

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW
WITH
EDWIN VOORHIES

23 AUGUST 1995

MURFREESBORO, TENNESSEE

INTERVIEWED BY REGINA FORSYTHE
FOR THE Q. M. SMITH ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
INTERVIEW #QMS.067

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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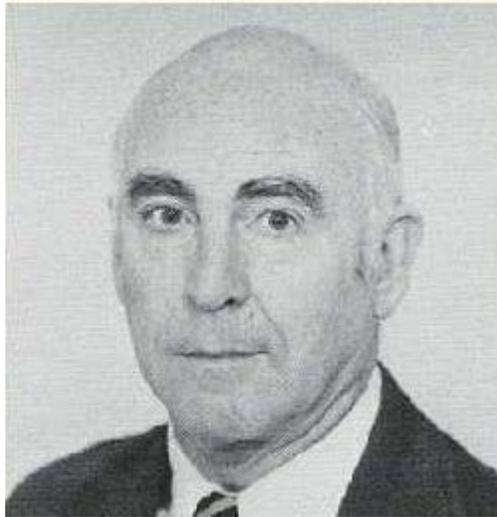
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ABSTRACT



**ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW WITH
EDWIN VOORHIES**

Q. M. SMITH ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW #QMS.067

FORSYTHE: This is Regina Forsythe I am interviewing Dr. Edwin Voorhies. Today is Wednesday, August 23, 1995. The interview is being conducted in the Gore Research Center, Room 111 in the Ned McWherter Learning Resource Center. The story got cut off while you were talking about Dick Revitt.

VOORHIES: Yes Dick Revitt was responsible for the development of the electronics program and that program has built a reputation and has acquired several other instructors besides him. The need for electronics people has grown and in order to fill that need there are a lot more students coming here taking it. One of the strengths of that department is the program electro-mechanical technology, and that means that people like Sergeant and Pratt and Tom XXX all have excellent technical backgrounds. There are a couple of new PhDs that I don't know very well that are making contributions now that really fulfill a need for the industries around, and electro mechanical technology means that a machine or a manufacturing process which requires computers and mechanical machines of various kinds, which means that whether it is controlled by electronics or mechanics, or air pressure pneumatics, it doesn't make any difference, those people have the background, and they can go in there and work with it and help keep it maintained in an industrial plant and it is highly apparent that there is a need for such people. That electro-technology program is one of the more successful and it fills one of the career needs of the department.

FORSYTHE: Thomas Lipsey

VOORHIES: Lispey was the instructor in machine shop who left here in 1949 whose place I took when I came in 1949, and he was the year before that he taught all the courses in machine shop, starting in the fall of 1949, I taught a course in machine shop.

FORSYTHE: Michael Bachler

VOORHIES: HE was an industrial arts educator, came here with a doctor's degree or achieved it the first year he was here and taught courses in what ever area he needed to teach mostly those courses were methods courses and but he taught other courses in drafting and metals and he was capable. He taught with us only for three or four years and then went to Berry College in Roam Georgia and was the chairman of the department of industrial arts there, and stayed for a few years. Now he has moved back to Athens Georgia where his wife is from and was teaching high

school, he might have retired since then. He was a good young man, a good teacher.

FORSYTHE: James Lorence

VOORHIES: James Lorence is there now. He came here and achieved his doctor's degree from the university of Georgia in vocational education, he is our vocational education man for this campus. That is another thing that I should give the industrial studies department credit for spawning and that is vocational education. Out of that department has come the impotace for achieving vocational education certification from the state of Tennessee. Vocational education courses that are taught and the students who are out now, many are the directors for the area technical vocational school called the Tennessee Technology School now all over the state there is something like thirty of them around the state, and a lot of them are run by the students that are out of this vocational education program which started in the department of industrial studies. That was an interesting thing. President Smith was aware of vocational education having coming here from Tennessee Tech. he understood what was going on in the state and tried to achieve state approval for teacher training in vocational education for a long time. He knew that the people in the department of industrial arts were oriented in that direction and had industrial arts majors and certification to teach industrial arts in the high schools. Vocational education is a different thing, it required actual work experience, and the reason it is different is that it is a federal program and federal money went into it and still does. The combination state and federal policies have to approve the program and it is not like the degree program just has to be approved by a board but also by the state and federal agencies. President Smith was aware of all that and wanted a vocational education program for MTSU and worked real hard to try and get it. I know that he hired at one time two people in vocational agriculture to try to get approval to teach vocational agriculture, I know he hired two people in home economics to try to get each one of those programs approved to teach vocational education teachers to where they could go directly to work in the vocational education schools. Our people if they got our degree had to go to the university of Tennessee to get their certification by taking a summers work or two summers work to get the vocational education courses that they need, that we couldn't offer them on this campus. President Smith worked on this for several years and never got it approved, even though he spent the money to hire those people, he didn't make it. During that time Dr. Kirksey became dean of the faculty, he was well aware of all of that. But what happened is that one of our graduates, named Charlie Dunn, who was a GI and older than the other students, lived on a farm out near Auburn Town, had to quit high school and go to work came back after World War II and passed the GED and got is high school diploma and started taking courses in our industrial arts department. He was an excellent carpenter before he ever came to college, he was good enough that we hired him, I think I mentioned this before, as carpenter on campus because I was maintenance director and the other carpenters would wait on Charley to do their hard work for them because he was better than they. He ended up being the

