

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW
WITH
EVELYN TURNEY

12 SEPTEMBER 1995

MURFREESBORO, TENNESSEE

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

INTERVIEW #QMS.093

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
EVELYN TURNEY**

Q. M. SMITH ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW #QMS.09301

FORSYTHE: This tape is part of the Q.M. Smith Collection designated as QMS.1995.93. This is Regina Forsythe. I am interviewing Mrs. Evelyn Turney. Today is Tuesday, September 12, 1995. The interview is being conducted in the Gore Research Center, Room 111 of the Ned McWerther Learning Resources Center. The tape of this interview along with a transcription of this 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. Turney?

TURNEY: Yes.

FORSYTHE: What is your full name?

TURNEY: Evelyn Jones Turney.

FORSYTHE: What is your birth date and birthplace?

TURNEY: November 21, 1924. Lascassas, Tennessee.

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

TURNEY: William Allen Jones. He worked for Gray Hound Lines. He was not a bus driver. At one time, he was in charge of the regional maintenance office in Nashville. Later he transferred up here as a local manager at the station.

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

TURNEY: Mary Thompson Jones. She was a housekeeper.

FORSYTHE: Do you have any siblings?

TURNEY: No.

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

TURNEY: James Clark Turney. He was a salesman and a school teacher. He taught in the Rutherford County School System. He taught at John Coleman and McFadden Schools, math and science mainly.

FORSYTHE: Do you have any children?

TURNEY: One. William Joseph Turney. We call him Bill.

FORSYTHE: Did anyone else in your family attend MTSU?

TURNEY: Yes, my husband and my son.

FORSYTHE: Did anyone else in your family work at MTSU?

TURNEY: No, I was the only one who worked here.

FORSYTHE: Why did you choose to attend MTSU?

TURNEY: We lived here in Murfreesboro. I just never did think about going anywhere else. The school was here, it was convenient. Back then money was not plentiful. That was why I came here. I just never thought of going anywhere else.

FORSYTHE: What years did you attend MTSU?

TURNEY: I entered in 1942 and graduated in December of 1945. My major was English and my minors were secondary education and business.

FORSYTHE: Did you live on campus?

TURNEY: I lived about half of a mile from here. I walked to school or rode my bicycle sometimes. Back then there were very few cars on the campus; the president, the dean, a few of the faculty had them.

FORSYTHE: What memories do you have of being a student here?

TURNEY: Very pleasant. I liked it mainly because it was so friendly, everybody spoke to everybody. I really did not think this town was friendly when we first came here. It had clicks. In school there were clicks, but out here [MTSU] everybody seemed to be more of a family and were really friendly.

FORSYTHE: Tell me about going to chapel.

TURNEY: I believe we had to go once a week. I remember one program we had in particular, and that was Minnie Pearl. She came up here. I do not remember too much about it, but I do remember going. A lot of students did not like to go to chapel, but I did not hear much complaining back then. Back then, if you were told to do something, you did it. You didn't question it.

FORSYTHE: Did everyone pay attention, or were they doing something else?

TURNEY: I do not remember that.

FORSYTHE: What was registration like?

TURNEY: Oh it was held then in Old Main, upstairs. The teachers were seated at tables and you went in a classroom and made out a schedule. Then you went and got the teachers to sign your registration card. It was three parts, one part was for the office, one part was yours, and the other was for the business office. It had your schedule on it. The teachers just initialed it. Like if you wanted to take English 111, and you wanted Miss Ordway, you went and got her signature. When you went downstairs, the bursar's office was in the basement of Old Main. You went down there to pay. They gave you back one part of your paper.

FORSYTHE: Did you have to wear a little beanie when you were a freshman?

TURNEY: I did not. I did not go through any sort of initiation. Maybe those who lived in the dorm did, but I did not. I do not recall seeing anybody with beanies on.

FORSYTHE: What did students do for fun?

