

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW
WITH
JOHN HOOD

16 AUGUST 1995
MURFREESBORO, TENNESSEE

INTERVIEWED BY REGINA FORSYTHE
FOR THE Q. M. SMITH ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
INTERVIEW #QMS.062

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
JOHN HOOD**

Q. M. SMITH ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW #QMS.062

FORSYTHE: This tape is part of the Q.M. Smith Collection designated as QMS.062. This is Regina Forsythe I am interviewing John Hood. Today is Wednesday August 16, 1995. The interview is being conducted in the office of Mr. Hood in the Third National Bank, 201 East Main in Murfreesboro. The tape of this interview, along with a transcript, will become part of the Quentin Miller Smith Collection and will be available to the public. Future researchers may include portions of this interview in their publications. Is that alright with you, Mr. Hood?

HOOD: That's Fine

FORSYTHE: We are in the middle of a long list of names I want to skip to the President and then come back. What do you remember about Q.M. Smith?

HOOD: Well I remember we talked about Q.M. on the previous tape. I was thinking I remember him as a very effective administrator that came from Tennessee Tech where I think he was president for 20 years he came to MTSU in '38 I believe and was president through '58 for 20 years down here. Was a veteran of World War II where I think he was gassed in World War II which caused a speech impediment a speech problem but he was very, very effective still I mean overcoming that which made it even more marvelous of the career he had. and I was always told when he got disturbed and you got called in his office because he was upset with you that he could speak very clearly. At least you didn't have any trouble understanding him or getting his message but I think all the presidents it seems to me were the right person for the right time, just the way it worked out. Very excellent in the office.

FORSYTHE: Dr. Cope

HOOD: Dr. Quill Cope was the one that was responsible for me coming to the campus to work Then I worked directly for him I worked for Mr. Abernathy which was Dr. Cope's permission which they hired I was the first full time employee in the development office to be in active fundraising seeking public funds for a public institution which was a bit new at that time. It was certainly to MTSU the University of Tennessee had done an excellent job with private fundraising for a public university I guess Memphis State had been involved in it and I think we were about the third one to get involved in Tennessee as I remember. Dr. Cope was very helpful to me personally very supportive he was a very excellent

administrator he came there from the Office of Commissioner of Education. Dr. Cope was in Sparta I had gone to Church with Dr. and Mrs. Cope we went to the same church for many years, in the same Sunday school class she was he taught a Sunday school class. He was a very forceful administrator I think no one had any doubts about who was in charge when Dr. Cope was president. If they had any doubts all they had to do was challenge him and they'd find out real quick. Dr. Cope was very time and cost conscious I remember shortly after I went there he called a meeting of the staff people reported to him, including myself and others were in the next level role and he pointed out to the group exactly what it was costing for that meeting per minute he had already calculated the salaries of everybody and told us what the meeting was costing and he didn't want to waste any time and he wanted the meeting over and get back to work and be productive. When Dr. Cope was very aware, not the other presidents weren't but I know he was very aware of the things on the campus he regularly walked over the campus and of course lived on campus. But he said if a garbage can had been moved to a different location Dr. Cope would usually be aware of it. He was that aware of the campus and details. One interesting sideline I don't think this is very negative at all but I went there I found out to get an extension phone for a office you had to get the presidents permission and I said you mean Dr. Cope has to approve of a telephone extension for a office, they said yes he does he released that authority to lower levels and he looked around one day and there were telephones everywhere on the campus so he decided to get it back under control and you better believe you had a good reason for a telephone before you came the president to ask for a telephone. After I understood why he had done it I understood what had happened, just an example of some of his administration. I know one time it was somebody had said to be a success in the administration at MTSU to get in some of the top roles you need to be a member of the Church of Christ were Dr. Cope was well we looked around and checked and in fact the Church of Christ was in a minority which was interesting, that was just a perception that some people had. I know Dr Bell Keathly director of student aid was a Presbyterian, John Weams dean of admissions was Baptist, Dr. Homer Pittard director of alumni relations was Baptist, Dr. Skinny Martin guidance and counseling was I believe Methodist, Dr. Howard Kirksey dean of the Faculty was Baptist it's just interesting, just a little sidelight there. But Dr. Cope I thought the world of him and he resigned his position I remember the day he called faculty meeting of everybody on campus and what the world was happening he called to announce his resignation he was going to the University of Tennessee to accept a position as an endowed Chair at UT where he had been before he became Commissioner of Education.

FORSYTHE: Dr. Scarlett?

HOOD: Melvin Scarlett came there while I was working and while I was on staff in the development office and I had the opportunity to meet him when he first came to visit the campus and I guess a couple years after he came maybe three I had the opportunity to go to work directly for him and worked for him from 1970 to 1976 when I left the University and I was administrative assistant to Dr. Scarlett. Dr.

