

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW
WITH
BOB WOMACK

25 AUGUST 1995

MURFREESBORO, TENNESSEE

INTERVIEWED BY REGINA FORSYTHE
FOR THE Q. M. SMITH ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
INTERVIEW #QMS.073

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
BOB WOMACK**

Q. M. SMITH ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW #QMS.073

FORSYTHE: This tape is part of the Q.M. Smith collection designated as QMS.1995.73. This is Regina Forsythe. I am interviewing Dr. Bob Womack. Today is Friday, August 25, 1995. We've moved the interview over to the Gore Research Center, Room 111. I want to ask you about the faculty members. I want to start with Will Bowdine.

WOMACK: Will Bowdine was a wonderful, wonderful man. He was a man whose interests were wide. He was a good department chairman and he was also Dean. He was low-key, and I don't think I ever saw him excited. He was always able to maintain his composure, and did an excellent job of leading our department and our school.

FORSYTHE: Joe Nunley?

WOMACK: I went to school with him. When I came here in 1941, he was here. He was one year ahead of me so that made him think he was my senior. He tried to take me under his wing, and if he were living, he would tell you that that proved to be a hard job. We were the closest of friends until he died about two years ago. We shared a lot of interests and local history. We would go up to Warren County where he was from. He was quite a writer. He could write poetry and short stories. If we had had an avenue to promote a teacher and a writing ability, there's no telling where he might have gone. A lot of his writings he did for other people. He used to host a coon hunt on the mountain. He would write a poem about the coon hunt as an invitation. Those were classics. He and I had different opinions on things. He was a little more conservative than I was in terms of politics and things like that. That never interfered with our friendship. It probably brought us together more because we'd get together and argue quite a bit. He was the best.

FORSYTHE: Miss Mary Hall?

WOMACK: Miss Mary was here when I came in 1941. She was an outstanding teacher and supervisor. She worked with the State Department of Education. She had a great sense of humor. She had an attitude that was quite difficult to describe. I'll give you an example of it. My son, Rick has a barn, and he has what we call big-lick walking horses. These are the horses that really step out-step high and step far. She was in our barn one day, and she was above eighty-five years old. She said, "Rick, bring that horse over here. I want to ride it." We all looked at each other. We didn't know what to do. He brought the horse over. She got on that horse and

rode it at eighty-five years old. She was a very adventurous lady. She went to Washington once to the White House for the conference on education. She knew they would be serving drinks there, so she asked her preacher what she should do. He told her if she didn't want to drink, she didn't have to. She told him that she wanted to know what to order. She intended to drink.

FORSYTHE: Finess Poole?

WOMACK: Pool was in the psychology department. He still lives here and his wife Jane teaches here now. I didn't know a lot about Finess as a professional person. I count him as a very close personal friend. Again, he is a very competent man and has a wide perspective. He is a very well-educated man and an asset to the community.

FORSYTHE: Homer Pittard?

WOMACK: Homer Pittard was one of my favorites. Homer Pittard, Joe Nunley and I stayed together. We were interested in a lot of the same things. We would get in our cars and ride through the country. Homer was a great writer. He wrote the history of this school for the first seventy-five years or something like that. He wrote many other things. He put out a bulletin on a civil war round table that we formed here at the university. He was quite an original writer. I know a man from Yale university that looked at a thesis he wrote and said, " I wish the thesis at Yale were at the level of Dr. Pittard's thesis at MTSU was." He was a giant of a man, probably six feet three or six feet four and played tackle on the football team. He had been a member of the CCC's back the in 1930's. He has a son who is a lawyer here and he has a daughter, but again, he was a very, very outstanding man. He had quite a sense of humor. This sense of humor came through in classes and his association with other people. I never had a better friend than Homer Pittard.

FORSYTHE: Can you tell me more about the Civil war round table?

WOMACK: Well, the Civil War Round Table was a thing we organized for people who liked to get together and talk about the civil war. It was made up of people throughout this area...Nashville, Tullahoma, Lebanon, Shelbyville. We would all just get together and have programs. We had national speakers...the best speakers in the nation. Dr. Bell Earvin Wiley, Dr. Grady McWhiney, Dr. Bud Robertson. All of those people were some of the most distinguished professors in some of the finest universities in the country. They would come and talk, and we would just discuss. Many of the people we had had varying views, and that made it even more interesting. We carried that on for about five years during the Civil War Centennial.

FORSYTHE: Can you tell me about Pete Greary?

WOMACK: He lives out on Las Cassas Pike. Pete was a most talented man. He was a good artist. He could paint. He was an outstanding teacher. He headed up the art department at one time. He also headed up the grounds at one time. He has so much talent. He was a man who had the finest garden of anyone around. His wife, Helen taught in the Catholic school, and they had two sons. They are both outstanding young men. Pete is an outstanding man. He is from East Tennessee in Mountain City, one of the farthest points in Tennessee towards Virginia. He was just A Grade any way you want to take him.

FORSYTHE: Hillary Parker?

WOMACK: Hillary Parker was President of the campus school. He had been superintendent of the schools in Oak Ridge, Tennessee before he came here. Hillary was a very jolly man, a very intelligent man. He was interested in history, and because of that, I became pretty close to him. We did a lot of traveling together. He's still living, and he made quite a contribution to this school.

FORSYTHE: James Martin?

WOMACK: Jim Martin was in the psychology department. He and Finess Poole worked together. Jim Martin was a joke-teller. He was a good teacher. He always had a joke. A strange thing about Jim was that I thought he enjoyed his tenure here as much as anybody I ever knew. Yet, when he retired, he never came back. He lived here in Murfreesboro, but I have not seen the man in fifteen years. While he was here, I saw him every day and was very good friends with him. When he quit, he walked away and left us.

FORSYTHE: What did you do after you graduated from MTSU?

WOMACK: When I graduated, I taught English at Central High School in Shelbyville. Then, I went back to Peabody and started to work on my doctorate. I got a job over in Lebanon, Tennessee and stayed there five years. I got my degree and then came here.

FORSYTHE: Where did you teach in Lebanon?

WOMACK: I taught English in junior high school. Then, I became principal of junior high school.

FORSYTHE: Is there anything you'd like to add or talk about?

WOMACK: I can't think of anything else.