

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW
WITH
HENRY MILLER

24 AUGUST 1995

MURFREESBORO, TENNESSEE

INTERVIEWED BY REGINA FORSYTHE
FOR THE Q. M. SMITH ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
INTERVIEW #QMS.071

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
HENRY MILLER**

Q. M. SMITH ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW #QMS.071

FORSYTHE: This tape is part of the Q. M. Smith Collection designated as QMS.1995.71. This is Regina Forsythe, I am interviewing Mr. Henry Miller. Today is Thursday August 24th,1995. The interview is being conducted in the Gore Research Center, Room 111 of the Ned McWherter Learning Resource Center. The tape of this interview along with a transcription of the interview will become part of the Quintin Miller Smith Collection and will be available to the public. Future researchers may include portions of this interview in their publications. Is that all right with you Mr. Miller?

MILLER: Yes

FORSYTHE: What is your full name?

MILLER: Henry Isaac Miller.

FORSYTHE: What is your birth date and place of birth?

MILLER: October 24, 1928. I was born in a house I wasn't born in a hospital.

FORSYTHE: Was it here in Murfreesboro?

MILLER: Yes, on XXX street if I am not mistaken.

FORSYTHE: What was your father's name and occupation?

MILLER: Henry Miller, years ago I remember he used to tell me he worked on the ice wagon, you know that ice plant they tore down? He used to work there years ago.

FORSYTHE: Did he drive the wagon?

MILLER: Yes.

FORSYTHE: What was your mother's name and occupation?

MILLER: May Ella Youngblood, my mother used to work for the jail house down there, years ago, for the sheriff, what was his name, was it Wilson? I was in Kentucky then. I think it was Bill Wilson. She cooked down at the jail.

FORSYTHE: Do you have any brothers or sisters?

MILLER: I have one brother named Willy Miller, then Suzy Johnson, my other sister died.

FORSYTHE: What is your wife's name and occupation?

MILLER: Lula Bell Miller, she used to work here at MTSU, she was a custodian, for fourteen years, she worked in the Science Building.

FORSYTHE: Do you have any children?

MILLER: Yes, I have a bunch of them, we have nine children, she has seven and I have two.

FORSYTHE: Did anyone besides your or your wife work here?

MILLER: No.

FORSYTHE: Did any body in your family come to school here?

MILLER: Nicky Turner, that is one of my grandchildren.

FORSYTHE: Why did you start working for MTSU?

MILLER: I needed a job, Mr. Ben Frances got me the job. I started in June of 1952. I retired the last of July.

FORSYTHE: Do you remember your job interview?

MILLER: Not too much, that was a long time ago. Ms. Huggins was the one I talked to. It was a place by the ROTC that is where I started. She was nice, and intelligent, she was a secretary.

FORSYTHE: What were your job duties when you came here?

MILLER: I know I was working in the Old Science building, then I went to Jones Hall, then I went to Beasley, then I went to I building, then to Home Economics, they changed the name to Human Sciences.

FORSYTHE: How many hours a week did you work?

MILLER: Well I went to work at seven and got off a 3:30, and an hour off for dinner, the dinner hour was at 11:00, and I came back at 12:00, back in the old days we used to be off from 12 to 1, Monday through Friday.

FORSYTHE: Tell me about Q. M. Smith

MILLER: I can remember a time when he was trying to change our paycheck to keep us from getting it on the 15th, Mr., Frances was our spokesman, and we went with

him, and he got it where we could get our money on the fifteenth and the end of the month, that is the reason we are getting it now.

FORSYTHE: What do you remember about the man Q. M. Smith?

MILLER: You could go to talk to him about problems, if you had a problem you could go and talk to him about it, he was an understanding president.

FORSYTHE: I found some names of the janitorial and maintenance staff, can you tell me any stories that you remember about these people. Eddy Womack.

MILLER: I used to work with him, we would take one another's buildings, I worked at Beasley and he worked at Sims, on Wednesdays I would go over to his building and he would go home and then he would come over to our building, I would go do his work and then he would come and do mine. We got along good, we got to be friends, and then we found out we were kin-folks, we would talk to one another all the time about different problems.

FORSYTHE: Tell me about Mr. Jones, you supervisor.

