

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW
WITH
BARBARA MCDANIEL

11 SEPTEMBER 1995

MURFREESBORO, TENNESSEE

INTERVIEWED BY REGINA FORSYTHE
FOR THE Q. M. SMITH ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW #QMS.092

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

EDITORIAL NOTICE

This is a transcript of a tape-recorded interview conducted by the Albert Gore Research Center at Middle Tennessee State University. The original recording and associated materials are archived at the center, whose collections may be accessed in person or via the web site gorecenter.mtsu.edu. After a draft of this transcript was made, the interviewer, or in some cases another qualified staff member, reviewed the draft and compared it to the tape recordings. In a few cases, the interviewee also contributed editorial corrections. This final transcript incorporates the corrections and other changes suggested by the interviewee and interviewer. The transcript follows as closely as possible the recorded interview, including the usual starts, stops, and other rough spots in typical conversation. The reader should remember that this is essentially a transcript of the spoken, rather than the written, word. Stylistic matters, such as punctuation and capitalization, follow the *Chicago Manual of Style*, 15th edition. The transcript includes bracketed notices at the end of one tape and the beginning of the next so that, if desired, the reader can find a section of tape more easily by using this transcript.

RESTRICTION

The interviewee has donated her or his copyright in this interview to the state of Tennessee through Middle Tennessee State University and has agreed that use of the recorded interview and transcript shall be governed by the director of the Albert Gore Research Center.

Researchers may read, quote from, cite, photocopy, and download this transcript without permission for purposes of research only. Publication is prohibited, however, without permission from the director of the Albert Gore Research Center.

ABSTRACT



ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW WITH
BARBARA MCDANIEL
Q. M. SMITH ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
INTERVIEW #QMS.092

FORSYTHE: This tape is part of the Q.M. Smith Collection designated as QMS.1995.92. This is Regina Forsythe. I am interviewing Mrs. Barbara McDaniel. Today is Monday, September 11, 1995. The interview is being conducted in the home of Mrs. McDaniel, located at 2802 Morgan Road, Murfreesboro, Tennessee. The tape of this interview, along with the transcripts 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. McDaniel?

MCDANIEL: Yes.

FORSYTHE: What is your full name?

MCDANIEL: Barbara Ann Wood McDaniel.

FORSYTHE: What is your birth date and birth place?

MCDANIEL: July 30, 1931. Hopkinsville, Kentucky. We only stayed there about six months after I was born and then we moved to Watertown, Tennessee. I spent most of my life in Watertown, until I came to MTSU for school.

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

MCDANIEL: Glenn Wood. He was a dry cleaner.

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

MCDANIEL: Sara Elizabeth Forbes Wood. She helped my father with our dry cleaning plant in Watertown.

FORSYTHE: Do you have any siblings?

MCDANIEL: I have a sister, Jannine Cross, and my brother is Jack Wood. Jannine lives here in Murfreesboro, while Jack resides in Centerville, Tennessee.

FORSYTHE: What is your husband's name and occupation?

MCDANIEL: Don R. McDaniel. He is retired now, but was with the Singer Company for many years.

FORSYTHE: Do you have any children?

MCDANIEL: I have three, and all of them graduated from MTSU. My oldest son is Donald Andrew McDaniel, and he works for Precision Concepts, a computer software company. My middle son is Mark Steven McDaniel and he is a lawyer in Memphis, Tennessee. My daughter is LaDonna Elizabeth McDaniel and she is vice-president of Communications for the Nashville Chamber of Commerce. MTSU and the Murfreesboro school system did a good job of educating them.

FORSYTHE: Why did you choose to attend MTSU?

