

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW
WITH
SAMUEL PARNELL

27 SEPTEMBER 1995
MURFREESBORO, TENNESSEE

INTERVIEWED BY REGINA FORSYTHE
FOR THE Q. M. SMITH ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
INTERVIEW #QMS.107

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
SAMUEL PARNELL**

Q. M. SMITH ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW #QMS.107

FORSYTHE: This tape is part of the Q.M. Smith collection designated as QMS.1995.107. This is Regina Forsythe. I am interviewing Mr. Samuel Parnell, today is Wednesday, September 27th, 1995. The interview is being conducted in the home of Mr. Parnell located at 713 Cramer Road in Murfreesboro, TN. The tape of this interview along with a transcription of the interview will become part of the Quintin Miller Smith collection and will become available to the public. Future researchers will include portions of this interview in their publications, is that all right with you Mr. Parnell?

PARNELL: That is fine.

FORSYTHE: What is your full name?

PARNELL: Samuel L. Parnell.

FORSYTHE: Your birth date?

PARNELL: January 30, 1920.

FORSYTHE: Your birthplace?

PARNELL: Lyndon, Tennessee.

FORSYTHE: Lyndon, Tennessee?

PARNELL: Perry County.

FORSYTHE: Your father's name?

PARNELL: Edward Alvin Parnell.

FORSYTHE: His occupation?

PARNELL: Farmer and a teacher, he taught school.

FORSYTHE: Where did he teach school?

PARNELL: Perry County.

FORSYTHE: Any particular school?

PARNELL: I don't remember the name of it.

FORSYTHE: Your mother's name?

PARNELL: Lucy Young Parnell.

FORSYTHE: Her occupation?

PARNELL: She was a teacher and a homemaker.

FORSYTHE: Do you remember where she taught?

PARNELL: She taught at the school in Perry County, on Brush Creek. I don't remember the name of the school but he was teaching and they got married. They moved to Perry county and he got drafted into World War I. She finished up the school and he came home. She taught in the Enon school on Cane creek in Perry county later but she wasn't a full time teacher. She taught at various and sundry times at that school, in 1945 she was teaching then.

FORSYTHE: Do you have any brothers and sisters?

PARNELL: I have a brother named Edward Alvin Parnell born in Perry county.

FORSYTHE: Your wife's name?

PARNELL: Naoma Henson Parnell

FORSYTHE: Do you have any children?

PARNELL: Samuel L. Parnell, Jr.

FORSYTHE: I was going to ask you, what is your wife's occupation?

PARNELL: She was home maker, she helped build the atomic bomb.

FORSYTHE: Oh did she?

PARNELL: Somebody stepped on her birth certificate and for some reason her 1926 birth certificate looked like '28. She ended up in Oak Ridge after they had built the buildings and got them ready to go. She went in and helped them in the gas diffusion plant where they diffused the gas into the active part of the bomb. After they got all the leaks out of the pipes she ended up on console board as a control operator. If one light turned red she pushed another to make it green and that sort of thing. She spent the latter part of World War II at Oak Ridge, she didn't know

what she was doing but she did it. She worked on the night shift, went in at eight and got off at four or something like that. She still likes to sleep late, she is asleep now.