state director of education and Dr. Kirksey talked him into coming to work for us in the '70s, we hired him when he was no longer the state director of vocational education, and he worked out of my office and he was able to get vocational education credited in all of those fields by working with the state and federal government because he knew the ropes. He stayed in that job for several years and then he retired. Now Jim Lorence does that, we hired him to teach the vocational education courses in the industrial studies department and he is a very outstanding person as far as getting something done, he is very pleasant but very competent and he works so well with all of these other departments in business education and agricultural vocation and he is the campus coordinator for vocational education, and in addition to teaching the vocational education courses and he goes around all over middle Tennessee and he organizes vocational education courses for college credit in places where there is a groups of vocational education teachers and he has really built up that program for the whole campus and is really doing an outstanding job of it.

FORSYTHE: Rose Burdick

VOORHIES: She is the secretary now and she has been there for several years. She does a fine job and is very pleasant and very competent and now that they have a second secretary to help Lim Lorence coordinate all the vocational education courses they need for secretarial help. They had to take over what was the science classroom next to Dr. XXX's office, had to cut out a door between the to and instead of a classroom that is an office now, they need all the space they have.

FORSYTHE: Mrs. William Fitz

VOORHIES: Mrs. Fitz was the first secretary of maintenance that is kind of an interesting story and I mentioned it before. My office was in the north east corner of the industrial arts building and Mr. Dalton and I shared that office, the first secretary on this campus outside of Old Main building was Mrs. Fitz. The first telephone on this campus outside of the Old Main building, all of the department chairmen at that time, did not have telephones and most of them didn't have typewriters or secretaries, as I said President Smith didn't have any money until the 1947 sales tax act and he didn't a building expense until the 1947 legislature met and appropriated the budget accordingly and in 1949 when he first got enough money to do all the things he had been wanting to do all of those years and was really frustrated because he couldn't do it and he began to see some progress then and so this 1949 was when I came and he probably hired Mrs. Fitz about 1950 and the first secretary and telephone outside of the Old Main building. When President Smith wanted something done, as I say being frustrated by walking around the campus and seeing windows out and not having the money to fix it, it was very frustrating to him and he put that phone in and gave me a secretary to answer it, because when he wanted me, he wanted me. As I said before he was a little hard to understand but I had to learn quickly because he would tell me what to do and then hang up. In any case that was Mrs. Fitz and she didn't stay very long, her

husband was a student here and she was French and spoke broken English to some degree but she ended up doing good work and was a very nice person. When her husband graduated, she left. At that time we were making a maintenance set up with a little office set up in the hanger that is by Forrestt Hall and we took over one end of that for a wood shop and used the hanger for storage and on the other end we had a little shop. Then later on we built a building near where the tennis courts were behind Cummings hall where they were getting ready to tare them down. Over in there we had a block building for maintenance set up until we built the present building in the '60s.

FORSYTHE: Who took Mrs. Fitz's place?

VOORHIES: We had a part time person then later on, Mrs. Hudgins. She was the secretary of maintenance for a number of years until she was old enough to retire, her daughter in Don Moser's wife who was president of Third National Bank and Gene Moser now teaches on this campus. Her mother was the secretary of maintenance for a long time.