MCDANIEL: It was close. My father did not want me to go to college at all. He did not believe in girls going to college. He claimed that they all got married, anyway, and never used their college education. He wanted me to go to beautician school, but I did not want to be a beautician. I begged and pleaded to get to come to MTSU. He granted me two years to take business courses at MTSU, but if I got married in those two years, then my sister would not get to go to college. I came here and went my two years, then I started working for the university as secretary of the R.O.T.C. department. My sister came over here a year and a quarter, and then got married. I'm glad I got here first, and had the opportunity to come. When they made the R.O.T.C. job a Civil Service job, I became Bob Abernathy's secretary. That was the most fun job that any girl could ever have.

FORSYTHE: Tell me about being a secretary in the R.O.T.C.

MCDANIEL: At that time it was in the basement of what is now the old gym. I did short-hand, typing, and a lot of filing. I was the only girl down there. It was fun. They were all really nice to me, and were very protective of me. They did make me go out and ride in the tank, and made me learn to shoot one of the M-1 rifles. The first time I ever gave blood, I did it for the R.O.T.C. blood drive. I was not old enough to give blood, so one of them forged my daddy's name on the permission slip, and sent me through the line. Working with them was a fun experience.

FORSYTHE: Who was your boss?

MCDANIEL: Colonel McClain. He was an officer and a gentleman. He was one of the nicest people you could ever expect to meet. He was very professional and friendly. He was a good man to work for. He commanded a lot of respect.

FORSYTHE: Then you were secretary for Bob Abernathy?

MCDANIEL: Yes, and that was fun. Bob was one of the most colorful people ever to be at MTSU. He had taught English and was director of field services when I worked

for him. Of course, we did all the mailouts to the graduating high school kids. I stuffed lots of envelopes and letters. He liked to tell jokes, and knew more jokes than just about anybody. He had books of jokes. When I went in to take his dictation of a letter, I probably listened to about thirty minutes of jokes, before I took dictation. People would send him the craziest joke cards. He was always playing pranks, especially on me. He knew I was afraid of bugs. His small daughter would come over there on Saturday, and they would find these old big dead bugs and place them in my stationary drawer. When I pulled out a piece of stationary, I was faced with a big dead bug. I got even with him, though. One day I was taking dictation. At that time his office was on one side of the auditorium. It is different now, and not like that any more. My office was on the other side of the auditorium and I had come over to take dictation. There were no screens on the window and it was in the spring or the fall. As I was taking dictation, a great big bug flew across my face and I screamed and screamed. I left the office and was laughing at Bob Abernathy swatting at it, and trying to kill it. President Q.M. Smith came over at that time and asked, "What are you doing to this girl, Bob?" That was the only time I ever saw Mr. Abernathy kind of flustered. We told him that there was a bug and Bob was trying to kill it. It was fun. Everybody stopped by to see him and he was always cutting up and joking. My mother said I put him on a pedestal and worshipped him. I suppose I did, he was just a really fun person to be around. I worked half the day on Saturday. Jim, his wife, would call to find out if I was there many weekends and invite me to eat hamburgers. I would eat with them. I would swing Janie, their daughter on the swing, and play ball with Paul, their son. Paul is a doctor in Murfreesboro now. They just made me one of the family.

FORSYTHE: How long did you work for Bob Abernathy?

MCDANIEL: A couple of years, 1952 and 1953. Some time in 1953 I went to Genesco in Nashville and was secretary there.

FORSYTHE: Where was his office again?

MCDANIEL: Our offices were outside the auditorium. You used go up the steps, and as you came into the building, there was Q.M.'s office. We had classes in that building then. Our offices were in small rooms to each side of the auditorium.

FORSYTHE: What was your major?

MCDANIEL: When I first started school, I was majoring in business. Later after I married and my kids came along, when my daughter was in kindergarten, I went back and got my degree in elementary education. I think I finished my degree in 1971. I went back on Saturdays and nights to earn my master's degree in curriculum and instruction and a kindergarten certification.

FORSYTHE: What was your thesis?

MCDANIEL: It had to do with Merle Karnes' way of teaching handwriting. This involved mirrors and a Plexiglas stand that you wrote on, and then the children could follow it. They chose me to try that method and I wrote my thesis about my experience. I'm sure my thesis is over at the library. They keep all those.