TURNEY: There was not too much to do in this town. They would hitchhike a lot of times up town. They would go to the movie. I think they had quarterly dances, but I never did go to the dances. Of course, when I was in school, it was during the war, and all of the boys left. The first year I was here, all the boys left. The last year I was here, all the boys came back. During that time, we had the CTD, which was the College Training Detachment. It was a group of men in the air force who were learning to be aviators. I do not know how many hundred were here. They provided some entertainment. They would have dances and parties for them. It was entertaining to watch them have retreat on Sunday afternoon. Our Sunday afternoon entertainment was going over to the college to watch retreat at about five or six o'clock in the evening. They would all line up in front where the little library used to be. It was out in front of that. I don't remember too much other entertainment. It was kind of a girls college during that time. Dr. Sims comment, "We have 12 males: 4 preachers, 4 f's and 4 unknowns." He was a funny guy.

FORSYTHE: I want to ask you about the faculty and staff when you were a student. Tell me about Dean Beasley.

TURNEY: I worked for Dean Beasley. I worked in the office as a student. Then I later worked full time. He was a wonderful gentleman. He was nice to the students. His wife told us that he would take those registration cards home with him, study them, and learn all he could about each student. He was very caring.

FORSYTHE: Is that the only job you had on campus while you were a student?

TURNEY: Yes, in the records office. There were not many jobs around. Some students worked in the cafeteria and a few of the offices, but not like now. It was nothing like now. I enjoyed working in there because I got to know so many people. Students would come into the office. It was fun, you got to know everybody.

FORSYTHE: What kinds of things did you do?

TURNEY: Back then, we typed the records. They were manually done. We would take the students' records and type their courses every quarter. That took a lot of time. At the end of each quarter, we would manually post grades. We would all get in a room and take the teachers' reports. You would read out, "John Doe" and read what he was taking. Whoever had that teacher's sheet would call out the grades. We would write them on the permanent record in pencil and later typed them on there. That was the way that the grades got recorded back then. We had little grade books that we gave to the students, and someone would be recording in those grade books while the permanent record recorder was writing on the permanent record. We had two people doing that. It took two or three working days. That was what we did. One time our student enrollment got down to two hundred, so there were not many students. It did not take long. People liked to help. We would gather up students who were trustworthy and they liked to help because they got to find out what everybody made.

FORSYTHE: What was it like with the enrollment that low?

TURNEY: We got to know everybody. I never did think of it as being low, because I was not used to a large place. You got to know everybody and I liked that. Now you could not possibly get to know everyone.

FORSYTHE: Eva Mae Burkett?

TURNEY: She was an English teacher. I had her once or twice. She was hard and demanding, but a very brilliant lady.

FORSYTHE: Catherine Clark?

TURNEY: She was the librarian, in fact she was my senior high school English teacher. I liked Miss Clark very much. She was very thorough and a very nice lady. She was really smart.

FORSYTHE: Ollie Green?

TURNEY: I did not have her, but she was a character. The students dreaded her. I've always heard that she liked the chemistry majors, but if you were not a male chemistry major, you were nobody. I'll tell you about a funny tale I heard about her one time. Joe Homer Nedlin, his daddy was the Church of Christ preacher where I

went for a while, Joe Homer became a preacher, but was mainly in the insurance business. When he was in school, he was going down the sidewalk one day and he said, "Good morning, Miss Green." She did not say anything and he said it again. When she did not reply he said, "Miss Green, I spoke to you and I mean for you to speak to me." I bet that is a true story. She was that way.

FORSYTHE: Miss Mary Hall?

TURNEY: I did not have Miss Mary either, but I knew Miss Mary very well. She was an interesting character. I liked to hear her talk and tell her stories. She liked to tell about things that had happened. I liked Miss Mary. She lived down the street from where my mother lived for quite a while.

FORSYTHE: Horace Jones?

Turney I did not have him, but the thing I remember most about him was that he would come in our office every morning to say, "Hello." I liked that. It was nice. His dad was the first president.

FORSYTHE: Clayton James?

TURNEY: I had Mr. James. I liked Mr. James. He taught sociology. He was really smooth, easy going, and interesting.

FORSYTHE: William Judd?

TURNEY: I worked for Mr. Judd. He was the registrar at one time. I liked Mr. Judd, but I did not have him as a teacher. Nearly all these people have been nice.