FORSYTHE: Tell me about your education

PARNELL: That is a good question. Back in 1938, I finished high school, Hickman County, in Centerville. I couldn't find a job. There wasn't many jobs going on then so the NYA, the National Youth Administration, you have probably heard of it, I got on that thing. I was helping to build an addition to the Perry County high school in Lyndon, Tennessee. I was still looking for a job this was just working. I think every other week we would work three or four days, it was just a little money. They decided to put in a saw mill about three or four miles from Dad's farm. He was hauling logs on the wagon and I got a job helping them put down the mill. Well they didn't have front end loaders and all this push button stuff, you did it by guess and by gosh. I had put in an application to go to college under the National Youth Administration at Austin Peay. I got a letter on the Monday I went to work saying that I should report to Austin Peay. Well I said, "I got a job." I don't remember what I was making, it was an eight hour a day job. So, Monday morning I went to work. On the way back I was sitting on the wagon and I got about halfway home and it dawned on me that I was too puny to lift all that heavy wood, and I was going to go to Austin Peay. I told my dad, "Tomorrow when you go to work tell that man that if he owes me any money to write me a check. Give it to you and send it to me because I will be in Clarksville Wednesday." He said, "What do you mean?" I said, "I am going to Austin Peay." I already had stuff packed ready to go but it was just the matter of going that day. So I rode the STAR route to Lyndon, got up there and caught the bus, and went to Clarksville. I got in late Tuesday night and it was too late to register so they sent me down to the dormitory. I spent the night in the dormitory. Next morning I went up to register and the registrar would not register me. He said, "Mr. Parnell, you are late. You should have been here yesterday, we don't take late registration." I said, "I couldn't get here" He said, "That is too bad." I said "Who is your boss?" He said "Dr. Clayton" I said "Well I will talk to him. " He said, "There is no need for you to talk to him because he doesn't approve of late registration either." I said "Well I am up here and I am going to talk to him one way or another." He said, "Go on down there then." He told me where the office was and of course the secretary stopped me. She had to hear this same tale. I walked in, he said, "Did you come here to go to school or go to work." I said, "I came here to go to school, I was working when I left home." He said, "Take this note to the registrar's office." The note said, "Register this man," so they registered me and I stayed with them until World War II started. Actually I was at UT when they drafted me. I worked one hundred hours a month and went to school whenever I could. They scheduled your work first and then you took classes that didn't interfere with your work. I worked for the gardener for a year and a half and then I went into the carpenter's shop after that. Also I was in the Tennessee National Guard. They had a cavalry out here at Murfreesboro at the same time, my troupe was there.

FORSYTHE: Were you part of the maneuvers?

PARNELL: Not this one, this is a different story. This is before World War II started.

FORSYTHE: You mentioned the STAR route, what was that?

PARNELL: That was the mail, they carried the mail from town to town, from post office to post office. Also the guy that had the contract drove a truck and he would let you drive that truck. You could get on the mail truck and ride from town to town and he would charge you a quarter or something like that.

FORSYTHE: Did you ever get your bachelor's degree?

PARNELL: Oh yeah.

FORSYTHE: Where from?

PARNELL: Austin Peay, my master's from Peabody.

FORSYTHE: What years?

PARNELL: '48 was the Austin Peay, I went back to school after the war and '49 from Peabody in industrial education

FORSYTHE: How did you get involved in the planning commission?

PARNELL: Well that goes back to the.....when I graduated from Peabody, I interviewed for a job at a military academy. I was going to teach at a military academy at Millersburgh, Kentucky, teach math and science and keep a dormitory. I had interviewed for the job, they had accepted me but I hadn't accepted them. I wanted to see what it was all about. It was three or four days before I got to Millersburgh my wife and I were going up, we were living in Nashville. I was laying up there resting because I didn't have anything to do that day. During that period the phone rang and someone called me. I have never found out who it was, I didn't get the person's name, but they said they needed a person in Murfreesboro to teach math, shop and run a cabinet shop and write lesson plans for the different classes in carpentry and masonry. I told Naioma, "Murfreesboro is closer than Millersburgh. Why don't I go over and see what it is all about." In the meantime Dad had moved up here. He had moved to a farm up here. I had come up here a few times but I hadn't really been up here, so I said, "I will go up there and interview and visit. We will just go up there and visit Dad and come back the next day." She said, "I can't get off from work." So she didn't come and I came up, the guy asks me "what are your future plans after the interview" I said "I have been interviewed for a job and they have accepted me but I haven't accepted them in Millersburgh, Kentucky." He said, "What are they going to pay you?" I

said "\$350 a month, I've got to keep a dormitory" he said "I will give you \$390 and you can find an apartment" I said "When do you want me to come to work?" He said, "Monday morning," so we were here Monday morning.

FORSYTHE: Who did you interview with?

