

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW
WITH
JIMMY EARLE

22 SEPTEMBER 1995
MURFREESBORO, TENNESSEE

INTERVIEWED BY REGINA FORSYTHE
FOR THE Q. M. SMITH ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
INTERVIEW #QMS.104

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
JIMMY EARLE**

Q. M. SMITH ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW #QMS.104

This tape is part of the Q. M. Smith collection, designated as QMS.1995.104. This is Regina Forsythe, I am interviewing Jimmy Earle. Today is Friday September 22, 1995. The interview is being conducted in the Gore Research Center located in Room 111 of the Ned McWherter Learning Resource Center. This along with a transcription of the interview will become a 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 Mr. Earle?

EARLE: Yes

FORSYTHE: What is your full name?

EARLE: James Patterson Earle

FORSYTHE: What is your birth date?

EARLE: July 25, 1936

FORSYTHE: What do you remember about being a student here?

EARLE: I remember Dr. Smith was the president during the time, I didn't know him very well but I heard a lot of nice things, he was a good administrator, at that time it was a small school, it MTSC, and it was close to my home, McMinnville. It is somewhat like it is today, it was a suitcase college, on weekends, everybody went home. It was a nice little community.

Forsythe: What years were you here?

EARLE: I started in 1953 and I went to Martin Junior college, and then I came back and finished in 1958. I came back for my masters from 1959 to 1961.

FORSYTHE: What did you do for fun as a student?

EARLE: Freshman year, I was on the freshman basketball team, and had fun night on Tuesday night and Nashville was accessible we thought that was good.

FORSYTHE: Do you remember going to assembly?

EARLE: Yes, we had assembly once a week, and we were assigned seats, and we had to be there. I think if you were absent three times there was some kind of penalty, but I don't recall.

FORSYTHE: I want to ask you about some of the staff that was here.

EARLE: At that time Coach Murphy was the athletic director and football coach. I didn't know him at the time very well, but all the students respected him. . . . The best class that I took in college was the "History of the Soviet Union" under Roscoe Strickland, he was one of the best teachers I have ever had in my entire life.

FORSYTHE: Dr. Parchment

EARLE: The students loved him, he had great rapport with the students, he made you feel at ease, and he presented him material very well.

FORSYTHE: Elbert Patty

EARLE: He was very honest, that is one thing that I appreciate about him, he was very honest. If he told you something that was the way it was.

FORSYTHE: Joe Nunley

EARLE: He was my high school coach, and one of my favorite people. He took me out of gym class and put a basketball in my hand, I guess he had more influence on me than almost any other person in my life, I had great respect for Mr. Nunley. He was an excellent high school basketball coach. Joe Nunley is the biggest reason I coached. His people skills were great. I miss him.

FORSYTHE: Bill Beasley

EARLE: When I think of Bill Beasley I think of myself. I had gone to the English department because I had flunked 101 twice, I just couldn't get past the term paper. The third time I had Bill Beasley in class. I had everything finished except English 101, I went to get my final grade, and he said "are you a graduating senior?" I said "yes" he said "I don't want your blood on my hands, you got a D."

FORSYTHE: Ed Dittle

EARLE: I thought he was a good basketball coach, a lot of people didn't like him but he was always nice to me, and I like him. He will be remembered by the people who really understand things as a good basketball coach.

FORSYTHE: Joe Black Hayes

EARLE: Coach Hayes is one of the most underrated people this university has ever produced, he was an excellent football coach, at the time he coached there was not a better line coach anywhere, his players played hard for him, he should have been in the Blue Raider Hall of Fame a long time ago.

FORSYTHE: Dr. Cope

EARLE: I thought the world of Dr. Cope he was an honest, strong administrator, he was a man that you were afraid of, but you respected him. He loved this school, the main reason this university is in the shape that it is now is because of Dr. Cope, for example he saved \$4 million to build Murphy center, he was a great administrator. Dr. Cope loved baseball and one year I wanted to sod the infield, so I went to the agricultural department and got Dr. Earl New, and I took him over to Dr. Cope's office, well he knew as much as Dr. New knew, I will get in there and I told him that I had brought Dr. Knew with me, and I would like to sod the infield, Dr. Knew went on. Then Dr. Cope told him, that is no good, that experimental field you have in the corner is not working. He told me that he didn't have the money to sod the infield. That was on a Friday. ON the next Monday, this was about 1967, he sends a check over to the athletic department telling me to buy a new score board. I loved Dr. Cope, he was one of my favorite people. He and his wife walked this campus every Sunday, then he would get into his office on Monday and if there were things that needed to be taken care of he would fix it. That just tells you. But he was a great man. You could relax because you knew the University was in good hands. We won the OVC in baseball in 1968, and Dr. Cope was at every game. We presented him with a signed baseball, and that was as close as I have ever seen him to breaking down. But I thought the world of him.

FORSYTHE: Can you tell me about your job interview?

EARLE: I think it wasn't very long, I asked some general things, he knew me and I think they were going to give me the job before I walked in. I was scared to death of him, but he was as kind a man and as fair that you will ever meet.

FORSYTHE: Dr. Scarlett

EARLE: We didn't get a long every well, but he loved this university and I have a great deal of respect for him, I think every decision that he made was in the best interest of the school.

FORSYTHE: What memories do you have as being a coach here?

EARLE: I enjoyed my memories, I had a great athletic director, and I had an opportunity to coach some great basketball players, and some fine young men. I think when you recruit you have to recruit character and fiber. I think one of the greatest successes we have is that most of my kids graduated and we didn't have any major problems. I was here for ten years and there wasn't a single kid arrested.

FORSYTHE: How did you do your recruitment?

EARLE: We didn't have any special way, we were just selective, but we certainly look thought their academic records. We recruit other nearby states. We certainly looked at their academic records, but to be honest, a lot of the kids that we had then would not be here now under these stringent NCAA requirements, and most of those kids got their degrees. I am really opposed to what they are doing now, I don't like standardized test, they don't measure the intangible things like if a kid will go to class, or if he will go extra credit. Some people just can't take standardized tests.

FORSYTHE: How did your teams do?

EARLE: We did pretty well, we won two OVC championships and two tournament championships, and the school, had never had a winning record in the OVC, and we had some good players.

FORSYTHE: You are in the Tennessee Sports Hall of Fame, can you tell me about that?

EARLE: That is what happens when you have good players and good coaches, I had an opportunity to coach some good players. I was very fortunate.

FORSYTHE: You said you wrote three books, what are they?

EARLE: The first book was the flip-flop offense in basketball, the second book was the red dog defenses in basketball, and the third book was the complete 1-3-1 book in basketball. We lived on campus for about for years when we were here, it is hard for me to sleep so I would just stay up and right, and the bulk of those books were written at one or two o'clock in the morning, but I enjoyed that.

FORSYTHE: Where on campus did you live?

EARLE: First in Sims and then in what was known as "I dorm" it is one of those newer dorms back on the other side of campus.

FORSYTHE: Did you live on campus as a student?

EARLE: Yes, in Jones Hall and Smith Hall.

FORSYTHE: How did coaching change while you were here?

EARLE: It didn't change that much, when we moved into Murphy center it got bigger then, because the crowds got bigger and the program started to win, but that also brings more pressure.

FORSYTHE: Tell me about Coach Trickett

EARLE: He had played here and had been a great player back in the fifties, then he became the coach here, and he hired me, I enjoyed him a lot. He did a lot to promote basketball here in Murfreesboro.

FORSYTHE: Thank you for coming.