

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW
WITH
CORNELIA DAVIDSON

1 SEPTEMBER 1995

MURFREESBORO, TENNESSEE

INTERVIEWED BY REGINA FORSYTHE
FOR THE Q. M. SMITH ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
INTERVIEW #QMS.084

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
CORNELIA DAVIDSON**

Q. M. SMITH ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW #QMS.084

FORSYTHE: This tape is part of the Q. M. Smith Collection, designated as QMS.1995.84. This is Regina Forsythe. I am interviewing Mrs. Cornelia Davidson. Today is Friday, September 1, 1995. The interview is being conducted at the home of Mrs. Davidson located at 303 Kingwood Drive in Murfreesboro, Tennessee. The tape of this interview along with a transcript 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, Mrs. Davidson?

DAVIDSON: Yes, it's all right.

FORSYTHE: What is your full name?

DAVIDSON: My full name Cornelia Clark Davidson.

FORSYTHE: And your birthday is October 1?

DAVIDSON: Yes.

FORSYTHE: Born 1899?

DAVIDSON: Yes.

FORSYTHE: And your birthplace?

DAVIDSON: Smyrna, Tennessee.

FORSYTHE: What was your father's name?

DAVIDSON: Charles H. Clark.

FORSYTHE: And his occupation?

DAVIDSON: He was a traveling salesman.

FORSYTHE: And your mother's name?

DAVIDSON: Alice Ross Clark.

FORSYTHE: And her occupation?

DAVIDSON: Farmer and housekeeper.

FORSYTHE: Any brothers and sisters?

DAVIDSON: Yes, I had two brothers, Charles and Bobby, and Rachel.

FORSYTHE: What was your husband's name?

DAVIDSON: William H. Davidson.

FORSYTHE: What was his occupation?

DAVIDSON: He was an insurance agent.

FORSYTHE: Did you have any children?

DAVIDSON: I had two. The oldest one is William H. Davidson, Jr., and Mary Ann Lowe.

FORSYTHE: Did anyone else in your family go to MTSU?

DAVIDSON: I'm not sure about that.

FORSYTHE: Can you tell me about what you remember about being a student at the Normal School?

DAVIDSON: Rachel, my sister went to school when it was State Teachers' College.

FORSYTHE: What do you remember about being a student?

DAVIDSON: It was an awfully good school. It was small, but it was a good school. They had students there from everywhere. I have forgotten how many kids they had. So many of those things have left my memory.

FORSYTHE: You told me on the phone that you rode in a horse and buggy.

DAVIDSON: I had to drive a horse hitched to a buggy because we didn't have cars then. See that was a long time ago. There was a barn out behind one of the Agriculture buildings. Men who worked on the farm were usually around the barn early in the morning. Sometimes I wouldn't come home until 3:00, and they'd be there then. One man that worked on the farm wanted to make love to me; he wanted me to notice him, and I didn't want to. I was a farmer myself, and I wasn't above him. I just didn't care to go with him. I had a date, and I didn't want to go to him. I used to pick up a girl, and this man was always watching for me to come. We had to hitch and unhitch our own horses. This man would always come and hitch my

horse and buggy for me, get it ready for me to go home. I'd do everything I could to miss the hour that I had to see him. This girl that I would pick up and take to school would let me out at the Main Building, and she'd take the horse and buggy. In the afternoon, she would go and do the same thing. I tell you, I was awful. I was a plain, little country girl. I didn't fix up much. I never was a xxx to primp and use makeup and things like that. I wasn't a very popular person around the university because they always looked up for the ones that were dressed up and looked like they were somebody. I wore my hair very plain.

FORSYTHE: What was the Henry Grady Club?

DAVIDSON: It was just a club. We'd meet once a month. It was more or less a social club.

FORSYTHE: Did you belong to any other clubs?

DAVIDSON: That was the only one I belonged to. I don't know who Henry Grady was.

FORSYTHE: Do you remember President Jones?

DAVIDSON: Yes, very well. He was an awfully nice man. He was very quiet, and I always thought he was fair about everything. I liked him. He was real nice.

FORSYTHE: Do you remember any other students?

DAVIDSON: There was one girl, Helen Gould. I don't know whether there was an "e" on the end or not. And, of course, there were a lot of Murfreesboro girls who went out there. Betsy Lee Batey, she's dead now.

FORSYTHE: Did you drive from Smyrna to go to school?

DAVIDSON: No, we were living in Murfreesboro. I moved to Murfreesboro when I was 5 years old.

FORSYTHE: How long did it take you to drive to school?

