

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW
WITH
CLIFFORD BROTHERS

23 AUGUST 1995

MURFREESBORO, TENNESSEE

INTERVIEWED BY REGINA FORSYTHE
FOR THE Q. M. SMITH ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
INTERVIEW #QMS.074

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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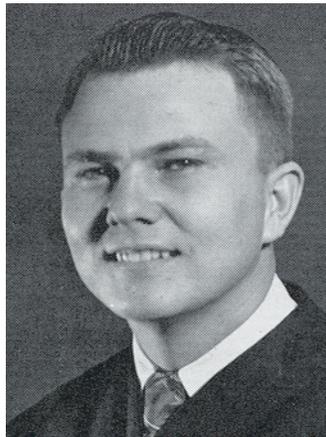
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ABSTRACT



**ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW WITH
CLIFFORD BROTHERS**

Q. M. SMITH ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW #QMS.074

FORSYTHE: This is Regina Forsythe. I am interviewing Mr. Clifford Brothers. Today is Friday August 25, 1995. The interview is being conducted in the office of Mr. Brothers, located in Holloway High School, on Highland Avenue in Murfreesboro, Tennessee. The tape of this interview along with a transcription 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. Brothers?

BROTHERS: That's all right.

FORSYTHE: What is your full name?

BROTHERS: Clifford P. Brothers, Jr.

FORSYTHE: Your birth date and place of birth.

BROTHERS: June 2, 1930 in Hopkinsville, Kentucky.

FORSYTHE: Your father was the senior?

BROTHERS: Yes.

FORSYTHE: What was his occupation?

BROTHERS: He was mostly in business: clothing and apparel.

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

BROTHERS: Martha King Brothers. She was a housewife.

FORSYTHE: Did you have any brothers or sisters?

BROTHERS: Yes. I have a brother in Texas. He was a pharmacist. I have a sister in Alabama who is married to a preacher.

FORSYTHE: What are their names?

BROTHERS: Harold Brothers is the one in Texas, and Charlotte Wiser is the one in Alabama.

FORSYTHE: What is your wife's name?

BROTHERS: Sarah Watts. She is a bookkeeper for a doctor.

FORSYTHE: What are your children's names?

BROTHERS: One is Wayne Brothers and one is Kent Brothers, and our daughter is Suzanne Frost.

FORSYTHE: Did anyone beside you go to MTSU?

BROTHERS: I was the only one.

FORSYTHE: Why did you chooses to go to MTSU?

BROTHERS: Because it was close. I was out at Christiana. We moved to Tennessee in '45 and I started as a freshman out at Christiana. They had a high school then. When I finished high school, I wanted to go to college and MTSU was closest. I could drive back and forth to MTSU. I went on to complete my BS there and I went to work for an engineering company. I came back and got my masters and then got into education here in the county. I sort of stayed around close to home.

FORSYTHE: What years did you go to MTSU?

BROTHERS: I graduated in '49. And I graduated from MTSU in '53 with a BS, then went back in '62 and got my masters.

FORSYTHE: What was your major when you got your bachelors?

BROTHERS: Industrial Arts and science as a minor. I completed that and I went to work with an engineering company. I could do drafting. I got a two year stretch in the army, then I came back and enrolled in the program and I taught classes while completing the program out there. I enjoyed that pre-engineering and electricity class. Then in my masters program I picked up certification for teaching and administration. I went off to education and have been in education ever since then.

FORSYTHE: What was the name of the engineering firm?

BROTHERS: XXX and Roberts. It is still in operation in Nashville. I enjoyed those years with them. We got tired of traveling. I enjoyed going fishing with the boys, and being at home. When I completed my masters, Baxter Hobgood wanted to start an adult education program in cooperation with the city and county, so we started that and got it going. Judge Street, he was the county executive at that time. He was very supportive, so I started going to work in the county schools with vocational education, like machine shop and automechanics. They took me on as the director of adult education with the county schools, so I stayed in there until 1970 and we built a lot of vocation as well as adult programs here within the county, I ran for

office in 1970 and got elected for one term as superintendent of the county schools for one term and served till 1974. I got beat, then I started this school as a school to help students that were not succeeding at their schools. At the time some called it a school for the unruly. That went into the papers. But the main purpose was to give students a chance to succeed in a vocational situation, which I had been working in, so we started in '74 and when I got beat as superintendent I came over here as principal. And the principal that was there went in as an assistant in vocational education. So I have been here since '74.

FORSYTHE: Let's go back to being an MTSU student. Did you live on campus?

BROTHERS: No

FORSYTHE: Did you have a car?

BROTHERS: Yes, Dad let me borrow the pickup truck to drive back and forth to school.

