If I'm not mistaken, she married a student. She married Marion Edny. I remember she was a good teacher, but I didn't take science courses. I took the things I could take and did the things I could do!(Laugh) To me, that was a mark of this school. They didn't insist that you had to do this or had to do that. What you can do, do it, and do it as well as you can. Otherwise, if that's what you're cut out for, that's what it will be.

FORSYTHE: What did you study?

HOBGOOD: I studied history, government, economics, speech work, English...all the easy things!(Both laugh)

FORSYTHE: What about Mr. Dan Beasley in the education department?

HOBGOOD: Dan Beasley was very likable as well as was Mrs. Beasley. He was dean of the institution when I was there. He taught only a few classes. Mrs. Beasley taught science, and his secretary was a fine young lady by the name of Payne.

FORSYTHE: What do you remember about Ms. Payne?

HOBGOOD: Well, she seemed to keep pretty close tabs on all the things that were going on including activities that were taking place. She was a close associate of Dean Beasley. I better not say anything about the fact that she was the sister of a young lady I fell for.(Both Laugh) I recall that on one occasion, we had arranged a debate series with Murray and a man by the name of Dr. Hubert Coleman and I, went to Murray to debate and the other team stayed here. We were the negative and the home team was the affirmative. Our home team lost 3-0 in a pretty exciting debate as I understood. Somehow Hubert Coleman and I managed to win at Murray by a 2-1 vote. We pulled a few tricks that happened to click. Some things that he mentioned that we did . We won at any rate 2-1. Immediately after winning, we received a night letter from Mary Wilson, the dean's secretary saying that we know you lost by a big vote but we love you anyway...come on home. He goes and sends a night letter in return to Mary Wilson of all the things we ever XXX. Anybody that would back his team by saying that they knew they had lost, yet still said come on home, we love you. We just couldn't understand it. To tell you the truth, we're thinking about not even coming home. We sent that message home. We didn't go in Monday. We went by his farm that his brother was taking care of in Humphries. We went and spent Sunday night and Monday we came in about four, and the hallway was labeled with all kinds of announcements. "NEGATIVE TEAM SWAMPS MURRAY" "WINS IN A THRILING FINISH" They had that up scattered all over the main floor and we got a laugh out of it. We enjoyed it very much. Some of the crazy ways that students and teachers behaved in those days. I remember one instance when I was a freshman, rumors developed about who was going to be written as the favorite teacher in the annual. I don't know why they decided to do it this way, but they decided they would let the teacher who received the most votes by the annuals being purchased. In other words, if you purchased an annual or were going to purchase one, you would put some XXX dollars in a box located out in the hallway and that would be a vote for your favorite candidate. The favorite candidate of the freshmen was Dr. Gillentine. We knew that we didn't have the money that the senior class had, so the senior class would go by and put in their envelopes indicating that they were voting for their favorite. Everyone knew who their favorite was and they figured that this was so many votes for their favorite. The freshmen went by and dropped an envelope in the box. Well, when they opened the envelopes, all of the senior ballots contained money for their favorite. The freshmen envelopes contained ten cents a piece saying that we regret very much that we do not have the money to purchase the annual, but we would like to contribute this ten cents towards the expenses which we know will be high. It tickled Dr. Gillentine to death. She had the biggest smile. The president of the university just went wild!! Dr.XXX was going up to everybody

that had anything to do with that chastise. He got a hold of Dr. Gillentine, and said, "Get them in there and give them down and country. I'm going to leave my door open, and I want to hear you scolding them from one end to the other." She got in and started scolding, winking the entire time. She walked by giving out dollars and telling everyone to go to the show this afternoon. So, everyone got satisfied, I guess. XXX got his wishes for XXX XXX Dr. Giligine had her XXX time. Incidentally, she went back to Arkansas and ran for the U.S. Senate but got beaten. It almost killed her.

FORSYTHE: What about Sarah Beasley in Geography? What can you tell me about her?