PARNELL: It was a guy, an Evans, that ran the, I don't remember his first name, works for a practical trade school. They had nothing but GIs and a lot of your local contractors now, were in that school. Most of them have quit, but a lot of the local contractors learned carpentry and masonry at that school. The school closed and I put in an application for Seward when they reactivated Seward. I went to Seward when they reactivated it as a base of engineers. The military sent me to Pasadena Junior College and to Oregon State College while I was in the military studying engineering. I ended up in an observation battalion carrying horizontal and vertical controls for the military with Patton's 3rd Army.

FORSYTHE: What did you do next?

PARNELL: The reason for me becoming a surveyor, that is an interesting story. While I was at Austin Peay working in the carpentry shop, I was working on a project with a saw and ripped off a couple of fingers. For some reason they decided they would send me on a rehabilitative scholarship to Austin Peay, UT paid my way and my tuition and all that sort of stuff. I didn't have to work anymore, because I ripped off a couple of fingers. I was taking engineering and I had a couple of survey courses at UT. UT has been teaching engineering for a thousand years, more or less. They know where every point is and know deviations of it so I did a pretty good job and enjoyed my survey. I had one quarter of it and this was December of '42. I was on Mt. McConnel on December 7th, a bunch of us kids on picnic and we had one of these big old battery operated radios that weighed about one hundred and two pounds. It takes two people to carry it up that mountain. We were up there having a party and picnicking and the radio came on and this announcement comes on that says, "We interrupt this program to bring you President Roosevelt." He gave his speech about the Japs stabbing us in the back and I told the boys, "Let's back this thing up and go home." They said, "What do you mean?" I said, "I am 1-C, in the morning I will be 1-A", so we went back and I met classes Monday morning and met classes Tuesday morning. They gave me all my classes and I told the professor next Monday I will be 1-A. I will get a letter either here or at home and if I made any grades in this class during this quarter you can give them to me. If I didn't, you can do whatever you want to do about it but I won't be back, so they gave me grades anyway. I got home and Monday morning I had that 1-A letter. March 10th I was at Ft. Oglethorpe, Georgia. They put me in an artillery outfit. A guy hangs himself one morning. We were going out on a field problem and he didn't show up. They kept hollering around for somebody to run circle. It looked like transits through there. I didn't pay any attention to it because I had been to Fort Knox, Kentucky to gunnery instructor's school and had just got back. I was prowling around to watch the

guns to see what they was. I looked around there and said, "I can run that thing, it looks like a transit to me." One of the officers said, "No it isn't a transit, it is an aiming circle, it is measured in mils instead of degrees." I said, "What is the difference?" He said, "6400 mils encircled." I said, "No problem let me have it." So I went out and laid out their guns for them on that problem and from there on in I was a surveyor. The military decided I needed a lot of training so they sent me to a lot of places. I don't know why they did it but they did.

FORSYTHE: What did you do after you got out of the military?

PARNELL: I came back out of the military, during the Battle of the Bulge. Patton had me preying around in that thing and the morning we went into Bastone I knew I was going to get killed . That was the only time I was ever really scared to death. I couldn't have put a popsickle in my mouth. I knew I was going to get killed that morning. We had a man on the end of a three hundred foot tape, you couldn't see him. You couldn't see anything for all that fog. I promised myself when I got back to Tennessee I was going to take a years vacation, I had never had a vacation, I had worked all my life. I had heard about vacations, I won a little money crap shooting and playing poker and this that and the other. I didn't have any place to spend money so all of my money was coming back home and put into as avings account. I was going to spend it on a vacation. Obviously I didn't get killed going into Bastone, and you have heard about Bastone I bet. When I came home I took a years vacation. Well my parents and family worried more about me during that year then they did anytime I was in the service. I would take my rifle and go out and camp or take my fishing rod and go out in the woods and hang out for two or three days and come back home. My brother, he came back too. He wasn't taking a years vacation. He took a little break. He had a girlfriend that he dated even before the war, lived up the creek from us. He was going up to visit her one afternoon. Naioma will vouch for this story but she don't always like to hear it. We got up there and I had my fly rod. He was going to let me fish down at the creek there and wade the creek. I think it was a made up deal because when we got up there Sue wasn't there . Sue was over at her girlfriend's house. We had to go over and pick up Sue at Naioma's place. When we get over there and Sue is over there in the house and they come out and they introduce me to Naioma. She looks good to me, even looks better than the fish. We talk for a while and he takes Sue and he carries me back to where he wants to drop me off on the creek with my fly rod. The next thing I know, I am out roaming around with them instead of roaming around in the woods by myself. Well she enjoys fishing and hunting too so we spent all the rest of the year hunting and fishing . I was supposed to go back to Austin Peay the next September. Instead of going to Ausitn Peay in September, we get married. I took a three month honeymoon and I went back to Austin Peay in the spring quarter. From there I went to Peabody. I had practiced teaching in New Providence training school and was going to teach biology and an industrial arts type course, just a small course in wood working. They didn't have that program for teachers and I set the thing up during my practice teaching session . The board of education decided that due to the fact

