

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW
WITH
HILARY PARKER

26 AUGUST 1995

MURFREESBORO, TENNESSEE

INTERVIEWED BY REGINA FORSYTHE
FOR THE Q. M. SMITH ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
INTERVIEW #QMS.077

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
HILARY PARKER**

Q. M. SMITH ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW #QMS.077

FORSYTHE: This tape is part of the QM Smith collection designated as QMS.1995.77. This is Regina Forsythe I am interviewing Mr. Hillary Parker today is Saturday August 26, 1995. I want to get back to MTSU. You were telling me before about the ditches and trenches on the campus. You had trouble walking across campus.

PARKER: Well at the time when we were expanding over there, it seemed like there would be a ditch for a set of wires or a set of piped heating or cooling electricity somewhere all the time, you would practically fall in a ditch especially at night it was actually hazardous to try to walk across campus sometimes when they were expanding so fast over there.

FORSYTHE: So the campus was not lit up at night?

PARKER: It was but even so a ditch is not lit up at the bottom.

FORSYTHE: Do you remember any one falling in them?

PARKER: No I don't remember anyone actually having the unpleasant experience of falling in them but it was hazardous.

FORSYTHE: I want to ask you about Phillip Mankin

PARKER: Mr. Mankin was a learned and well read man. He had read a lot of Voltaire and other anti-religious books. One day a student made an answer that had to do with the stories of the Old Testament and he said to her "Why girl you don't believe all those Hebrew pastoral tales do you?" she said "Yes I do Mr. Mankin that is the Holy Bible and I believe every word of it don't you?" he said "oh no that is just wishful thinking of the people in those days when they were writing those" she stood up from her seat and pointed her index finger at his face and said "Mr. Mankin, I guess one day you will find out one day rather or not when you get there."

FORSYTHE: Did he have an answer for her?

PARKER: He didn't have any come back for that good little Baptist girl. While we are talking about Mr. Mankin being an agnostic a little teacher was

telling me about her experiences out in the classroom up in the eastern part of the state I believe it was Sullivan county, there is a Sullivan county isn't there? She said that she was talking to the class before Easter once about Easter and why it was observed and about Christ and how they treated him and they had a trial and sentenced him to die and how he had to carry his cross up a hill and how they flogged him and beat him on the way up in a cruel fashion. One little boy looked like he was about to explode being red in the face and he said "teacher if that was John Wayne those sons of bitches wouldn't have done it to him!" That was just one of the rural counties east of here.

FORSYTHE: Do you remember Eva Mae Burkin?

PARKER: Yes she was a rather popular teacher. Well known. I did not have any classes with her.

FORSYTHE: What about George Davis

PARKER: Mr. Davis, a science teacher, biology. I learned the world was round from him. Not only from his lecture but we had to do laboratory work, take those frogs apart and learn about organisms and even the human organism. I guess that was one of the biggest eye opener class I ever had. Regardless of whether it was literature or philosophy or mathematics. That class with Mr. Davis was an eye opener from who had never had biology in high school.

FORSYTHE: Marion Edney, he was a biology teacher also.

PARKER: I don't remember that person.

FORSYTHE: Nance Jordan

PARKER: He was an athletics teacher I believe, I didn't have him as a teacher. In later years I had two or three of his boys at the campus school, when I was director principal there. So I know that family very well.

FORSYTHE: How about Charles Lewis

PARKER: Mr. Lewis had philosophy of education. He was teaching philosophy of education as if it were an exact science and many times the class after they got out into the hall would day "un-uh."

FORSYTHE: Was that because they already had an experience as teachers?

PARKER: Yes. That was some of the reactions. Dr. Charles Lewis

FORSYTHE: Wink Midgett

PARKER: Wink was a business teacher although he had a lot to do with coaching as a sideline to his college classes and he I believe he set up the business department as the school having come from the upper part of the state more than here, I believe he graduates from TPI. I liked him as a friend and as a teacher and I am sorry he is not with us anymore.

FORSYTHE: What about Anne Ardway, an English teacher.

PARKER: Miss Ardway she was an English teacher, and she ranks right along with Mr. Frazier as a good English teacher.

FORSYTHE: Hester Rodgers

PARKER: Art teacher, I didn't particularly want to take any art because I am not particularly gifted in that area but as an elementary principal I had to know a little bit about it so I could know a little bit about what they were talking about in the art class. She was very patient with us especially those of us who were not very talented or knowledgeable about art and art terminology.

FORSYTHE: Mr. Romine

PARKER: As I recall he was an industrial arts teacher but I didn't have much association with him.

FORSYTHE: E Mae Sauders

PARKER: Well believe it or not I passed the course with her with all my unmusical qualities. I was good at instrumental music but I was pretty short when the man was handing out singing talents, I was behind the door I think. She was pretty patient with us.