FORSYTHE: What was parking like?

BROTHERS: It was a breeze compared to what it is now. It seemed like a big campus then. Of course it didn't have all the buildings spread out. It was enjoyable. I enjoyed my years there.

FORSYTHE: What did students do for fun?

BROTHERS: I am sure they did a lot of things. I didn't know anything about dorm life, I would go back and forth, and my dad ran a store and he had a farm and we had all of that to do, so it was really go to school and then go back home and go to work.

FORSYTHE: You were in the industrial arts club?

BROTHERS: Yes. I was also a member of the Sigma Club. I was in the chorus. I enjoyed singing, church work, and stuff like that.

FORSYTHE: What did you do in the Sigma Club?

BROTHERS: Well if you were making good grades, I felt like it was an honor. Dean James had started that, and I got to be a member of that. They wanted you to make good grades and have meetings and learn parliamentary procedure. It wasn't like fraternities and things that they have now.

FORSYTHE: What did you do in the industrial arts club?

BROTHERS: Well they would have meetings and plan things. I don't know if we did things for the shops. We usually had a project or something like that.

FORSYTHE: Tell me about Dean Beasley.

BROTHERS: He was very straightforward, a good educator. You knew where you stood with him. He was a prince of a fellow.

FORSYTHE: Ed Voorhies.

BROTHERS: Ed was instrumental in my being in Industrial Arts, and the drafting. O. L. Freeman was the drafting instructor. I guess in my junior year, I got on with the XXX department and was doing line drafting with them. If I recall at that time, Dr. Voorhies had a lot to do with the campus plan. He knew the architectural firm and they were doing girls' dormitories at the time. And he said, "Have you thought about pursuing drafting or anything like that?" I said "I would love to be an engineer." He got me in with XXX and Roberts, because I was surveying anyhow.

FORSYTHE: What kind of things were you drafting for the maintenance department?

BROTHERS: One thing was for the ROTC building. There would be projects that they were doing on campus and I would get to do some of that. He thought I had talent. I got to do some drafting when I got with XXX and Roberts, but most of mine was out in the field: sanitation and water. But I always envisioned that I would be an architect someday, but I never got there.

FORSYTHE: What about O. L. Freeman?

BROTHERS: He was my drafting instructor. I always remember they called him "Obey", and I always remember that Mr. Freeman and Voorhies said "You won't show it to him." And I said "Yes I will." We got into perspective drafting, and I drew the soldier at the court house, and I carried it up there and he rared back in his desk and he said "Look here boys, we have got an artist in our group. Bring the book Brothers. I don't see a soldier on that book." I said "I just thought I would add to it." He said "Well I'll tell you Brothers, you know you have got 90 so far, but it looks like you are not going to get an A this time. You better have that thing re-drawn and on my desk tomorrow." Then we drew in ink, and I stayed pretty late doing it. I always knew Mr. Freeman.

FORSYTHE: Philip Dalton.

BROTHERS: I had him for woodworking, and I made a coffee table and it was sort of a flaky looking kind of board that had come out on the market. Then I put walnut around it. And for the legs I found some laminated antennae that they used on the planes during the war, and he thought it was a very odd looking thing because he was of the old school. But he gave me a grade on it. He had a lot of down home philosophy in his teaching. He taught to respect people and how to resolve situations and things.

FORSYTHE: Ollie Green.

BROTHERS: When I was a freshman, the first test we had I got it back with a very low grade, and I said "Miss Green, I thought I worked all these problems." She said "You did, there is nothing wrong with you math skills, but your spelling and grammar." I said "I thought this was chemistry class." She said "It is, but you are going to learn some grammar and English and History and anything else in my class, and I want you to go to work on it." She helped me a whole lot, got me to thinking.

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

BROTHERS: My contact came with him when I was campaigning for Superintendent in the '70s. And I came in contact with Dr. Smith somewhat and I will always remember that he said "You are getting into education and I want to give you a piece of advice. Changes come slow in education, so don't expect it to come over night." I will always remember that, and that is the way it was.

FORSYTHE: Did you know Dr. Cope?

BROTHERS: Only that when I was working on my masters, he said that he would be willing to hire me, but he only wanted those that had a doctor's degree. And I was thinking that I would have to go to Vanderbilt or somewhere like that. He was very straightforward.

FORSYTHE: What do you remember in general about being a student here?