HOBGOOD: That's the same Beasley I commented on when I was talking about the Dean.

FORSYTHE: Okay, what about Clyde Campbell in history?

HOBGOOD: I didn't have him.

FORSYTHE: What about S.P. Clemmens?

HOBGOOD: Are you sure these teachers were here in the years 1926-1930?

FORSYTHE: Yes, I looked in the books. Let's skip to Coach Faulkinberry.

HOBGOOD: Oh, yes, Coach Faulkinberry. I went out for baseball, made the team, but an old injury flung me aside again. As I said, we were always doing things that we could do and some of the best players in school were baseball players that were injured or were not passing their work. The second best pitcher would not play because his brother was the main pitcher on the main team, he didn't want to play because he was afraid that he would contribute in some way to his not doing as well as he should. So, when I found out that my back and knees were not going to respond very well to my running, I went to Coach Faulkinberry and said, "Coach, you hardly have enough men to practice every day. So, why don't I get up a crew of subs and those who are out for different reasons and scrimmage your team some afternoon, as often as you want. Well, the very first game, we had two of the best players in school. They're from down in Lynchburg. They couldn't pass a nickels worth of work, but they were real hot baseball players, and Coach Faulkinberry started one of his second strongest pitchers in the first scrimmage. We had them going every which way when we were about to beat them, and he had to resort to his top man who was already playing professional baseball, and that was a total shock. He was playing professional ball and a little bit later on, he went to Memphis and played for three or four years. From Memphis, he went to Pittsburg to manage and Kolon Shaw went with him and had six fine years there. He was such a fine person. I admired him and he was very XXX after the six top years in professional baseball. Shortly, his wife died, and it broke his heart. My last picture is him going to the grave on pretty days taking a chair or something with

him and sitting at the grave reading poetry to his wife. They loved poetry. That's the last picture I have of that guy. He was just an outstanding person.

FORSYTHE: What about Mary Frezell?

HOBGOOD: Yes, I remember Mrs. Frezell, too. I think I may have had one class with her. She was a very good teacher.

FORSYTHE: Dr. Golightly?

HOBGOOD: I had some work with Dr. Golightly. Dr. Golightly always emphasized character education...very strong in this field. I don't know, maybe a little bit too much because some stories that were not so pretty developed some of the family in later years.

FORSYTHE: V.B. Gracey?

HOBGOOD: Dr. Gracey was a very good teacher. He was in charge of the physical education program for the cadets during the aviation cadet period and they would have ten or fifteen mile cross-country runs in the afternoon, not usually that strenuous. He came back some time after that. Around five p.m., they'd have retreat, which was a beautiful thing on the campus. All of them were present, all of them marching to dinner and after dinner, they had to spend one hour quietly in the dormitories where they were staying. It was on night after that that I understood that the cross-country had not been bad that afternoon. They hadn't gone near as far as they usually went. But, in that quiet hour, they found one of the boys dead. I don't recall his name, but that was the tragedy of the aviation cadet program.

FORSYTHE: Pauley Greene?

HOBGOOD: Yes, but I didn't have class with Ms. Green, but those who did seemed to enjoy her work very much.

FORSYTHE: Mr. Hutchinson?

HOBGOOD: MR. Max Hutchinson was in charge of the farm and all of the agricultural courses. Dr. Hutchinson was a leader in many respect because he was the first to begin to point that Mr. Line didn't even have his degree in education. He didn't have a degree in anything. He may have done some college work of some sort. I don't recall ever saying he had any degree at all. Dr. Hutchinson made much of the fact that he did not have anything. It led to some thinking about some changes that should be made.

FORSYTHE: Horace Jones?

