

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW
WITH
ELLA JOLLY

22 SEPTEMBER 1995
MURFREESBORO, TENNESSEE

INTERVIEWED BY REGINA FORSYTHE
FOR THE Q. M. SMITH ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
INTERVIEW #QMS.102

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Albert Gore". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

ALBERT GORE RESEARCH CENTER

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ABSTRACT

**ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW WITH
ELLA JOLLY**

Q. M. SMITH ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW #QMS.102

FORSYTHE: This tape is part of the Q.M. Smith Collection designated a QMS.1995.102. This is Regina Forsythe, I am interviewing Mrs. Ella Jolly. Today is Friday September 22, 1995 The interview is being conducted in the home of Mrs. Jolly located at 1606 North Highland, Murfreesboro, Tennessee. 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. Jolly?

JOLLY: Yes. It is.

FORSYTHE: Let me ask you one more thing about going to school. Do you remember going to chapel?

JOLLY: Yes. I believe we had them once a week. It was mandatory. We had assigned seats. It is hard to believe that all the students could fit in that one place then. There were monitors who check the empty seats, and if you were not there you were reported. I suppose you were given some kind of demerits. I never missed, so I do not know.

FORSYTHE: What kind of programs were going on during assemblies?

JOLLY: It was called assembly, not chapel, and lasted thirty minutes. We had a prayer, the pledge of allegiance, and usually the president, Q.M. Smith would speak to the student body.

FORSYTHE: What kind of things did he speak about?

JOLLY: I can't remember. I guess he would talk about the college and the upcoming weeks, like football games. . . school spirit, things like that. I'm sure there were other thing that went on, but I cannot remember what they were.

FORSYTHE: With his speech impediment, was the student body able to understand Q.M. Smith?

JOLLY: After a while you sort of caught on to what he was saying. It was hard at first. A lot of students did not realize that he had that speech problem. They would chat, giggle, and carry-on until someone would nudge them and make them realize that he could not help being that way. I think he had been gassed in World War I.

FORSYTHE: What was the students' attitude about having to go to assemblies?

JOLLY: We did not question it. Students back then knew the rules, and we just followed them. Students did not protest or squawk about things. You just followed the rules. Rules were issued and given to you, and that was it.

FORSYTHE: I know you physically had to be there, but did you pay attention?

JOLLY: Probably not.

FORSYTHE: Did students read magazines or do homework?

JOLLY: No. It was a relatively short gathering. You just knew you had to go and be there. It seems like it was at ten or eleven o'clock. You had time to go to one or two classes, and then you would go to assembly.

FORSYTHE: What do you remember about Dr. Cope?

JOLLY: I don't remember a lot about him. Q. M. Smith left in 1958, so I knew who Dr. Cope was, but I do not know anything about him.

FORSYTHE: Dr. Scarlett and Dr. Ingram?

JOLLY: I do not remember Dr. Scarlett. I remember Dr. Ingram quite well. He was a professor on the faculty before he became president. He had several different positions. I never had a class under him. My husband had him as an instructor in some of his master's course and he liked him. My husband has often said that if it had not been for Dr. Ingram, he probably would not have gotten through with his master's degree. Dr. Ingram gave him a lot of encouragement, but I do not know him well enough to judge him.

FORSYTHE: Do you remember Dr. Prescott or Dr. Walker?

JOLLY: No. I've only met Dr. Walker. I was still teaching at the Campus School when he first came to MTSU. He came over and made to rounds of the Campus School class rooms to come in briefly and meet us.

FORSYTHE: I want to ask you about people at the Campus School. Darlene Ross Ausmus?

JOLLY: She later married and became a McDermitt. I knew her, but I was not really close to her. I knew her from faculty meetings and serving on committees. I think she taught sixth grade. She was a very likable person. The students liked her a lot. She retired before I did. She remarried and moved to Lewisburg, Tennessee.

FORSYTHE: Verna Crockett?

JOLLY: She was our librarian. I can remember her because she was really a stern disciplinarian. She did not allow a lot of free movement or that type of thing going on in the library. She was well respected. She was not there very long. She left and married and moved up in the New England States.