Scarlett I thought had as much vision as any president had and more than some before the long haul and was not a man before his time but I thought never was fully appreciated for the vision that he had for the potential the University had. He was responsible for getting the learning resource center built on campus and I think only now only in recent times has it really come into it's own. I think no one really appreciated what the possibility was for the Learning Resources Center. I very much regret that it was not named for him. I think that it was a real oversight but it was a political matter and I think if any building should have been named for Dr. Scarlett it would have been the LRC Murphy Center was built while Dr. Scarlett was President and I think it is still today one of the finest athletic facilities anywhere in this part of the country not just the state. I think a lot of vision a lot of planning went into that The folks on the campus including the president visited a lot of facilities around the country visited the one in Notre Dame there was one in Oklahoma and I believe one in Colorado I remember about three that they visited to pick up some of the best ideas to incorporate them into Murphy Center. Still today it ranks as one of the best you will find anywhere. While Dr. Scarlett was president the Doctor of Arts program started which was at the time only in three disciplines English, History, and Health Physical Education and Recreation. I think that was a giant step forward for MTSU. Those would be some of my recollections and he still remains him and his wife good friends he went on to Memphis State retired at Memphis State and moved back to Murfreesboro, and we see him from time to time.

FORSYTHE: Did you know Dr. Ingram?

HOOD: Oh Yes I knew Sam Ingram when he was on the staff at MTSU he was I guess chairman of the Department of Education and later the Dean of the School of Education then he went on to Motlow as president there when he was started then came to Nashville as Commissioner of Education and from there came back to MTSU as president. Very another very capable administrator a different style altogether from the others and I think he was a very effective administrator running a very tight ship financially. And kept the University in very strong financial condition almost to the point sometimes of not spending enough money. Some faculty would say. But, when he went out as president of the University it was in as good a financial condition as it ever had been is my understanding.

FORSYTHE: Okay and Dr. Prescott?

HOOD: Wallace Prescott was there for a year when Dr. Ingram announced his resignation a year in advance and it turned out they didn't get a president lined up and brought in Dr. Wallace Prescott for a year. He and his wife came down from Cookeville where he had been retired from Tennessee Tech he was Vice-President for academic affairs. At one time he was president there while they had a search going on. I have never known a person or a couple to get as intimately involved in the University and in the community as they did in a short period of time particularly knowing they were only going to be here a short period of time.

Most folks would have said you know what is the use we'll fill the job for a year you know and go on. But you would have thought Wallace Prescott was here for the duration as president I was tremendously impressed with both of them and I thought that he did a marvelous job in the year that he was here and the University did not sit still while he was here waiting for the next president the made some great progress. Hats off to him and them for the good job that they did for a year.

FORSYTHE: Dr. Walker?

HOOD: James Walker I have known him since he came and I think he has done an excellent job directing the University into a lot of new areas very dynamic person I think he has brought to the University a excellent staff made a lot of changes many of which needed to be done, and some times changes are not always popular with folks but I think the community and the University itself have really come to be impressed with Jim Walker and Gwen and I think he is doing an excellent job.

FORSYTHE: I will go back to the faculty and staff. Dr. Paul Hutchinson?

HOOD: Paul was or is the director of the computer center a very capable person my impression of him is very fine member of the staff.

FORSYTHE: Sam Walden?

HOOD: Is Sam still there, Yeah okay Sam left there to go with an insurance company, Sam was in the data processing area. Very, very capable.

FORSYTHE: Mr. Charles Pigg?

HOOD: Charlie Pigg was the director of campus planning he was a very good personal friend and I thought did an excellent job working with a number of presidents over a long span of time to help to develop the campus to, lay out the construction, the additions, the new buildings, the renovations. His role was to work with the university staff and the architects and the contractors so Charlie had nothing but the universities interests at heart always.

FORSYTHE: Norman Martin?

HOOD: He was in the Business office and moved over later to the Athletic Department where I guess his business manager or whatever the title is, mercer okay in the Athletic Department. Norman and his wife Barbara is Nurse for the Campus in the Health Center. Long time good friends.

FORSYTHE: Charles Phillips?

HOOD: Witcher was the manager of the bookstore for many years I guess one of the political savvy people we had on campus which was always involved in state politics and Witcher was just a good person to have in that regard but he did an excellent job in operating the campus bookstore and I think is very appropriately named for Witcher. His first wife Ruth Mary did a couple of years ago and he remarried a very good friend of mine Odin Walcob which was secretary to the president and who survives him and I know Whitcher's children and he was a great asset to the campus.

One of several folks that rose to positions of leadership on campus came from Watertown which is over in Wilson county. Witcher ran the bookstore and Wink Midget was chairing the Business Education Department, Harold Jewell ran the maintenance and later on Morris Bass was vice-president for finance it was interesting how a number of people came out of Watertown that did well at MTSU.