HOBGOOD: Mr. Jones taught one of those tough fields, and I didn't have any course work with him, but I liked him. I believe he married Mr. Line's daughter. He was related to the family. He was excellent, and I was editor of the paper my senior year. I went down to the News Journal one morning and fixed the layout for the first page. I came back and the manager of the paper was sitting on the doorstep, and I told what I had done about the first page. He said, "You better go back and get it changed." I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "You were just elected all-around student." I said, "Don't give me that. I know better than that." He said, "No, you XXXX, but why didn't you ever take any work with Mr. Horace Jones? I said," Well, I don't know. He taught the hard subjects." He said, "What I have to tell you is that you came in second." Mr. Jones said that he just didn't know you because you'd never taken a class with him. So, he didn't know what you could do. The other people argued that all we'd have to do was look around the campus and see how many things you did that you could do, but he wouldn't have it. He just turned it down and went for a student with high grades, and I didn't blame him. I knew that was the case. I was no best-all-around, but I did get that second highest number of votes. My aunt had a niece in school at the time, but she had to call and tell her that I was second best all around student. Well, I tried my best to tell them there was no second best. There's no such thing as second best! Don't use it all. But, they made up a bigXXX and sent it to my old Rocksboro home. Then came a donation of two hundred dollars from one of the men in the industry. He said, "Baxter, I'm so happy to read this about you, and I know all seniors need a little money to help things out. So, take this two hundred dollars, and sometime when you've made some money and don't need it, bring it back and you and I will give it to another student who has done well. I went to see him when I went to Rocksboro and told him that whole story, and I told him that I couldn't pay him that year, but I would the next.

FORSYTHE: What about Mr. Judd? He was in social science.

HOBGOOD: I didn't have Mr. Judd.

FORSYTHE: Phillip Mancon?

HOBGOOD: OH, yes, yes, MR. Mancon was an interesting person that you could have a lot of fun with as we did. He loved poetry. He was eccentric in some ways. We accused him of walking and talking in iambic pentameter! He would laugh and go on about his work. Some of the fellows one night thought they'd play a little trick on him, and they got a young lady to agree to have a date with him. They told Mr. Mancon that this girl was interested in him a lot and, and he invited her to dinner. She went and when she got there, there was nothing to eat. He opened an old-time can of salmon, put it in a saucer, divided it into two saucers, put some vinegar over it and had some crackers. She had some and he had some. All of a sudden, I didn't get any dessert. I guess I'll run now to the store and come back with some ice cream. While he was gone, she didn't know what to do... whether to wash the saucers or clean up or what. But, the cat licked out the saucers.

When he came back, he dipped his cream right into those saucers. They ate the cream and had a big joke out of that. He was a fine person. We enjoyed his classes and we enjoyed talking with him. He was very cooperative, very faithful in his work, very fine with those he worked with.

FORSYTHE: Katherine Monahan?

HOBGOOD: Oh, Catholic all the way. Ms. Katherine was a beautiful soul and was most insistent that girls and boys had to stay apart from each other...couldn't get close together. If you were going across campus, you don't touch hands in public. The story they liked to tell the most is that on one occasion, some of the boys were standing in the west hall of the west entrance and exit of Old Main, and Ms. Monahan and Mr. James were coming across the walk from Rutledge dormitory and Ms. Monahan fell, and Mr. James, the gentleman that he was simply reached out to take her by her elbows and raise her to her feet. She was fighting him like tooth and toenail. "Don't you touch me...Don't you touch me!" The boys who noticed that talked about it with Mr. James and he said it was the truth. She didn't want to be touched. She didn't want any help, but she was a sweet, darling soul. Great teacher.

FORSYTHE: Dr. John Morris?

HOBGOOD: Dr. Morris...I believe I had one class with him. He was the kind of teacher that taught in unknowns. I remember the last test I took with him...He wrote a long statement on the board and had it covered with a road map or something, and then as we got in and took our seats, he raised that map and that was his long one question. Ten minutes after everyone had read the statement, no one had written a single word. Finally, key in on one thought or one discovery I made in the sentence. I just simply wrote about that one thought for the rest of the period just as fast and as hard as I could go. I turned it in, and it came back with a B. I believe that no one in the class made lower than a B. I believe that nobody in the class made more than a B, but that's the kind of test he'd give. He wouldn't say five times five equals blank. It was blank equals blank most of the time. Again, he was a very likable character.