FORSYTHE: Roy Simpson

PARKER: Roy Simpson was the head of the campus school for a while and made a name for himself. He established the motis operandi for the student teachers and the observers and so on. I was there one time and he had brought two college girls to the first grade and the teacher wasn't there but two or three little students were there and they were looking at these two college students and one little boy said to the other looking at the college girl teacher "how old do you reckon she is?" the other one said "I bet real old, I bet she is 22"

FORSYTHE: Do you remember MR. Edward Tarpley?

PARKER: No I missed him.

FORSYTHE: He had the health class.

PARKER: Health?

FORSYTHE: How about JC Waller

PARKER: Mr Waller taught philosophy of education and he came at the time of the Bell Curve, and IQ was becoming popular, people could understand what you talked about when you said IQ. So we all had our Intelligence quotient measured and we would go to some school and help administer it. So Mr. JC Waller introduced me to the Bell curve of distribution of intelligence and many other things as far as that is concerned. But I remember Simon Bennet, Simon Bennet, Simon Bennet. The tests were first given in France and Mr. Bennet was a Frenchman, or Simone Bennet I guess would be right. But that is my recollection of Mr. Waller.

FORSYTHE: How about John Wheeler

PARKER: I don't remember that man at all.

FORSYTHE: Did you teach at the training school as a student?

PX; Yes

FORSYTHE: Who did you teach with?

PARKER: With Miss. Frances Snell and she had a niece who was Mary Fancis Snell and they were confused sometimes but I taught with the aunt rather than the niece, Miss Francis Sell and the subject was geography. I got to where I could do pretty well with the geography class although I was a little slow with delivery. She said one thing to me in the form of a question and it was very diplomatic, no sting to it. She said to me "Mr. Parker do you ever get in a hurry?"

FORSYTHE: What do you remember about President Jones?

PARKER: I don't remember him I never saw him.

FORSYTHE: PA Lyon that is who I should ask about.

PARKER: Prichard Alfred Lyon. He was a very impeccable dresser, I guess you would say, is that a good adjective? His manner and etiquette was the same. As far as I was concerned he was a good administrator, but some of the local politicians didn't agree and they began a semi-political semi-educational campaign against him because he didn't have a doctor's degree and they thought any president of a college degree. But he was very pleasant and a very good administrator as far as I was related to him.

FORSYTHE: How was QM Smith received after Lyon left?

PARKER: Dr. Smith was received well as far as I knew anything. He was the type of personality that you wouldn't dare campaign against unless you really had the smoking gun. Smith ran business in such a way that it was democratic enough because we had a faculty meeting every week and I as a member of the faculty came over to it and he gave everyone an opportunity to ask a question but he usually had an agenda of his own that took up the time and generally related to what we were interested in any way.

FORSYTHE: What do you remember about Dr. Cope

PARKER: I believe that Dr. Cope came here from the state office of the department of education in Nashville. He and I would ride together to the Rotary club meetings and we got to know each other that way better than we did through our association on campus. He was a keen observer of everything that was going on around him and was a keen administrator as far as I can tell. It is too bad that after he left here he came to an accidental death at the University of Tennessee. You knew about that I guess.

FORSYTHE: I just know he died. I don't know anything about it. I have researched up to the time of QM Smith I have researched up until his time period.

PARKER: What about Dr. Scarlett

FORSYTHE: Dr. Scarlett was the first president they had who was not a native Tennessean. I believe he was born in Reading Pennsylvania. He had some ideas that were different from us hill-billy Tennesseans and as a result raised some eyebrows as to whether or not he knew how to get some things done, even though he might be knowledgeable. He was always very nice to me and when I retired he gave me all the privileges of the school, like tickets use of the library and other privileges due to retired teachers.

FORSYTHE: You retired May 30th, 1973. Why did you come here and work for MTSU?

PARKER: It is hard to answer that because I was down at Oakridge as superintendent and had no problems and had another offer to go to Springfield Massachusetts at a higher salary but my late wife and the two sons, Morris and Bob so wanted to come to Middle Tennessee, that I told my wife that I couldn't look her in the coffin if we didn't come to Middle Tennessee so we came to Middle Tennessee mainly because we like the place here and I am so glad we did because then all my retirement was from the same state and it made a whole lot of difference it has given me a whole lot more financial pleasure by having all my teaching experience in one state.

FORSYTHE: Do you remember your job interview?