FORSYTHE: Sylvia Crowder?

JOLLY: I had first started teaching with Sylvia at Mitchell-Nelson School. Then I do not remember when she became a member of the faculty at the Campus School. She was there before I came. She taught fourth grade. Unfortunately, she passed away while I was there. She was the type person that was in her own world. She was creative, but none of us ever figured Sylvia out. She just was a really rare person.

FORSYTHE: When did you teach at Mitchell-Nelson?

JOLLY: Fall 1959 through 1961. I stopped when our daughter was born in 1961. After taking a year off, I went to Bellwood and stayed three years. It was a brand new city school then, and they were moving teachers around. Several of the faculty from Mitchell-Nelson were switched to Bellwood. When I went back to see Mr. Hobgood, who was the city superintendent, and asked him if he had a job opening he said, "Yes, and I would like for you to go to Bellwood." After that I stopped teaching for a year, we were trying to have another child. Nothing happened. In the meantime, the government was beginning to give a lot of money out to schools to bring them up and improve reading and all of that. They needed someone to coordinate it, at that time it was called "Title 1." It has been renamed to something else now. It was all government moneys and Mr. Hobgood came to me, January 1966, and asked if I would consider doing that. I said I would feel very lacking, but he said Mrs. Ruth Bowdoin would help me. I moved up to the central office up town. I was the head of it. The job description was to take care of the budget, order materials, a lot of reading machines were coming out. We still had an all black school at the time, Bradley School. The schools had not integrated. You would think by that time they would have, but they had not. There were a lot of low scores at Bradley and Crichlow. I would order these materials and I would take them into the class rooms and teach lessons of how to use these for the teachers. I did that until September of 1966. In the meantime, I had become pregnant with our son and I stopped working. My main teaching experience was at Mitchell-Nelson and Bellwood.

FORSYTHE: What can you tell me about integration?

JOLLY: I have thought a whole lot about that and I cannot even remember when they broke up the Bradley school and started bringing the children to other schools. I never did have a problem with it personally. I guess some teachers did, I suppose it is hard to break old habits. I never did have a problem with it. There were

never very many black students in your class room. The most I ever had at one time was five. I do not remember a whole lot about it. I just remember it happening.

FORSYTHE: Baxter Hobgood?

JOLLY: He is such a dear man. He is a well loved person in this town. He was someone you could always go in and talk to. His whole life was education. He just gave so much to education, especially in the city. Before he was superintended, I think he had been a coach at Central, it was the high school then. I do not have words to describe how I feel about him. He was a surrogate father to everyone. He loved people. Even if you see him out now, he remembers you. He loves to be around people and loves to talk. He is really a nice person. He has been through a lot of poor health in recent years. He really is a dear person to both my husband and myself.

FORSYTHE: Ruth Bowdoin?

JOLLY: I cannot say enough about her. She has just done so much. She is another one that just gave their lives to education. Her husband did, too. She was always looking for some way to help little children to get a better start in school. I think she realized it long before a lot of teachers realize, that these children are coming to school with out the background they need. She was able to start, beg, or borrow, to get that old used school bus and start the class room on wheels. It is recognized nation wide. She has been to Washington D.C. and has been presented awards for beginning that. I you can ever interview her, you should. She is so deserving of everything that she has ever gotten.

FORSYTHE: Jean Moser?

JOLLY: I had known her at the Campus School when I went there. She taught fifth grade. I knew her better through my husband. She was a lot young than us, but my husband knew her husband. She was a really good and thorough teacher. She taught my son in the fifth grade. She was well organized and knew her material. She really knew what was going on.

FORSYTHE: Rita King?

JOLLY: Rita came there after I had been there a while. She took Sylvia Crowder's position, after Sylvia died. Rita came up from Smyrna and took that fourth grade teaching job. She taught fourth grade until she became principal at the Campus School. She has just moved on from that job this year [1995]. She is down at Laverne Primary School as a principal now.

FORSYTHE: Joyce Elay?