FORSYTHE: Jimmy Jackson?

HOOD: He was business manager for many years and just a great fellow did a great job for the University. A very loyal alumnist and long time employee and retired from the university.

FORSYTHE: Martha Turner?

HOOD: Martha was director of placement I worked in the office with Martha we both reported to Bob Abernathy as did Dr. Pittard and Mr. Sloan at the time. I worked beside her very professionally and I think she has done a wonderful job at expanding the Developmental office.

FORSYTHE: Dr. Pittard?

HOOD: Dr. Homer Pittard was one of my close friends and associates, very super intelligent person, very excellent writer kind of person you enjoyed being around he was a great historian he wrote the history of the university the first 50 years edited the Alumni magazine for the years he was Alumni Director and we were involved as development officer and he was Alumni director we were involved in a lot of alumni meeting, functions for the campus, and fundraising and whatever it might be. We made a lot of trips together had a lot of great experiences together.

FORSYTHE: Eugene Sloan?

HOOD: Director of public relations one of the great members of the staff. There was a group there I guess it was Q.M. Smith assembled most of those, Dr. Cope, Bob Abernathy, and Dr. Pittard. Mr. Sloan was I guess first director of public relations I believe. He retired in that post. Old Pathfinder we used to call him. I enjoyed trips with dr. Pittard and Mr. Sloan I got amused at them when salary increases would come around each year they would go and show each other what there raise

was then one of the other would get mad because he didn't get as much as the other did, and I told them they both deserved that if they didn't have any more sense that to show each other what there raises were that you should never share that with anybody. I mean I said that as a good friend, but it was always amusing to me that they would do that every year.

FORSYTHE: Bob Brooks?

HOOD: Sports Information Director. Alumnist of the University did a great job for MTSU. Bob went on to Oral Roberts University where he is still athletic director I think. I regretted that a few years ago when they were looking for a athletic director they didn't consider Bob. He did come back and he was A.D. at Austin Pea. I hoped bob would get here but I guess the time was not right for him to return here and it didn't work out but he did do a great job.

FORSYTHE: Bob Abernathy?

HOOD: Yeah well I couldn't say enough about Bob Abernathy for whom I worked. He was my Sunday School teacher, my good friend, he was responsible for bringing me to the University, and an excellent person to work for never had a moments dispute or a moments misunderstanding with him. Course he was a great speaker on the speaker circuit for the University great recruiter that was his job they called it field services in those days that was not done out of the admissions office it was done out of the Field Services Office and he was always on the speaking circuit great story teller and in fact I have always said that any speaking that I did I would have to try and pattern some of the things after Bob if I could ever emulate him I could really do well on the speaking circuit. Bob's family, his wife and his children are still good friends, we see them from time to time. bob was very meticulous about his stories it wouldn't be unusual for him to speak in Chattanooga or Hamilton County many times in a year we had so many alumni over there so many students coming from Hamilton County that they invited him back to the PTA the Farm Bureau the whatever to speak and Bob was very careful that he didn't tell the same story twice if you had him speak to the PTA he would have his outline of stories and next week he would speak to the FFA and he would be very careful to not tell the same stories he told at your meeting cause he knew there could be some of the same people at the meetings. He kept a very extensive joke file story file and he knew where he had told whatever story when. That was his job so he didn't get paid he would get maybe a country ham or bookends or whatever he might get for speaking. After he retired he still had demands for speaking so he engaged himself with Tandy Rice who has a agency that books speakers and of course the problem was when you who used to have him for PTA had to call Tandy Rice and found out it was 300 dollars instead of a country ham everybody would always balk at that because he had been used to getting him free. And Tandy had told Bob I believe you have more poor friends than I believe anybody has ever because they didn't want to pay for him.

FORSYTHE: Dr. Keathly?

HOOD: He was director of student financial aid. Snider Belt Keathly I had him in class as a matter of fact when I was working on my degree and enjoyed Dr. Keathly very much he did a good job I guess he was probably the first financial aid administrator as such. He came here originally on the faculty and then went into the financial aid. I know he had written some textbooks I remember when I was in his class I ran across some of his textbooks in doing some research for a class report. His wife Vena worked in the business office while he was there and in the University Center has been named after him.

FORSYTHE: Harold Jewell?

HOOD: He was in the maintenance department I mentioned him earlier coming from Watertown he was in charge for many years and did a great job keeping everything running and everything repaired and everything looking good.

FORSYTHE: Dr. Clay Tucker?

HOOD: He was Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences I guess it was called at that time or maybe Liberal Arts, English professor his wife Dorothy was the drama teacher They came from Columbia. He was just one of the very professional people on campus when I was in school.

FORSYTHE: Hershel Azeltine?