PARKER: Yes with Dr. Smith. We met at the half-way ground between Oakridge and here at the famous Cedberry Hotel in McMinnville, it was famous for its dining room especially and we met and had dinner there President QM Smith and Dean Beasley, at the time I had me masters degree from Peabody University and had done all my work for my doctoral degree at the University of Tennessee, being that Oakridge was so close, I had taken a lot of evening and Saturday classes and I told them that and after talking some time, Dr. Smith said "now I don't care one bit if you get your bachelors degree or not, as far as our job is concerned, I want you for the experiences you have had, the experiences you have had with children and the experiences you have had with teachers and with other administrators to come to our place, it is just up to you whether you get your doctor's degree or not even though you are coming to a college most people coming to a college do have a doctoral degree." So when he said that I didn't argue with him, some of the work you have to go through by making a new study or something. Some of those studies are kind of silly anyway, prove that which is already self-evident. So that is the way it ended in the Cedberry Hotel that night.

FORSYTHE: What were you hired to do, what were your job duties.

PARKER: I was hired to be director/principal of the MTSU training school, that is what they had it called then, I later got it changed, the word training school sounded like you should jump through a hoop like a dog would at the circus, and we didn't have to argue about it if we called it the campus school, the school on the campus of the college for elementary children. So they bought that idea readily and it was changed as soon as I came.

FORSYTHE: How did the training school change from '54 to '73?

PARKER: The biggest change when I was there, and I was in on helping to make it, was to take students who wanted to take do their apprenticeship out to public schools, 'cause many of the students who would make good grade here would get out there and say "but they are not like you there, they do not have the supplies and the philosophy and the point of view and I am lost for the first year." so instead we set up a school where they would do just an observation and then do the actually teaching out in Coffee county or in Summer county and my job then was to go to the principal of a school and tell them what we wanted and who we had and find out could we place them with them. That was about the only change while I was there, besides changing the name.

FORSYTHE: Did you do any teaching while you were there?

PARKER: I would teach summer school classes during the summer on the campus.

FORSYTHE: You would teach educational classes?

PARKER: Yes

FORSYTHE: What kind of classes?

PARKER: The Psychology of learning and just general psychology, you know what is it the ego the super ego and the id. Some of our children would get upset with Dr. Freud.

FORSYTHE: Yes me to. He had a problem I think.

PARKER: Maybe his alzheimers set in early, where he claims such things like girls had an envy of the male, penis envy.

FORSYTHE: I had a problem with that I thought "why would we?"

PARKER: You never heard of that one?

FORSYTHE: I have heard of that one but I thought "No I don't think so"

PARKER: You can't but both ends of an electrical cord in a receptical.

FORSYTHE: That is true, it won't get no where.

PARKER: There was another doctor, a German Jounng, he was about the same as Freud.

FORSYTHE: I had to think psychology and philosophy classes, I didn't care for those. It was fun to hear the different theories but some I don't think you can take too seriously.

FORSYTHE: I Want to ask you about some of the training school people, Mary Francis Neal.

PARKER: She was a colorful character, she had a sense of humor, by the way she is still living over in some of those condiminiums.

FORSYTHE: Yes I interviewed her she it a real still lady.

PARKER: Is she still with is up here?

FORSYTHE: Well she had a stroke and every once in a while she would tell a story and she would forget about what she was talking about.

PARKER: I remember she had a way with children. She would always tell the children she was not going to marry a doctor or a lawyer or a professional she was going to marry a plumber or a tire man. She said they were the ones that were hard to get to fix your house.

FORSYTHE: They probably make more money to. They charge enough don't they?

PARKER: She was brought up by a widowed mother her father was killed by a railroad crossing between here and Nashville where the Tennessee Central used to cross around here years ago and she was brought up an only child and she was only about four or five years old when he was killed. Every year around Christmas she would have the children tell about the preparations the were making for Christmas. The Protestant children would tell that they were going to make cookies and so on and the Catholic children would tell maybe a little different story and the Jewish children would tell about the Minorah, about the oil lasting seven days, it is a Hebrew story. They came to this little Jewish boy and his name was Jay Wolf his gather used to run a department store on the square, Wolfe department store. Well she came around to Jay and asked him what he did to get ready for Christmas and he said "As you know my father owns a department store and before Christmas he brings home the money and sets it on the dinning room table and just before Christmas he stays home real late and brings home sometimes tow bags of money and on Christmas Eve he brings home the money and he puts the money on the table and we all join hands and we sing"

and she says whatt do you sing? and he said "What a friend we have in Jesus!"

FORSYTHE: What about Ann Ashley?

PARKER: She was a teacher at the school, I told her she was the only Aristocrat I had the pleasure of teaching with. The very land we are sitting on was granted by King James in 1660 to eight of his friends who had befriended him when his father James I was beheaded by Cromnell Heshame and James went to France where the monarchy was still in safety and they got tired of Cromnell's butchering and asked him to come back and assume the throne again. He rewarded eight of his friends a grant of land between the Atlantic Ocean and the Mississippi river. It included Charleston North and South Carolina and Tennessee that was Lord Cooper, Lord Grandville and Lord Ashley and Ann Ashley was out of that group, she was a direct decendent and the Ashely plantation is still in existance, only 1200 acres left, it is nearly all gone. It is down in Georgia, we passed it some years ago going to Charleston.