JOLLY: I got in at the Campus School by taking Joyce's job. When Joyce took a maternity leave the last six weeks of the school year in 1973, I had been substituting. I finished the year out for her. That was second grade. The next year, she decided to stay out with her baby and did not come back for a couple of years. I just stayed on to teach. I was there 18 years. She did finally come back to teach. Jane Poole left, she is at MTSU now. Joyce came back and took over her class.

FORSYTHE: Jane Poole?

JOLLY: She is very sweet. I just love Jane. I can be out here in the yard working, and she will come by on her way to some school, and pull in the driveway and chat. She is a really sweet person. She and her husband, Finis, are both likable people. Jane was a wonderful elementary class room teacher. I was a shame that she gave that up to teach at the university. She is just as good at teaching university students as she is teaching little ones. The little children just loved her. She taught second grade.

FORSYTHE: Joan Mann?

JOLLY: She has had a dual job at the Campus School. She started out as a class room teacher and then became the librarian. She has a degree in library science. She is the librarian and also takes care of the computer lab over there. She knows a lot about computers, and teaches some beginning classes. She may teach computer class at the university, in continuing education.

FORSYTHE: Anne Hayes?

JOLLY: I never knew a lot about her. She was kind of a loner. Sweet person, though. she was a little bitty short lady. She taught fifth or sixth grade. She retired. I see her occasionally and she works with the Elderhostel program now. She just loves it. She has always been very active and very independent. She thinks nothing of getting in a car and driving where ever she wants to go--out of state.

FORSYTHE: Elizabeth O'Gwynn Bennett?

JOLLY: We called her Liz Bennett. When I first went to the Campus School as director of the reading lab, she had just done my job the previous year. She also was working on her master's degree while doing it, just like I did. She got a full time position in the Campus School second grade. She was very helpful to me. She is a really creative teacher. She takes the whole language approach to teaching, and was doing that long before it ever became the fad to use that teaching method. In the whole language approach, you take a subject like insects. In that you bring in math, science, reading, writing, all of that centered around one topic.

FORSYTHE: Nannie Rucker?

JOLLY: She is quite a character. You would never know what her age is because she would never tell you. She has taught first grade. She is a black woman, very capable, smart, and intelligent. She was very active in politics. I'm not sure if she is still a member of the school board or not. At one time, she was a member of the county school board. She is very active in community affairs.

FORSYTHE: Wilma Salzman?

JOLLY: I barely knew her. She was there for one year. Her husband came over from the University to teach music at the Campus School, several days a week. She was on the opposite side of the building. I knew her in passing, but not very well. I think they moved to Texas that year.

FORSYTHE: Frances Lorraine Singer?

JOLLY: She came after I started teaching. I believe she took over Wilma's class room. I did not have a lot of contact with Lorraine because she was at one end of the building, and I was on the other. I had classes with her husband David at MTSU when I was getting my masters degree. She is a nice friendly person.

FORSYTHE: Carolyn Strang?

JOLLY: She is just a love. She was my cohort teaching third grade. I had the basement room and she had the room right above me. She is still teaching over there. I think she plans to retire at the end of this school year [1995]. I just love Carolyn. We got along so well together. A lot of teachers who teach the same grade do not get along. We suggested things like taking our classes on field trips together. If one wanted to do something and the other one did not, that was fine. We never had a disagreement. I still see her from time to time.

FORSYTHE: Are you saying that teachers who teach the same grade have problems? Why?

JOLLY: The just disagree on how to go about teaching the curriculum, and how to handle things. That is just a fact of life.

FORSYTHE: Peggy Monfee Whicker?

JOLLY: I consider Peggy my best friend. I never knew her until I was working on my master's degree and she was working on hers. She had already started teaching at the Campus School. At that time it went from kindergarten to the eighth grade. It is just kindergarten through sixth grade now. She had been teaching at Reeves Rogers then she moved to Campus School as an eight grade teacher. She has this real husky voice that you can hear all over the building. She was really a disciplinarian. She retired the year before I did. Of all the teachers at Campus School, my son says he loves Peggy Whicker next to me, out of all the women in the world. The kids just love her. You see her out in town, and a child who had

her for a teacher will run up to her and hug her. She was tough and expected a lot, but she is a quality person.