FORSYTHE: Tell me about the Industrial Arts Club

VOORHIES: It was a group of students in the department who banded together, it was kind of like a fraternity but they also did a lot of work in the interest of the department and Delbert Dyke was the sponsor, then I became the sponsor and I have developed a good personal relationship with the students over the years. That is where some of some of us set up the chair of excellence, Bob Russell came through that. I should probably talk about this a minute, another man who was a GI who worker for Dr. Dyke, named Cecil Cantrell he was good with working with metals and Doc hired him in the sheet metal shop, he did work for maintenance when we needed it, he worked for fifty cents and hour like Charlie Dunn did in carpenter work. He was from Warren County and never considered going to college until he saw the opportunity to do it on the GI bill, he greatly appreciated the fact that he was able to get a good start and we gave him some help by paying him fifty cents and hour to work for us, but he gave us a lot of help in return. He ended up over in North Carolina with an oil distribution center for one of the oil companies, he is an oil distributor for the area. He has been interested in MTSU ever since and has been on the foundation and he is the one that put up \$100,000 on a matching basis to renovate what was the drawing building, where we taught drafting courses to make it into the alumni center that it is today. That \$200.000 did that work, it was scheduled by the board of regents to be torn down and the alumni conceived of the idea to spend money to renovate it and it has worked real well.

FORSYTHE: Where you a part of the dedication of that hallway to Cecil Cantrell?

VOORHIES: Cecil didn't want any of the credit for that, he just wanted to do it. Marie Kirk who is the alumni director certainly appreciated that and all of us did, but he said

he didn't want any credit for it, he was going to keep on encouraging other alumni to donate. But she finally convinced him to come over and be recognized, because after all, he was responsible for having the building, and she got approval for having the part of the building named for him. That was the original dining room, and it later on became two big drafting rooms and he took courses in drafting in those rooms. He condescended to do that. He kept on doing things like that. He and XXX between have probably donated more than \$500,000 to this institution, I feel sure that they have. In any case Marie Kirk said that is insufficient for all the work you have done and a few years had the notion, with my help, that we needed to name him as one of the outstanding alumni. She couldn't get him to do that, so what we did was to, she invited him over and he said he couldn't come, his company was sending him to Italy at that time, she took that as an opening and asked me to accept that on his behalf while he is in Italy, that is the only way we will ever get it done, and at the alumni banquet, on behalf of Cecil Cantrell I accepted him as one of the outstanding alumni, and his picture is up there with the rest of them.

FORSYTHE: I want to ask you about some of the projects, I know about one, the artificial satellite.

VOORHIES: I am not familiar with that as I should be, I know that came out of the department and I think the accrediting had a lot to do with that. While ago we were talking about Cecil Cantrell by talking about the industrial arts club, and I ought to talk more about that and over the years that apartment came close together and the faculty and the students were working close together every day, and hiring students to work part time and working together in the industrial arts club and the promoted industrial arts in the public schools, then they had socials where all of the faculty and the students and their dates and wives all would gather several times a year and as I say it served as a fraternity as well as promoting the department and working for the department. That created a close relationship between the faculty and students and a lot of the success of the department was the result of that close relationship, as I say these two young men that have given us so much money over the years, that is a part of that, and others have done a lot besides that. Delbert Dyke was the sponsor of the industrial arts club when I came, and I took over for a while and other faculty members took over after that. In later years that was not an option any more, things have changed where it ceases to exist, out of that was spawned an industrial arts fraternity. Then that fraternity is still active is still active but not as much as it once was. The fraternity was only for those that achieved a certain grade point average and they took on more professional activities and professional activities only. It is a national industrial technology fraternity and they came here in the '60s and set up a chapter and put up an organization for a number of years with outstanding students in it.

FORSYTHE: Can you tell me about any of the students projects?

VOORHIES: There were several. One that I remember right off. Bob Russell, who started the chair of excellence, was also at one time the president of the veterans club on campus, he talked me into being the sponsor of that to, and at that time those veterans wanted to leave something on campus, and I went to President Smith and asked him about it, and he said we needed a flag pole over the football field, so they took on that project and raised the funds and raised the flag pole and that flag pole is still there today. I would say that Bob Russell is the ring leader of that, did the welding of the flagpole, and they raised the money and bought the flag and pulleys and everything and they erected the flag pole and it is still there. That is one example. There were other projects, we have a homecoming parade every year and the industrial arts club was always participating in that and they had an advantage in that they had their shops to build a float in, but I never will forget what happened. In those days they stayed up at night for several days getting ready for their float and had it all just like they wanted it, pulled it out and got it in the parade and it rained like heck, and about washed the whole thing away. After weeks of working day and night, the rain washed it out in a few minutes. But those things were more important in those days than they are now. Most students are commuter students who drive in to take their courses and drive back, the way it is going today. Of course the fraternities help some in that respect, but they didn't have any fraternities in those days except the honorary ones.