FORSYTHE: What memories do you have of being a student from 1949-1951?

MCDANIEL: I have lots of fun memories. Back then it was a suitcase college. I would stay about five weeks before I would go home. It was a lot different than it is now. You had very little freedom. You did not wear slacks and you never wore shorts. If you wore shorts to gym class, you wore a raincoat or jacket over it. You were not allowed to go out on the campus in shorts. On Saturdays, we were allowed to go to the cafeteria in slacks, but otherwise, we were not allowed to wear them. You were allowed out on Friday night till 10:30, and Saturday till 11:00, and Sunday 10:30. If you did not get in on time, you were grounded. Lights had to be out at 10:30. They actually checked. If you had your lights on you got demerits. It was quite different. You were very sheltered at that time.

FORSYTHE: Did you have a roommate?

MCDANIEL: Yes. My freshman year, in Lyon Hall, I had two roommates because I was in a corner room. There was a bunk bed and a single bed. My sophomore year, I lived in Rutledge Hall and just had one roommate. The woman in charge of Rutledge Hall, Miss Pitts, was from my home town. I could get by with a little more, than I could in the other hall! She took care of me. I did not take advantage of it, but I could get permission to go places easier. I was lucky that I had a friend who lived in Murfreesboro, Yvonne McFolin Mingle. She is a real estate agent now. Then she lived on University Street. I usually spent my weekends with her. That way I could stay out as late as her parents would allow us.

The first year I was here, they built the James Union Building. That winter we had a big snow. Since there was a big pile of dirt, from construction, between Lyon and Reynolds Halls, we took big pieces of cardboard and slid down that hill. It used to flood over in front of the campus school. I wore out a pair of shoes, skating on the ice over there. We did things like sledding. You could not go anywhere, really, not that many people had cars. Many of the ones that had access to cars, were from Murfreesboro. You would not have trouble finding a parking place back then.

I remember one of the big football players coming down that hill, and hitting a hedge which split his pants. We had fun night on Tuesday night, which Miss Buleah Davis was in charge of. We did a lot of square dancing, jitterbugging, and slow dancing. You made your own fun. We sat out under the trees a lot and talked. You walked to town if you wanted something.

FORSYTHE: Tell me about chapel.

MCDANIEL: We were required to go. We had an assigned seat. When I first got over there I did not know anything about Dr. Smith. It took me a while to get used to hearing him speak. It finally got to the point that I would stop and listen and could understand him. He was really an interesting speaker. You have to give him a lot of credit and admire him, because he was willing to get up in front of people and talk, despite his speech impediment. You know he was gassed during the war. He was a very interesting man. I never knew him that well. He stayed in his office a lot. We would see him at school functions like dances, occasionally. I remember him teasing me once.. Mrs. Evelyn Felder would tell us not to take our shoes off at the big dance, but you can't jitterbug in high heels. We would kick our shoes in the corner. Dr. Smith teased me later about not having my shoes on. That was when they had the big bands. One of our first big dances was in the James Union Building. When they built what is now the Old Gym, we had dances over there. We had the Glenn Miller band and the Tommy Dorsey band visit us. The R.O.T.C. brought the bands in. It was called the R.O.T.C. Ball. It was open to the general public, but I guess there might have been an entrance fee.

FORSYTHE: Do you remember the kind of lectures they gave in chapel?

MCDANIEL: Sometimes they played music. One guy played the marimba and was really good. Some of the girls would sing. The student body president would say something. I do not remember a lot about it.

FORSYTHE: What would happen if you did not go to chapel?

MCDANIEL: That I do not remember, but I know we were required to attend.

FORSYTHE: Did you have a job as a student?

MCDANIEL: I worked in the library part of the time, putting books away, and repairing them. I did whatever they wanted me to do.

FORSYTHE: I'm going to name some faculty members, and would like for you to tell me what you remember about them. Bonnie McHenry?