FORSYTHE: Ann Ordway?

HOBGOOD: Oh, Ms. Ordway was something. She was a darling person. She was the aunt of Dr. Sam Hay in Murfreesboro. He could tell you some good stories about her. You should visit him sometime. He's retired. I'm going to visit him tomorrow. She's the one that I told you maneuvered me while I was there into a little college relations...girlfriend. She moved in such ways that I just had to follow her.

FORSYTHE: What about Tommy Reynolds?

HOBGOOD: Tommy Reynolds? Physical Education. I didn't have any classes with the girls physical education teacher, but she was a likable person. XXX I was chairman of our church building committee, and one year I went with some other people to the home of two of her brothers and I thought one of them was going to kill me before I got out of the house. And it was my fault because he was interesting in building, and when we were building what is the middle school now, the back door almost got in his front door. I didn't stop and ask him what he would like to see done..I should have. All he wanted to say to me was that he thought that the back door should look like the front door. And it should have, and in some respects, it did. I tried to tell him that I regreted that we hadn't conferred with him and made it look more like a front door, but he wouldn't handle and wasn't going to give anything to that church. Well, Ms. Tommy came to him and said, " I want you to apologize to my good friend, Baxter Hobgood. If you feel like it, I want you to go ahead and give them the money for the building." I got to church on Sunday morning, and the secretary met me at the door, and said, " Your friend came by and said to tell you he was sorry." He left a five thousand dollar check. That's my contact with Ms. Tommy. She, too was a very fine person. I believe she coached the girls teams, and incidentally, Mr. Faulkinberry coached the girls team, and I guess we better not say too much about him. You must know a little bit about the story.

FORSYTHE: What about Sara Reeves? She taught in the history department.

HOBGOOD: I didn't have her, but she was a principal of one of the schools I helped to build. It bears her name...Reeves- Rogers. It's is her and Rogers the first grade teacher. Her son was killed in WWII, and that's where the Rogers part came from. Ms. Reeves was principal of the old Critslow school. Ms. Rogers taught in the school, and her son was killed in the war. So, we named it the Reeves-Rogers

FORSYTHE: E. Mae Sanders? Music teacher.

HOBGOOD: I didn't have any music, but she seemed to be well thought of by students.

FORSYTHE: Dr. Simms? H: Dr. Simms was quite a guy. Everyone thought well of him and he lectured for the most part. He was the type of person that you never could get anything on. If you tried to joke with him, he'd top your joke. There's was no way you were going to get anything by him. One of his students won the Nobel Prize for economic reorganization.

FORSYTHE: Is that James Buchanan? H: James Buchanan? He said that the most he ever got out of one of Dr. Simms classes was that he advised him to go to Chicago. That's where Dr. Simms had been. He went to the University of Chicago. This is an interesting story that they tell on Dr. Simms..I don't whether you want to put it in there! He is completely bald, and one morning a guy by the name of Upstart got real smart and real cute. He went by the desk where Dr. Simms was seated and took his hand and rubbed it over his bald head,and said, " That feels just like my

wife's knee." Well, Dr. Simms sat there for a little while. He was going to lose his cool or anything. He gets up and looks over the crowd to the boy, and he rubs his head and said, "By George, that does feel like your wife's knee!" The boy was blushing.

FORSYTHE: Here's another history teacher...H.H. Todd.

HOBGOOD: I didn't have him.

FORSYTHE: Okay, let's go to staff...J.S. Holmes.

HOBGOOD: Mr Holmes was the financier. He was a very faithful worker. He was crippled, but very faithful. Everybody liked him, and his wife was a happy-go-lucky type of person. They made a fine couple. On campus, they were well thought of.

FORSYTHE: Ms. Betty McHenry? She was the President's secretary.