FORSYTHE: Elizabeth Whorley?

JOLLY: She was a first grade teacher when I went there. We would tease her about her class all of the time. You could barely get through it. She had it full of big paper mâché dinosaurs and all kinds of stuff, big easy chairs. It did not even look like a class room. It looked like part museum and part comfortable house. She was a really good first grade teacher. She later became principal after Martha Hampton left. When she left her class to become principal, the custodians had to help the new teacher move in and get settled. The first thing she did was to move all of the big dinosaurs. She liked to have space, and Liz Whorley liked all of this cluttered stuff. They were hunting places all over the building to place those big dinosaurs. They stayed upstairs in the balcony of the gym for a long time. Every year her students studied dinosaurs and each class constructed a different dinosaur. They were huge, made of chicken wire.

[End of Side A]

FORSYTHE: This is a continuation of the with Mrs. Ella Jolly by Regina Forsythe on Friday September 22, 1995. Tell me about Helen Babb?

JOLLY: I think she was the one that took over Liz's class room. She is teaching kindergarten now. She is a real laid back person. When I used to take my university reading class to go observe at every level, I would tell the classroom teacher what area I wanted them to be working on that day. We always loved to go observe in her class room. She was just a real laid back teacher. You never heard her raise her voice. A whirlwind could be going on behind her, and it just did not seem to upset her. She just carried right on. She is really sweet. I had also taught with her at Bellwood School. She taught fourth grade, while I taught third grade. She left here with her husband to go to Florida where he received his doctorate.

FORSYTHE: Virginia Travis?

JOLLY: She taught across the hall from me, kindergarten. We got along really well together. We kind of looked after each others' classes, if one of us had an emergency and had to go some, where the kindergarten teachers over there at Campus School have all kinds of aids and help. The are always MTSU students, working on projects. She seemed just right to be teaching kindergarten, because she is a little tiny woman. I still talk to Ginny quite often.

FORSYTHE: Jane Baker?

JOLLY: She is a special education teacher there. She was not a classroom teacher. She took care of children with special needs, a lot of testing--from the gifted students to the ones who needed special attention. She coordinated different programs.

FORSYTHE: Connie Jones Hardy?

JOLLY: She has moved on to MTSU now, she got her doctorate degree. She was a fifth grade teacher. Connie was a lot of fun to be around. She was always in a good mood, you could hear laughing all over the building. She was a really sweet person.

FORSYTHE: What memories do you have of teaching at the Training School?

JOLLY: I remember it as a busy place. There was always something going on. You had to have a lot of stamina to teach there. Even when people call me now and tell me they are going to apply for a position there and ask my opinion, I am very honest. There are a lot of good things about teaching over there, but you really have to work hard, and you need to be in the best of health. It is a hectic pace. You are involved not only with teaching your own class room, but also with university students coming through. The MTSU students observe you teach, you also teach them, you get them as student teachers. It is a really different place to teach. I never thought I would be teaching at a place like that. The first time that I ever had to teach a demonstration lesson was for Dr. Grever. I taught my class room, but there were university students lined up around the wall writing down everything I say and do. They prepare to discuss your lesson with their professor when they get back to the class room. I was scared to death. Talking with others, I know they all felt the same way. Even though you may be experience and have taught for years, it is like living in a fish bowl. When students observe it is just scary. You eventually get used to it. It takes a terrific amount of planning. You have to be able to juggle a lot of thing going on.

FORSYTHE: How has education change through the years?

JOLLY: When I first started teaching, whatever the teacher said was the law. You did not dispute anything the teacher said. That is the way it was when I went to school and when I first became a teacher. You taught from whatever book you were given to teach. As the years went by, all of that changed. You were allowed to branch out and use a variety of different materials besides the text book. I think students are a lot more outspoken now-- even the lower elementary grades. That may be good to some extent.

FORSYTHE: Thank you, very much