MCDANIEL: I lived with Bonnie for about a year. She had a house on Bell Street which had two bedrooms downstairs and I lived in one. There was a bedroom upstairs and two boys lived in it. Bonnie was a lady. She was in her forties or fifties when I was there. She seemed old to me. She would come home from work and take a nap. We would go out to eat or I would fix something there. She liked to play bridge. She would have Mr. and Mrs. Bragg and Mr. and Mrs. Holden, of Holden's Hardware, over to play bridge. Sometimes she would cook for them.

She would hire the housekeeper to cook and serve food. Sometimes I would help her. She was a nice lady. She never said much about working at MTSU.

FORSYTHE: Carolyn Holloway?

MCDANIEL: She lived right down the street. She had two daughters and a son. Carolyn's sister also worked at MTSU at the same time. I would go down the street to visit Carolyn, talk to her and play with the kids. We have kept in touch all these years. When I started working for Bob Abernathy, a lot of the other girls were wearing socks. I thought that looked unprofessional, so I wore stockings and low heels. Eventually they all got to doing that. The secretaries were close knit. It was fun.

FORSYTHE: Evelyn Turney.

MCDANIEL: She has a good sense of humor. She worked for Mr. Judd in the records office with Carolyn. When it came time to give out grades, the secretaries and office workers would all go in a room and spread out. Someone would have the card and read out what subject it was and whoever had that subject would look up the grade. Each card was a student's card. That is how the grades were done. It would take us a day or two. Registration was done by each professor. You had your slip of paper and they signed it to allow you into their class. It was more manual then.

FORSYTHE: Dean Beasley.

MCDANIEL: He was a very serious person, as far as I'm concerned. I did not see much of him. He stayed mostly in his office. Dean Beasley's house is being torn down now. I hate to see it go.

FORSYTHE: W. B. Judd.

MCDANIEL: He was a real sweet old man. I did not have a pencil sharpener in my office, so I would go in his office to sharpen all my pencils. He finally got me a pencil sharpener of my own. He used to tease me that if I wanted something he could get it for me. He was good at his job.

FORSYTHE: Did you have office parties?

MCDANIEL: Not really, but lots of the MTSU faculty would get together. When people got together I was usually invited. I remember going out to Gerald Parchment's home in the country and having a wiener roast.

End Side A, QMS.1995.92 BMcDaniel

This is a continuation with the interview of Mrs. Barbara McDaniel by Regina Forsythe on Monday September 11, 1995.

FORSYTHE: Charlotte Hinds.

MCDANIEL: She was very pretty and vivacious. She and Carolyn were sisters. She worked in the office with Carolyn and Evelyn. At that time, she live across from the campus.

FORSYTHE: Dean James.

MCDANIEL: He had taught school in Lebanon, Tennessee. I was from Wilson county. He was truly a really nice man. He was a diabetic, and every now and then I would see him running down the steps. I would know that he was needing some sugar because he would get a Coke and gulp it in one drink. He was well liked. He never had children and I think he missed not having them. I commented to him that he had influenced the lives of so many young people. He and his wife were really nice.

FORSYTHE: Catherine Clark.

MCDANIEL: She was the librarian. She was very business-like, crisp, organized, and expected her workers to work. I worked for her when I was a student worker in the library.

FORSYTHE: Mr. Woodmore?

MCDANIEL: My sister was secretary to Mr. Woodmore and Jim Jackson. He was the head of the business department. I knew him when I saw him, but did not have a lot to do with him. He lived next door to Bob Abernathy.

FORSYTHE: Jimmy Jackson.

MCDANIEL: He was a real nice guy and a lot of fun. He was friendly and outgoing.

FORSYTHE: Ed Baldwin.

MCDANIEL: He was the geography teacher. I knew enough about him to stay out of his class. He asked me one time why he had never taught me in class and I said, "Well, I know about you and I'm staying out of your class!" He just laughed. Years later, I had to take geography to get my elementary education degree and this professor was even tougher than Dr. Baldwin was!