FORSYTHE: Wink Midgett?

TURNEY: I used to have him for shorthand. He would scare me to death. We had these little cards. We called them class cards, and I guess they recorded your grade for the day on there. He would shuffle those up. He would pull up your name, and you did not know when your name would pull up. We took turns looking at the shorthand text book and reading/transcribing out loud. You were so scared. If you missed, you did not get your five, the highest grade for the day. If you picked up and went right on reading, he would give you a five, but you could not hesitate or anything. You learn that way. I later got to like Mr. Midgett, but I was scared of him.

FORSYTHE: Henrietta Myers?

TURNEY: I did not have her, but I liked her as a friend. She was a very nice lady. She seemed to care for the students.

FORSYTHE: Tommie Reynolds?

TURNEY: When I was here, she was teaching women's physical education. I think I was kind of in awe of her. I do not remember too much about her, but she kind of kept us in line. I would say she was strict.

FORSYTHE: Roy Simpson?

TURNEY: I had him at the Campus School. I went to high school at the Campus School. They used to have 9th and 10th grade. I loved Mr. Simpson. I went there in the 1938-39 and 1939-40 school years. I think they had had the 9th and 10th grade one year prior to that. I do not know how many years after that, that they had it. He was the principal. Mr. Frank Bass was the director. Mr. Simpson was the principal, but he also taught math. He was so nice. When we moved back here from Nashville, my mother and dad wanted me to go to the Training School because we just lived a block and one half from it. They had rather me go there, than off to Central High School which was across town. He let me in and I know the class was full. That was so nice.

FORSYTHE: Who were some other teachers that you had at the Campus School?

TURNEY: Mary Francis Snell, Miss Madge Manson, Mr. Simpson, I do not know who taught home economics, I think we had several teachers.

FORSYTHE: Mary Francis Snell?

TURNEY: I liked Miss Mary Francis, she was nice. Back then, I do not think she was teaching for too long and she did not have too much discipline, when I had her. I remember the boys being larger than she was. They would really act up and she had a time with them. Later on, she really became a strict English teacher. That is what I had her for later. She taught my son English. Everyone dreaded Miss Snell. She made you learn this and that, all those rules. She became a really strict, but a good teacher.

FORSYTHE: Madge Manson?

TURNEY: She taught me freshman English and Latin. She was more interested in the art than the Latin. I do not remember much about her English class. I did not learn too much Latin. We had class in a cloak room, there were only about six or eight of us who took Latin. Everybody shied away from that, you know. She was very nice to me. I was sick one time and missed two weeks, and she came by my home and helped me catch up. Like I said, all these people were nice. Nearly everyone of them.

FORSYTHE: Do you remember having student teachers?

TURNEY: Yes, the class would be turned over to them. I had not been used to that. You see when we moved here, I was in the 9th grade. I had not been used to student teachers, and all the other kids at the Campus School had been used to them. I did not exactly like it. I had rather have the real teacher. They would be in the room or sometimes leave. I practice taught over there, myself, under Miss Mary Francis Snell. I had her for a teacher, a supervisor teacher, and then my son had her for a teacher.

FORSYTHE: When you student teach, what did you do?

TURNEY: I was a nervous wreck. I was so scared that those little kids were going to ask me something that I did not know. There were five or six of us. Back then, you just went over there a couple of hours, you did not go over there all day, like they do now. They split this class and it just had little girls in it. One of us got six students and I got five. One of my students died while I was student teaching. That was sad. She had a brain tumor. The whole school was really torn up about that. That is one of the things that I remember most about my student teaching. It was 10th grade English.

FORSYTHE: Dr. Sims?

TURNEY: I had him. I think I already told you something about him. If you were not in his room when the bell rang, he would lock the door. He was a brilliant person. He taught history, and he really knew his material. If you were whistling, he'd say, "A whistling girl and a crowing hen always come to some bad end." I liked him. A lot of students shied away from him and wanted one of the other teachers that they did not think was so demanding. He told a lot of tales about Webb School in Bell Buckle, Tennessee.

