

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW
WITH
JOHN BRAGG

31 AUGUST 1995

MURFREESBORO, TENNESSEE

INTERVIEWED BY REGINA FORSYTHE
FOR THE Q. M. SMITH ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
INTERVIEW #QMS.083

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
JOHN BRAGG**

Q. M. SMITH ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW #QMS.083

FORSYTHE: This tape is part of the Q.M. Smith Collection designated as QMS. 1995. 83. This is Regina Forsythe. I am interviewing Mr. John Bragg, Sr. Today is Thursday, August 31, 1995. The interview is being conducted in the Gore Research Center Room 111 of the Ned McWherter Learning Resource Center. We were discussing Jones Hall.

BRAGG: Yes, we were remodeling Jones Hall for office space. We got a million dollars state money, and the university matched it with reserve funds. [We got the money for] the infrastructure and the mass comm. building and now the business building, and I hope we get another library. That will wind up my part in the legislature. I worked with Dr. Pittard a lot when he was alumni director. We started the first "Fifty Club" in which alumni members would give fifty dollars annually. Later we called it the "Century Club" so people would give one hundred dollars annually. I worked with him on the "Mid-Stater." It was the alumni publication for awhile, and it is now a magazine. Those were the things we did back then in the alumni business. I have enjoyed working throughout all of these years with the university.

FORSYTHE: Tell me about the first Bragg Building named after you?

BRAGG: I began a foundation, which we used to raise money. Jack McFarland and I were members of the printing industry of Nashville, now called the printing industry of the south. They had a school in Nashville off 16th and 17th Avenue which is now Music Row. There was a Nashville Printing School there. They dealt in hot metal, and that was before the offset started using photography. When the new offset business came along, they no longer had a need for that building. So, Jack McFarland and I, (I was president of the printing industry of Tennessee at that time), went down and got them to give us that building and the land. We sold it and that's how the graphic arts building got here at MTSU. We hired the guy that was down there to come here. That's why they called it the Bragg building. It could have easily been called the McFarland building, but his name had already been added to the infirmary. So, they named that building for me.

FORSYTHE: You also have a second building named after you.

BRAGG: I told them that I appreciate that very much and I'm proud of that building. They tell me that we have tremendous enrollment in Mass Comm compared about

second or third with the most number of students in the country at any university. Nashville is a communications center and is also the fifth or sixth largest printing center in the country. You have all of the TV shows, graphics, and PR. It's just an amazing amount of opportunity for mass. comm. students. I understand those jobs pay pretty good.

FORSYTHE: What about your work with the foundation. What other work have you done?

BRAGG: I was with the original foundation when it was organized. Randy Wood gave \$25,000 a year for three or four years. I served on it then, and I'm back on it now. I've just been going around and raising money with others.

FORSYTHE: Is there anything else you'd like to add?

BRAGG: I understand that the number of full time equivalent students at MTSU, is only about 300 less than Memphis State. Memphis State has more head count than that, but we're only 300 students under them if everyone was full time. That's good, but there's much more to be done.

FORSYTHE: What do you see in MTSU's future?

BRAGG: I'm thrilled with what we're doing now with the mass. comm. building, etc. [From] the master plan, we've done the infrastructure, we've gotten nursing facilities, recreation facility, business and aerospace, mass. comm, and now we have the library. I think the livestock pavilion has been a great addition to MTSU. I am told that the number of agribusiness students [at MTSU] has doubled since 1987 or 1988. I think a lot of that is due to the livestock pavilion, and people coming in here and seeing it....farmers, livestock dealers, and horsemen coming in here and seeing what we have. I think it will be even greater when we get the Miller Coliseum done. I don't really think the Miller Coliseum would even be in our minds if we hadn't have had the livestock pavilion. That's where the Walking Horses Owners Association came for their show. They left money to us to build a horse coliseum because they see this one wasn't going to [be big enough]. I think that pavilion had a lot to do with the money that comes from the Miller Trust, and it is amazing how many people it brings into Murfreesboro who eat and stay overnight here. I get a list of all of the events over there, and it's usually around 60 to 65 events per year. This last year, we spent a lot of money putting the bedding out at the landfill, and we were talking with a BFI guy in Nashville and asked why we couldn't just bring something out there and not pay for it. We worked it out that that's what we're going to do. It's going to save us about \$40,000 dollars. MTSU is growing so fast, it's going to be bigger than Memphis State. We have some way to go before we're as big as UT, but I think we'll become the second largest school in the state. I'm concerned that we don't get the message out that we're still better than the public thinks we are. We're still the best kept secret. We don't give enough credit to the individuals here on campus who do such great work. That's a concern of mine, but we're

doing better. We're taking advantage of opportunities that we never took advantages of before. Dr. Walker is a pusher, and I predict that in about seven or eight years now, they'll be thrilled with what's he's doing with the 1A thing. In my opinion, we'll either go to 1A or the football program will perish.

FORSYTHE: Thank you for coming.