HOBGOOD: Oh yes. She was a very efficient and a very fine person with whom to work. She was very interested in every student. She worked closely with the Dean. She did anything she could do to help in any way. Everybody liked her.

FORSYTHE: J.H. Baer? He was custodian of property.

HOBGOOD: Mr. Baer was well liked. Again, he was one of those people joked with and about a lot of the time. He was a good secretary of the Kiwanas club I had joined. Mrs. Baer told some too, I believe. I believe she taught music.

FORSYTHE: W.C. Hastings?

HOBGOOD: I didn't have Mr. Hastings.

FORSYTHE: Did you live in a dorm while you were on campus? Jones hall?

HOBGOOD: I lived in Jones Hall. When I got here, everything had been taken. I went over to Jones Hall and I found little room that served as a Janitor's Headquarters. Some of the furniture was out in the hall, and I found out that you could put a small bed and a dresser out in there, and the bath was right across the hall. There's one of those on each floor. I went across and saw Mr. Lyon and said, " Get them to move that third floor janitor's station and just have two. Let me live on the third floor and have a bed and a dresser and a few things in there that I can get by with until I change. He said, "Well, if you want a room that bad, we'll do it." I roomed there the first year... the whole year. The second year, amongst the other jobs that I filled either on or off campus, I operated the Y store.(located on the second floor of Jones Hall). It was in one room where we kept drinks, pork and beans, crackers, cakes, and ice cream. Usually, some of them would miss eating in the cafeteria, and I would open it as soon as we got back from the cafeteria. Usually,

it was swamped. They were eating there instead of the cafeteria. Often times, about 10:30 or 11:00, Coach Faulkinberry, who was living in the dormitory would come up on the first floor and say, "Hob, I'm hungry. Why don't you shout out that the Y is open, but let me get in there and buy something from you first. Then, let the others come on down. They are a little bit restless tonight. Let them come on down." When we did that, I had to have help. I would take in all the money and turn it over to the secretary of the Y (YMCA). He would buy all the supplies and pay out all of the funds.

FORSYTHE: So, the Y store was inside Jones Hall?

HOBGOOD: On the second floor.

FORSYTHE: Did it have anything to do with the YMCA?

HOBGOOD: It was operated by the YMCA.

FORSYTHE: What other jobs did you have?

HOBGOOD: I told you about organizing the white XXX. I was editor of the paper. Ms. Buchanan thought enough of me to make me one of her assistants in the dramatic department. Finally, those things with the aviation cadet program...I finally learned how to play a little tennis. The fellow that taught me the most about tennis was a man who gave the boys their first experience in an afternoon. He had won the championship at Forrest Oakes in New York. His name was Stuart, and he married Murfreesboro girl and they now live on the mountain...Sewanee. Incidentally that is where Mr. Lytle lives.

Forsythe : When you started working at MTSU, do you remember your job interview?

HOBGOOD: I first started on a part-time basis. Mr. James that I spoke of came to Central High School on number of occasions and he would visit my classroom. When he decided to retire from that job, he recommended me to fill his spot as the high school supervisor for MTSU. That took me into a lot of experiences because I rode with Ms. Mary Hall. In that first year, she undertook the job of reading to me a long, long book. She rode along reading. She's another one you could never get anything on as far as telling jokes. Her father was one of the most gracious and outstanding people that ever lived. When WWII ended, they'd been out to look at a patient somewhere and were driving by in horse and buggy, and they heard the bells ringing in Murfreesboro at 11:00 and they determined that it had to be the end of the war. He stopped his buggy and he and his daughter got down on the ground and thanked the Lord for the close of the war. She liked to tell that story. One of the interesting ones that we both enjoy a lot.

FORSYTHE: This tape is part of the Q.M. Smith collection designated as QMS.995.37.