FORSYTHE: W.K. McCharen?

TURNEY: The librarian. A very nice easy-going fellow.

FORSYTHE: Eugene Sloan?

TURNEY: I didn't have Mr. Sloan, but I liked Mr. Sloan. He was one of my favorites. He worked across the hall as director of public relations. He was always a gentleman.

FORSYTHE: Mr. Woodmore?

TURNEY: He was the bursar. He was always nice.

FORSYTHE: Bonnie McHenry?

TURNEY: She was the epitome of a lady. The president's secretary. We all liked Miss Bonnie.

FORSYTHE: Marjorie McFolin?

TURNEY: She was one of my best friends. She is deceased now. We worked together in the admissions and records office. We ran around together, and dated together. We had a lot of good times together. She was fun to be with.

FORSYTHE: This is a continuation with the interview of Mrs. Evelyn Turney by Regina Forsythe on Tuesday September 12 1995. What years did you work at MTSU?

TURNEY: I worked 1946-47 school year, got married in 1947 and stayed out a year. I came back and stayed fifteen months. I had a baby and was out six months. I came back in March of 1950 and stayed continually until June of 1990. It was all in the same office. I enjoyed it. Something interesting was always happening.

FORSYTHE: Carolyn Holloway?

TURNEY: She is one of my good friends. In fact, I just saw Carolyn last night. We worked together for I do not know how many years and then she transferred to the IBM office. We always got along well. I think that it is important to get along with the people that you work with. I've read that it is one thing that bosses dread, employees not getting along. Carolyn's sister, Charlotte Heinz, worked in there too. I like Charlotte. We all got along fine. We would run around together some. Carolyn was a widow and had three children, so she did not have a lot of time. She was nice. She would let me ride to school. I will never forget that as long as I live. It was not but a half mile walk, but I would go over to her house a block away and ride with her. It helped. She was always nice and obliging.

FORSYTHE: Margaret Bain?

TURNEY: I did not work with her very long. She was in one room, where as, Carolyn, Charlotte, and I were together in another room. I did not have as much direct contact with her.

FORSYTHE: Jane Warner?

TURNEY: She worked in the same room as Margaret. I like Jane and I see her occasionally.

FORSYTHE: Tell me about how things changed with computer systems.

TURNEY: We first went to the IBM system that Carolyn worked with. I do not know what year that was. I have forgotten all those years. For years and years the computers printed labels and we would get extra help ladies to aid us. They would take a

stack of records and match the label to the record. Computers changed everything. When I first started working here, admissions and records was one big department. It later separated into two departments. One thing I did for a long time, maybe twenty years or more, we called ourselves senior checkers, and we checked the records of the seniors to make sure that they had all the requirements that they needed for graduation. We corresponded with them. When they appointed deans to the various schools, we worked with them on what the requirements were, and whether it could be waved for certain students. We had to really be on the ball checking to make sure that they had everything. It was a very responsible job.

FORSYTHE: Let me ask you about the presidents. What do you remember about Q.M. Smith?

TURNEY: I remember that he looked like a president and he acted like a president. He was a man who was highly respected. I liked him, he was nice. I remember Mrs. Smith. I did not have too much to do with her. I also remember the children.

FORSYTHE: What do you remember about Dr. Cope?

TURNEY: I think that Dr. Cope knew more about what was going on, on campus than any other president. I've heard that he would go over to the maintenance department and say, "Come on Floyd," that was Floyd Travis. He would drive him all around. They really kept up on things. His wife was very nice. What I remember most about her is that she knows everybody's name. When she sees me, to this day, she says, "Hello Evelyn, How are you?" She still remember my name. She was the president's wife, and I was a lowly secretary. You would never know it. I remember she would get out there in the median, where you go out on East Main, and plant some flowers. She was a very plain, down to earth person. He was too.

FORSYTHE: Dr. Scarlett?

TURNEY: I do not remember too much about Dr. Scarlett. I don't know of anything to say really about him.

FORSYTHE: Dr. Ingram?