FORSYTHE: Do you know Andrea Briney?

PARKER: Yes she is the most gifted person, she in married now, Mrs. Green and she loves out on Manchester highway some distance from here. She taught 6th grade there at the campus school. She was continually having children do drama, but children like drama any way naturally. Put on mother's high heels and long dress and go walking around. She would do things in history like the marriage of Rachel Andrew Jackson with her 6th grade she was always thinking of some ways to make it real for the children instead of just dull history. Or Bonnie Sherell jumping over the stokade fence at the hands of John Sevier. By the way you know Seveir was a word coined because the hillbilly Tennesseans could not pronounce Xavier. It got its name from the French indirectly.

FORSYTHE: Margarete Harrison

PARKER: Margarete was one of the best second grade teachers you will ever know. She had premature, not gray hair but white hair. She told this on herself one afternoon when school was out and two or three children were waiting on the later bus, and they said "Miss Harrison, how old are you?" She said "Oh I am about one hundred." One of the kids said "Well I thought you looked like it."

FORSYTHE: Before I forget, I talked to Dr. Bob Womack on Friday and he said to ask you about the Civil War roundtable.

PARKER: That was beginning with the one hundred year anniversary from 1961 to 1965 there was a group of us history buffs that formed a civil war roundtable we would meet once a month and have some speaker and have some description of part of a battle or part of a campaign. It was a lot of fun and a pleasure for us middle aged fellows to not only meet and talk but we would make trips and I was driving a big Chrysler car at that time, we would go about four five of us, Dr. Pittard and Womack and Joe Nunley, he was a wonderful fellow, have you ever heard about him?

FORSYTHE: Yes but why don't you tell me about him.

PARKER: Dan Wheel a writer for the Daily News Journal wrote a story about him once and I will give you a copy some time. Well we drove to Shilo down in Savannah Tennessee, on the battle of Shilo and walk over the grounds and say "This is what happened at six o'clock, and here is what happened at ten o'clock, and here is where old McCook got the pants shot off of him and such and such a place. Then we would do to another place, another place we went was to Donelson. My great grand father was captured at Donelson at Fort Dover Tennessee. It is a big fort over there with a marker, sort of a national monument where Howitzer's would shoot off down the river at the steam boats and US Grant coming up with soldiers. We would go to Murfreesboro, there is quite a lot to be seen there at Stone's river, and the museum and the slide show. I remember the joke there was there was some person visiting here from the north and said "These are all Yankee soldiers" and the southern children said "Where are the Rebels buried?" and someone said "there were just a few of them and they got away." That was four years of pleasant experiences with those fellows. We would have notable speakers come in and we had to raise a collection some how and we would find some guy who had read a lot about the Civil War and was a non-partisan writer and he gives it factual and he was given the funny points of a soldier away from home, many of the soldiers in the war had not been out of their county, no rail roads and no fast transportation, no radio and no television, no telephones. One of the speakers had a letter of a boy who had written his father back in Nebraska where it is flat in the prairie land and he said "Dad over here in West Virginia there are some of the God dangest mountains you ever did see." We would have such stuff at a our round table

FORSYTHE: Tell me about Homer Pittard

PARKER: Well he was one of those in the roundtable. It was sad that he couldn't stay with us longer because he would have dug up a lot more about our local Middle Tennessee, the roots of the society, the makeup of

Rutherford county and the surrounding counties to. His wife lived on Tyne boulevard, Mable his widow.

FORSYTHE: What can you tell me about Joe Nunley

PARKER: Joe Nunley bless him he was a true blue gentleman, died of a heart attack, his wife died first, his blessed Jessie DePriest, he was living alone and was out in his garden cutting turnip greens when he just fell over dead. He was from Warren county, from Viola and that is kind of a well to do neighborhood, Viola and he was buried up there at Mt Zion in Foster's Cove. He was a good writer himself and his little folk stories, neighborhood tales, wrote quite a bit, didn't publish much of it just in memeograph form. When Dan Whittle was writing his story about Joe's death, he said the mountain was what he existed for and he said he was buried on the mountain and he said while the preacher was saying some nice words at his funeral I heard in the distance a farmer's jack-ass brayed and he said "if Joe had been here he would have known not only the farmer's name but he Jack Asses name also." Every fall had would take a group of friends of his in to this house he owned on Foster's Cove and we would have a weaner roast but we would have a lot of other things to eat besides weaners. And we had a good time getting together and it was usually in October. Joe was a member of the faculty over here and he military experience to. I forgot what theatre of operations, whether it was the Pacific or European.

FORSYTHE: Is there anything else you want to talk about or anybody?

PARKER: I can't think of anyone.

PARKER: Well thank you very much.