FORSYTHE: Lane Boutwell.

MCDANIEL: He was head of the Speech department. He and his wife were very active at the university. They put on some very good plays. I never was in a play, but I worked behind the scenes. They built it up to what it is today.

FORSYTHE: Emily Calcott.

MCDANIEL: My word for her would be unique. I had one class under her and I put off taking that class as long as I could. This was when she was old. Dr. Calcott liked boys a lot better than she liked girls. She taught children's literature. She was a very strange person, different. She was smart and well educated, but different.

FORSYTHE: Buleah Davis.

MCDANIEL: She is a doll. She was in the Physical Education department and was also in charge of our fun nights too. She has a wonderful sense of humor. Kids all loved her. I see her quite often because we are in Delta Kappa Gamma together. That is a teaching sorority. We meet and have programs on educational issues.

FORSYTHE: Miss Mary Hall.

MCDANIEL: You could write a book on Miss Mary, and I think someone has. She was an interesting lady. You could sit and talk to her for hours. She was very smart and was a woman ahead of her time. She was not satisfied to sit back and play the role that ladies did in her time. She achieved a lot. She was one of the founders of the MTSU chapter of Delta Kappa Gamma.

FORSYTHE: Miss Ollie Green.

MCDANIEL: She was another one that was different. She was in the Geography department. You just did not have much choice in that department, she and Dr. Baldwin were both hard. Miss Ollie was really sweet to me. When I worked for Bob Abernathy, I lived in the Bach house which is right across from Rutledge Hall. Miss Ollie lived in the brownstone right behind me. I remember her trying to teach me to crochet or knit. She was a nice old lady.

FORSYTHE: Howard Kirksey.

MCDANIEL: I knew him only as a professional, when I was working at MTSU, but he was a nice person.

FORSYTHE: Charles Murphy.

MCDANIEL: I only knew that he was the coach. I went to a lot of games, though. Students got in the game with their activity card and did not have to pay. You got the card when you registered.

FORSYTHE: Henrietta Myers.

MCDANIEL: She was my shorthand and my office machines professor. She was very good. She typed my thesis for me. She was a good teacher and was personable, concerned, and helpful.

FORSYTHE: Wink Midgett.

MCDANIEL: He grew up near my Dad, in Watertown, Tennessee. I knew his sister really well, and one of his nephews went to school with me. When I came over here to school, he and Nell took me under their wings. Nell, his wife, grew up in Tucker's Cross road, where my mother was reared. I used to baby-sit the Midgett's children. I also had classes under Wink. When I was in typing class he would come and talk to me and I had to keep typing. Some how he also got me through accounting. He had a very dry wit. He came after me one night to baby sit. There was a couple out on the front porch of the dorm, and the boy was really tall while the girl was real short. When he came in he told them that he had heard that anyone at MTSU could get a date if one wanted one. When I walked out with him he was laughing and told me what he had done. He was full of fun like that. I still see his wife often. When I was pregnant with my first two children, Nell's mother made sure that she made the first little outfits that my children got. We have a family tie as well as the MTSU tie and have kept in touch all of these years.

FORSYTHE: Dr. Sims.

MCDANIEL: He was a character. I had political science or some other dry subject under him. Since I am five feet two inches, my feet never touched the floor when I was sitting at the classroom desks. I usually placed my feet on the rung of the chair. Dr. Sims noticed my discomfort and asked how tall I was and where I sat at home. I said that I sat on the floor at home. He replied, "I can't let you sit on the floor in here, but I will send that old chair in the corner over to the Industrial Arts department and ask them to saw it off and make you a stool." I said, "That sure would be nice." Dr. Sims ran for that Constitutional Convention and had cards printed up. That was the first year I was old enough to vote, and as I went in, a girl gave me one of his cards. When I returned to the university I told Dr. Sims that the girl had given me one of his cards. When he laughed he cackled and said that he told the girls only to give cards to those people who looked as if they could not remember his name until they got inside to vote. Q.M. Smith and everyone came out and had a big laugh because they had all received cards too. I suppose we all did not look very swift.