MILLER: He and I got along fine, he was a fine fellow to work for.

FORSYTHE: There was another supervisor, Mr. McBroom.

MILLER: Mr. McBroom, I loved him. I respected both of them, they were nice and they knew how to go about things, they knew how to come and talk to you, I could go and talk to them.

FORSYTHE: Tell me about Felix Smith

MILLER: We got along pretty good, like I say I know how to treat people and then they have to start liking you. I can meet up with anybody, I don't meet any strangers. I have friends all over the place, and that is a good thing, people can speak a good word for you.

FORSYTHE: Martin Knox

MILLER: He was a pretty square guy, that is some of those people that used to work here years ago.

FORSYTHE: Ben Francis

MILLER: That is the one that got me the job, I can't forget him. He is a preacher and every time he would come out of church I would give him flowers, I did little things that added up to big things. You can't beat him, he is a nice, intelligent person. He isn't dead but he left us a few days ago, he hasn't written and I want him to

write. He was so nice, he would do things for us at our church, and he was nice in getting me this job. He didn't know I was going to stay here this long, but I stated longer than he did.

FORSYTHE: Willie Tigg

MILLER: Yes I worked with him in the Science Building, he was a nice person, he would stick his neck out for me sometimes when they got on my back. He was just nice.

FORSYTHE: Billy Haynes

MILLER: Yes he was a nice person. I thought he was going to be the oldest man out here, but I topped him I think. They told me the other day that I was the only man that had been here forty years.

FORSYTHE: Will Richard

MILLER: He worked at the James Union Building. I saw him the other day when I was taking my grandson to school.

FORSYTHE: William Brown

MILLER: He was a wonderful person, we called him Cigar. I don't know why, I never saw him smoke a cigar in his life. We were good buddies. He worked over there with James Owen.

FORSYTHE: Charles Martin

MILLER: Yes I worked with him at Smith Hall.

FORSYTHE: Charles Smith

MILLER: He was my supervisor before Mr. Fox came here. He was a pretty square fellow you can go and talk to him about anything, he will sit and listen.

FORSYTHE: Albert Richardson

MILLER: I know him well, his wife worked out there to.

FORSYTHE: Let me ask you about the other presidents. Dr. Cope

MILLER: He was my main man. He always told us that if he caught us running he was going to fire us. One day we were sitting down, I will never forget that, but he caught, and he said "Are you all XXX" I said "You know what he told us" at the meeting if he caught us running he would fire us. So don't think he isn't seeing

you 'cause he saw us." That is something I never did, if you were my supervisor I would sit there.

FORSYTHE: Dr. Ingram

MILLER: He gave me the award for working 30 or 35 years.

FORSYTHE: What can you tell me about Dr. Walker?

MILLER: Dr. Walker, he is nice you can go talk to him, he always told us that we can talk to him any time, but he doesn't loan money. I can't blame him for that. I got along with all these people, I know how to meet people. I was telling my grandson about that yesterday.

FORSYTHE: What memories do you have of working here at the school?

MILLER: When I was here I did the very best I could, and I did my work. I took pride in my work. I worked under Dr. Arthur. She was a fine lady. I never shed a tear until she left. I went to her house and found out that she was going to retire, she stayed next door to the home economics building. Then I worked with Dr. Ritar, she is a fine lady.

FORSYTHE: Let me ask you, while you were here did you notice a change in the students as the years went by.

MILLER: Some of the people I have met here have had problems. I had one student come to me and say "can I lean on your shoulder" I said "You can lean on my shoulder any time" I told her how God was good to me and how he would straighten out things. The next day that student came back, and she said "Henry, what did you do?" I said "I didn't do anything, God is working through me" I have a lot of friends, and I used to preach to people, I don't know why. MTSU is one of the sweetest colleges a person can go to, I talk about it all the time, there are nice people here at MTSU. MTSU is all right with me, that is where I made my living, when I started I wasn't making anything, but it paid off for me. It really did, God has been good to me.

FORSYTHE: Is there anything else you want to say.

MILLER: I had some more bosses, one was Mr. Warren he was a black supervisor. This is a nice college, I was not able to go here, but I worked here for years and I enjoyed every bit of it, now I am going to enjoy walking around the street.

FORSYTHE: I appreciate you coming today.