TURNEY: I remember Dr. Ingram more before he became MTSU president than I do afterwards. He was the Dean of the School of Education. In the position of a senior checker, I worked really close with him. He was always really nice to me. When he got to be president, I was not working directly with him.

FORSYTHE: Dr. Prescott?

TURNEY: He was only here for about a year. Everybody liked Dr. Prescott, I remember that. He was well liked.

FORSYTHE: Dr. Walker?

TURNEY: I retired before he came. I retired in June of 1990.

FORSYTHE: What have you been doing since you retired?

TURNEY: Ten months after I retired, my husband died. That was very sad because we did not get to do a lot of the things that people do when they retire. My mother had almost become an invalid. Two months before Jim died, she fell. She already had arthritis and that made the arthritis worse. I have spent my time with her. I cannot leave her at night. I still go places in the day time. I still have my home out on the Lascassas Pike, but I stay with mother so much of the time. It is getting more and more that way. She will be 94 in a month, which is a long time to live. It was a wonderful life.

FORSYTHE: What stands out in your memories as an MTSU staff member?

TURNEY: I have good memories. I would not have stayed as long as I did, if I did not like it. I had in my time before I retired. I liked to work here because everyone was nice. For a long time, you knew so many people. We used to know all of the faculty. We could look at the registration cards, see the initials, and know who they were. They would come by the office and talk to us. I liked the school environment. I did not want to be a teacher. I have a teaching certificate, but I never did use it. I did not want to teach, but I loved the school environment. I did not like big business. I worked up town for six months after I graduated. I did not like it and I came back out here, and I was so happy.

FORSYTHE: Where was the records office located?

TURNEY: It was in Old Main, to the right as you came in the front door. We moved to the Cope Building in 1965. It is in the same place it is now. When I first started there were three of us working in there--Carolyn, Charlotte, and myself. There was also Dean Beasley's secretary. I really cannot tell you how many people were employed in the office when I retired.

FORSYTHE: Do you remember any controversies happening while you were here?

TURNEY: No. I remember we had a streaker or two, but I do not remember anything about the Vietnam or Korean conflicts. There may have been problems, but I do not remember it.

FORSYTHE: Tell me about the campus growing since you were a student.

TURNEY: It has grown tremendously. I know that it is progress, but I hate to see all of the green grass go. I hate to see all the parking lots. I wish they could have done

something else rather than to plow up all of that pretty grass. That just goes with growth, so I guess it is to be expected.

FORSYTHE: Can you think of anything else that you would like to talk about?

TURNEY: Well, I had some very nice bosses: Dean Beasley; Mr. Judd; Dr. Weems, John E. Weems was just a nice guy to work for; Frank Glass; Mr. Heiss; Cliff Gillespie. Mr. Glass still thought he was in the army when he first came here. I think he got over it. He ended up being a fine fellow and he sent me the first orchid I ever had. I do not know if they still do it or not, but at the Alumni Banquet, they would honor people with 25 years of experience and would give us a medallion. I was working for him when I had completed 25 years. He wanted to send me an orchid, but he did not know whether Jim, my husband, would like it a lot. He called up Jim and asked him if it would be okay. if he sent me an orchid. Of course, Jim did not care. He did. I got so I liked him very much. At first he was kind of hard on the staff. You know how regimented the army is. I did not work for Mr. Heiss very long, but I liked him. Some of the young ladies did not like him much, but I did. He was a part-time Nazarene preacher as I remember. We always laughed. Cliff was almost the age of my son. Cliff first started working as a student in records and admissions. I was over him and sort of told him what to do. He laughed and said that I always put him to work in the basement--cleaning the storeroom or the files. Then he later became Dean. It worked just fine, me working for him. The age difference did not seem to matter at all.

FORSYTHE: How did you all store the files and for how long?

TURNEY: When I first came here, they had been here forever and ever. We just kept getting more and more. I believe it came to the fact that we would keep folders for five years, if someone had not returned by then we would destroy them. I do not know what they do now. We had every record from 1911 on, when I first came here. When I left they still had them. There is a vault in the records office that has files.

FORSYTHE: Thank you.