FORSYTHE: Richard and Virginia Peck.

MCDANIEL: Mrs. Peck taught me English. They were both very smart, but also very private people to some degree. They were both tough English teachers, but made you well prepared.

FORSYTHE: Margaret and Neil Wright.

MCDANIEL: Neil Wright was a mess and was lots of fun. He gave Bob Abernathy a picture framed in a commode seat one time. In graduation practice he took a picture of me standing in line and sent me a copy. He was very thoughtful. Everyone liked Neil Wright, and Margaret too. She was very pretty and very good.

FORSYTHE: Dr. Parchment.

MCDANIEL: Gerald married the girl that I had an apartment with, Elaine Stepp. He had a farm and was in the Biology department. Years later, I needed to ask him about something and had difficulty getting in touch with him. When he answered the phone I said, "You are so cotton-picking hard to get a hold of." He knew it was me, because I was the only one to use that expression. He was a good teacher and was well liked.

FORSYTHE: Tommie Reynolds.

MCDANIEL: The only class I ever quit was under Miss Tommie. She was a math teacher and went so fast. I'm not a good math student any way. When we went in for tests, she would talk constantly, and I am a person who has to have quiet to concentrate. I got so frustrated that I quit. I had a friend who was a genius, truly brilliant, and he got so mad over a correction on an exam that he just threw the paper down. She was a very difficult teacher to understand. I'm sure she was good if you understand math, but I did not.

FORSYTHE: Eugene Sloan.

MCDANIEL: He grew up on a farm next to my mother. He lives down the street from me now. He is a nice man. His son is my age, and we were in college at the same time. Every time I saw him, he would say that my mother was the prettiest girl that came out of Wilson county. That always made me feel good.

FORSYTHE: John Scott.

MCDANIEL: He taught me English. He was a unique individual. I enjoyed having classes under him. He would sit in the middle of his desk with his legs crossed. He made English class fun. He was dynamic, full of energy, and had a good sense of humor.

FORSYTHE: Clifford Stark.

MCDANIEL: If you want information about him, you need to talk to Jane Warner.

FORSYTHE: Francis Reil.

MCDANIEL: He was a gentleman. Even to this day, when you see him, he is glad to see you and gives you a big hug. His son is my dentist. Don laughs at me and says I chose him as a dentist because he gives me a hug when I come in. I figure if you have to go to the dentist at least it ought to be pleasant.

FORSYTHE: What was the campus like when you were here?

MCDANIEL: Well, there was not as much of it while I was here. The library was where Peck Hall is now, and that was the end of campus. We had two girl's dormitories and one boy's dorm. Where all the high rise dorms are now, was the airport. The maintenance building was also over there. When Don and I married we lived in Vet Village. It was built as barracks during the war, and after that it was converted into apartments that the vets could rent. My husband was a veteran. Our first room had a bed, a couch, a chair, and television. It had a small kitchen and you went through a closet to get to the bathroom. The bath had an old metal shower stall and the sink was a zinc double sink. One side was really deep and the other was not. It was not air-conditioned. It had only one door, a front door. After I had my first child, we were allowed to move into a two bedroom apartment, and we thought we had lots of room then. We had two closets. When we married in 1954, my husband had just got out of the service and we lived in Vet Village for four years.

I had a washing machine to do laundry, but had to hang our clothes outside on the line. We parked in front of our apartment. The airport was across from us, but it did not disturb us.

It was a good time to go to school. You knew who every professor was. There were a lot of veterans going to school on the GI Bill. Most of the kids that lived nearby, went home on the weekend. The ones that stayed had to find things to do. There was not much to do in Murfreesboro at that time... a movie, maybe. You did not take off and go to Nashville like you do now.