BROTHERS: It was enjoyable. Like I said, I would travel back and forth to go home. I remember that as the year went on, the freshman class that I had in English, John Scott was the instructor and I failed English, and I asked John, and of course he denied it. But he said "That is they way with these country boys. They can't cut this big time stuff." That just made me determined that I was going to show him that country boys can do it, and sure enough I passed that, and worked and got my masters, and went on to become superintendent of the county schools. Who would be the first one that I would call into my office but John Scott. John was supervisor at that time. I said "John you don't remember me do you?" He said "Well yes, you were a supervisor in education." I said "Go on farther back. I was that freshman boy that you told in you English class that country boys couldn't cut it." He said "No you have got the wrong one." And I said "Well, I am the boss now."

FORSYTHE: Tell me more about Holloway High School?

BROTHERS: It was built in the 1920's and along in the '30s or '40s the gymnasium was added, and then along in the '60's they added this two story complex and some shop buildings here. And it was a black high school and was very predominant in football and basketball. Then in '68 all this stuff with d desegregation came about. Then they built two new high schools and closed Holloway down, and all the stuff like that. This was all in the working when I was elected in 1970, so all the bus routes and

dividing the faculty, I got accused of all of those things. I sent this one here, and I closed Chirstiana. They said "You will never get a vote out here." But all that was done from '72 to '74. They used it for special Ed, and then the supervisor Raymond Nunley started talking about having a vocational school for students who needed vocational training, so we pushed vocational education. We got the thing started in January of '74. Of course, I was busy campaigning and got beat, and I came here in September of '74 and have been here since then. And we have grown and added programs on. It was originally a black high school, and we went through all of that. Then we opened it up as a vocational high school. Now Lamar Alexander coined the term "alternative school". So they thought we were an alternative school for a while, the school for the unruly, but we have kept insisting as the years have gone by that we were vocational, the second tract. Now they talk about two tracks in education. Either you are going vocational or you are going academic. So we got the board to prove that we were a vocational tract, and that the other schools were comprehensive academic tracts. Then we were able to change the name to Holloway Vo-Tech. We have added bio-tech, applied communications, math-tech one, just more up to date with the society that we are living in. That has been basically our growth and development over the years.

FORSYTHE: How many students do you have here?

BROTHERS: We are at around 190 or 200. This is an increase of about twenty students over last year. I'd say within the last five years we have grown like all these other places have grown. Since we are a non-zoned school, they can come here from anywhere in the county. In grades nine through twelve, there is direct bus service from the Smyrna LaVergne area and from Riverdale and Oakland, plus they can go in there cars, but we have been growing over the past five years. But this is our biggest jump this year, and with this building we can deal with two hundred in our classes, but we are growing like the rest of them.

FORSYTHE: What is your graduation rate?

BROTHERS: Well last year we graduated twenty five students. We had twenty eight that started out and one of the boys just got sorry and quit and got in trouble with the law. Another one moved, one of the girls got married, but once we get our students to the senior level, we have a growth retention rate. We have been able to increase our retention of students about five to ten percent per year. The new superintendent insisted on that. What ever the incentives are we will try all of those, but we have a good graduation rate.

FORSYTHE: How many teachers do you have?

BROTHERS: I have fourteen now on staff. We added one recently. We get probably a one to twenty ratio. We have some math and English classes that have twenty five. But we just try to help kids receive an education with a lot of emphasis on attitude. We

meet the same requirements on the TCAP test and the state requirements for graduation. We just have a vocational emphasis.

FORSYTHE: Tell me about being superintendent.

BROTHERS: The superintendent that was in said "I am going to get out and be the principal of a school." He was smart and I was dumb, because he didn't have to fight for the new building program, and I did. Oakland and Riverdale High School were both on the drawing board and everything like that was ready to go. Of course that meant that Holloway would close down and we would phase out Central. And the teachers at Central, some went to Riverdale and some to Oakland, so we had all of that going on. I had a degree and had been a supervisor but as far as being a superintendent I had never been one, but that is the way it is in an elected office. If you meet certain qualifications, you go out and shake hands and get elected, so I got elected and I had all that building. This thing of dividing students and faculty, all of it was new to me, so I had to rely on the people I was working with, and I tried to instill in the people I was working with what to do. We got a bookkeeping system, and we got an accounting system in there. I tried to get stuff on micro film. I thought I was a progressive thinker. I wanted to get things done. I continued to push the adult education program. I was interested in music. I said there are other things beside sports, so that was a learning experience. Looking back, would I do it again? I got real close to doing it again, but no, I did my four years in public service, and wouldn't want. It is a position that you are damned if you do and damned if you don't. You can't please everybody and can't satisfy everybody. I just enjoy what I am doing here since '74.

FORSYTHE: Do you have anything else you would like to talk about?

BROTHERS: I have talked to much now.

FORSYTHE: Thank you very much.