DAVIDSON: We lived right at the edge of the city limits on a farm. I don't know how long.

FORSYTHE: How did you choose your classes?

DAVIDSON: I wanted to be a home economics teacher, so I took the courses that were required.

FORSYTHE: Why did you want to be a home ec teacher?

DAVIDSON: I always liked to cook. I did a lot of cooking at home. When I would go home after school and Mama was busy, I'd go on and fix supper.

FORSYTHE: Do you remember your home ec teacher?

DAVIDSON: She was a small, dark complected teacher. We were all very fond of her. Her sweetheart was named Mr. Taylor. He used to come around to the office sometimes to see her during the time we were in class. One time he made her cry. And we all just hated him after that. I had my first evening dress when I graduated. We didn't wear caps and gowns back in that time.

FORSYTHE: Where was graduation?

DAVIDSON: In the Main Auditorium.

FORSYTHE: Dr. Anne Ordway.

DAVIDSON: I didn't have any classes under Ms. Ordway, but she was a very popular teacher. She was young and attractive, and she was a mighty good teacher of English.

FORSYTHE: How about E. May Saunders?

DAVIDSON: She taught music. She was a great big, fat person. She was an awfully good musician and they say she was a good teacher. I never did take music lessons.

FORSYTHE: Mr. B. B. Gracy.

DAVIDSON: I knew who he was.

FORSYTHE: Did you do practice teaching?

DAVIDSON: I did practice teaching. My practice teaching was in the grade school out there.

FORSYTHE: What did you teach?

DAVIDSON: That was regular geography and English and all. Common studies.

FORSYTHE: How many students did you teach?

DAVIDSON: It was just a few because there were grammar schools in town, and these were mostly people who lived close to the school.

FORSYTHE: Did you have an infirmary on campus?

DAVIDSON: Yes.

FORSYTHE: Did you play pranks on each other?

DAVIDSON: This was a college, and the ones who played pranks were the ones in the dormitories. I spent the night out there one night, but there wasn't much playing going on. It was all work.

FORSYTHE: Did you go everyday to school?

DAVIDSON: Yes.

FORSYTHE: Where did the boys stay?

DAVIDSON: There was a boys' dormitory and a girls' dormitory.

FORSYTHE: Did you start here right after high school?

DAVIDSON: I didn't get to go to high school because we didn't have a high school here at that time. I took my high school work through Soule College. Ms. Hyde and Ms. Hopkins were the two ladies who ran the school. I went from Soule College to the Normal School.

FORSYTHE: Did everybody have to go through Soule?

DAVIDSON: No. They just took girls. They had a boys' school here named Mooney School. There were several years that Murfreesboro didn't have a high school because we had Soule College and the Mooney School and Tennessee College.

FORSYTHE: How long did you go to the Normal School?

DAVIDSON: Four years.

FORSYTHE: Is there anything else I should ask you about?

DAVIDSON: My mother and father lived on the farm. There were alot of social clubs that met in the afternoon, but I was always needed at home. I didn't stay after school; as soon as my classes were over, I went home.

FORSYTHE: What did you do after you graduated?

This is a continuation of the interview with Mrs. Cornelia Davidson by Regina Forsythe on September 1, 1995.

DAVIDSON: I taught at Normal Park School in North Chattanooga.

FORSYTHE: How long were you there?

DAVIDSON: I taught two years, then I got married. I was engaged to William Davidson. Home economics in the grammar school is not a very big department. There's just

the seventh and eighth grade girls that go to it. I boarded right across from the school in Dr. Eldridge's home. In the afternoons, I'd get restless. Outside of my home ec work, I taught wherever they needed an extra teacher. If the geography teacher was sick, I taught for her. I taught spelling and geography. I was bored, and somebody said, "Why don't you take up china painting?" I said, "That's a good suggestion. I'd like to have some hand-painted china." If they thought I could do it.... On Saturday, I would go to the studio, and I painted a whole set of china.

FORSYTHE: Thank you for letting me come out here.

DAVIDSON: Is that all?

FORSYTHE: Unless you want to tell me more. What did you do after those two years in Chattanooga?

DAVIDSON: There was one year, I believe it was my senior year, the boys had just gotten out of the Army. They had classes for them, the local and out-of-town boys when the war was over. And of course the soldiers were always very attractive to the girls. To go to a boarding school, you don't get the social life that they have. You don't get into the spirit of the school as the ones in the dormitories. If you come from home and go out fast, it's kind of like going to any other school.

FORSYTHE: When you started, it was mostly girls?

DAVIDSON: Yes, on account of the war.