HOOD: He came as chairman of the Department of Sociology. Hershel and Gwen Azeltine, I'm trying to think where they came from. they came while I was working on campus. He I believe has a ministerial background, he had training as a minister maybe had been a minister, very involved with church work and still, I ran into her somewhere not long ago and they have been doing some missionary work up in Massachusetts I believe. Very deep thinker good asset to the faculty.

FORSYTHE: Okay Dr. Ed Baldwin?

HOOD: He headed the Geography & Earth Sciences Department had a time when they used to have classes in the upper levels of old main up on the third floor he was teaching when I had a Geography class one time, that was before air conditioning and you can imagine summertime what it was like to have a class up there, and I did one summer. He was a very good teacher a very talented person musically also he was involved in the little theater here I remember we did a pageant on Murfreesboro 150th anniversary 1968 called See Here Black Fox. 1967 I guess It was and I remember Dr. Baldwin having a role in it. I was involved in the production of it.

FORSYTHE: Dr. Lane Botwell?

HOOD: Chairman of the Speech and Theatre Department graduate of North Western if I recall he was always one of my favorite people on campus. I would have majored in speech if we had had it at that time so you could only get a minor so I had classes under him I always thought he was one of the capable people He was very professional I enjoyed his diction and articulation was always as it should be being in that position was just perfect I thought.

FORSYTHE: Dr. Robert Corlew?

HOOD: He was chairman of the History Department and later on Vice-president for Academic Affairs. I have known him over the years as he has been there I never had any classes with him but I knew him while I worked there and have known him since been more involved in the community with the Cultural Arts Commission fine Historian cause he wrote the history of Dickson Co. which is his native county I believe he has also written a history or two of Tennessee I believe. Has been involved in several publications of that type, he is a well published author and I think a real scholar I think a real distinguished gentleman. He is a member of the State Historical society and Chairman of the state historical commission.

FORSYTHE: Dr. Norman Parks

HOOD: He was chairman of the Political Science department his wife has just died. I guess he was at times what we would call controversial but it wasn't unusual as political science as a discipline but very professional and very well read a real student a real strong professional in his discipline he is a good writer. At one time I believe he served as a writer or editor for the Tennessean the Nashville newspaper. Outstanding faculty member.

FORSYTHE: Dr. John Patton?

HOOD: He was Chairman of the Biology Department a real fine person and he was a bird watcher and over the years he was just one of the fine member of the faculty.

FORSYTHE: Richard Peck

HOOD: Chairman of the English Department, do you have Virginia Peck next They were in the English Department. I had every class I could get under Virginia Peck, we talked about Dr. Peck we talked about when I was a student, cause I told you about the radio program and everything.

FORSYTHE: Dr. Fran Reel

HOOD: Head of the Physical Education Department came from Massachusetts from New England. Good fellow.

FORSYTHE: Dr. Bill Curr

HOOD: Psychology Department he in recent years has retired came from Illinois I believe one of the fine professionals on the staff.

FORSYTHE: Wink Midget

HOOD: Business Education Department written several books

FORSYTHE: Baxter Cook

HOOD: worked with Charlie Pigg in the planing department of Campus Services real good staffer.

FORSYTHE: Charlie Dunn

HOOD: Worked in Basic and Applied Sciences he came from State Department of Education were he was assistant commissioner for Vocational Education and he came to head that up MTSU graduate real pro.

FORSYTHE: Jim Freeman

HOOD: Sports Information Director I think he followed Bob Brooks later went on to Talladega were he is there SID down there called him flake he did a good job.

FORSYTHE: Van Fox

HOOD: Learning Resources Center Radio TV production he came from Murfreesboro had left here many years ago and eventually got into TV and was with NBC. Used to be when Jack Parr became the tonight show Van was on the staff there after working in New York for a number of years came back to Murfreesboro and MTSU to head up the Radio TV and did a good job.

FORSYTHE: Dr. Huda

HOOD: Jim Huda History and Historic preservation which is one of the unique programs MTSU has

FORSYTHE: Barbara Haskew

HOOD: Barbara one of the fine ladies on campus who has certainly made a great contribution as Dean of the College of Business and Vice-President for academic affairs she is a very capable lady she worked with TVA for a while, she left the campus and worked with TVA and came back in recent years and has certainly moved up the ladder and made a great contribution.

HOOD: Ben Hurt football coach MTSU graduate and played football, Ben never did seem to achieve the success everybody hoped he would. One of the guys that was on campus in any position as head coach and left here and went on to Houston and retired he was at Rice I believe he is a very good friend of Ross Spielman who is also a graduate they were classmates together they also have a son named for the other. Ross has a Ben and Ben has a Ross I believe good quality guy from Pulaski I believe

FORSYTHE: Paul Hendershot

HOOD: He was in Business Research I believe