FORSYTHE: This is Regina Forsythe. I am interviewing Mr. Baxter Hobgood. Today is Tuesday, July 25, 1995. The interview is being conducted in the home of Mr. Hobgood at 214 Tyne Ave, Murfreesboro, TN.

FORSYTHE: Did you say it was "War and Peace" that Ms. Mary was reading to you?

HOBGOOD: Yes, "War and Peace." One of the interesting things that we like to talk about as an example of how you never could get anything on her in joking with her is when we got over in a place called Railroad town, Cumberland City. They had an old railroad hotel, with all baths and toilets working in one corner somewhere in five places. There was no central heat. When we went to bed, I gave her a room on the first floor after we had supper and put me on the second floor. About 10:00, someone knocked on her door. They had brought her a heated iron to put at her feet so she'd keep warm, and they brought one and asked me if I wanted it. I said, " Sure, put it there." That took care of the night. Morning came...ham and eggs, pancakes, and all kinds of food that you wanted. All and all, it was a very pleasant experience. I remember on one occasion when we were meeting here at the college for some reason...somebody from Memphis jumped up and said, "Hey, Hobgood, why don't you tell that story about how you and Mrs. Mary registered at Cumberland City, they put those hot irons at the foot of your bed. So, I got up and told it as if there had been one bed only. " Yes, I remember when we went to bed that night, they brought in the irons and put them at our feet and fixed them so the room was real warm. We had a good night's sleep and a good breakfast the next morning". I told it that way, and I didn't know what Ms. Mary was going to say. She got right back up and said, "Yeah, Baxter, I remember that night they put those at our feet. It got our room real warm. We had such a nice breakfast and everything was just hunky-dorry!" You got nothing on her. She came right back as a lot of them like to do. Ms. Murray was a delightful person to work with.

FORSYTHE: I want to ask you about some faculty members while you were a faculty member. Edward Baldwin?

HOBGOOD: Mr. Baldwin was a director of all of the classroom cadet work. His wife is living presently, and he has a son. He was excellent with his work. He studied it so much and worked it out in such a way that those of us who taught the class had the materials prepared for us. He was excellent.

FORSYTHE: Okay, T.H. Kennedy?

HOBGOOD: I didn't have any classes with Kennedy. He was a preacher, and I remember him as just being a teacher in the program. I don't know what he did. I was working as he was working.

FORSYTHE: How about Newby Freeman?

HOBGOOD: Newby did a physical education, did some good work in both the regular classes before the cadet program came on campus and, he was a well liked person.

FORSYTHE: How did he get that nickname.

HOBGOOD: I don't know.

FORSYTHE: Nance Jordan?

HOBGOOD: Nance was in physical education. Nance was an athlete and very active person. He didn't teach long after the war. He may have gone into the war. That was on thing that Mr. Smith insisted on...that you try to get in. I believe when he came back he got into the cleaning business for awhile. He didn't live too long after that?

FORSYTHE: P.A. Lion?

HOBGOOD: The President...well, Mr. Lion, from my point of view was a very likable person. He did many good things for me. I enjoyed working him and being around him. I know my aunt appreciated him and all the things that he did for the family.

FORSYTHE: What was condition of the buildings while you were a student and while you were teaching out here?

HOBGOOD: While I was there as a student, about the only buildings they had were Old Main, Rutledge, Jones, the cafeteria and the library was somewhere on Old Main. I remember I had to take the books when the new library was built. I really hated to see that old building come down.

FORSYTHE: Where in Old Main was the library located?

HOBGOOD: in the attic...a small space in the very top.

FORSYTHE: I read in some newspapers about the Sidelines contest in 1929 selling subscriptions. Did students have to buy newspapers?

HOBGOOD: No, I believe they were free. There was a small amount that came out of the activity fund and we had a few ads.

FORSYTHE: What was the subscription contest about?

HOBGOOD: That was for the election for the most popular teacher for the annual.

FORSYTHE: Do you remember any pranks that you pulled on each other?

HOBGOOD: I think I've already mentioned most of them. s