that I just had a BS, I was not capable of handling all that and I needed a masters, so I go to Peabody and get my masters. I get my job, but the superintendent of schools brother-in-law had the job so that is when I went out in public education.

FORSYTHE: What did you go into then?

PARNELL: That is when I came over here, I never taught in public school. I am a certified OGT instructor in the military but you can teach anything you are capable of teaching based on the schools I went to when I went there I am a graduate of a four year engineering school so I am not a state certified but a military certified engineer.

FORSYTHE: Tell me how you got involved with the Rutherford County planning commission.

PARNELL: The airforce needed space zoning at the end of all the runways at the airport. We roped the air space regulation fourth county the engineering department did and I was the one ram-rod it. I handled it all the way through. Then someway my name got involved. At the time the base closing came up, somebody remembered that there was a Parnell that lived in Rutherford County that helped on that project and he might be able to retire and they would get him cheap. That is not a joke. That is what they wanted and that is what they told me because they knew I had a full retirement so they could get me cheap. I came up and talked to them. I wasn't so sure that I wanted to work for the county government or any other government because I had found that government regulations were never clear cut, they aren't military. I came up and talked with them, met the committee, and they decided they liked me. I wasn't sure I liked them and we cut a deal. I went down to the civil service commission and they approved my taking two days a week off for my duties down there, because at the time I was on the architect engineer team that sent us to various and sundry bases that needed help. So I took two days a week to do this then if I had to go off the base the people in the county wouldn't object to that. Sometimes I would be gone three or four weeks and it didn't make any difference to them because all I was doing was learning and playing with them any way. It ended up that after three months either of us could say good bye, nobody would object. If they didn't like me they didn't have to give a reason why they didn't want me. So I worked with them and I did a project while I was with them they had wanted, a population projection. That is the biggest mistake I ever made in my life. The county didn't have a place to put me so they put me in a little office upstairs over a bank on East Main. It had a table and a telephone and big lunch boxes and that sort of stuff. That is where I was doing my work, no secretary no nothing. My first job was to do a survey and project the population. Well I knew a little bit about it, enough to know what to do. During World War II I happened to be in Germany in the Rehr Valley. It has the center of industry for Germany, everything that was industrial was in the Rehr Valley. For some reason the Rehr Valley struck me when I started studying this thing. It had large transportation and rail transportation the autobahn going through it and anything you wanted went through there. You could hall anything

through it, and this kind of looked like it to me so I thought about that and that is what I was thinking about when I began that study. My population was that by the year two thousand there would be over one-hundred thousand people in the county. Well everybody fussed at me because my population was too great because the county lost population from thirty to forty. It stood even between the fifties and sixties. It gained a little bit in the seventies and it didn't look right to nobody but me. They liked to not hire me on account of that one, but I went down to make a report at this little bank building, at the office I had up there. During the course of it I said, "While I was up there in that hole in the wall over that bank." After the meeting was over one of the members of the planning commission walked up to me and said "Mr. Parnell that was a pretty good report but I want to let you in on a secret, I own that hole in the wall and we don't charge the county any rent for it"

FORSYTHE: Who was on that commission?

PARNELL: Dr. Smith and Slick Davidson was two of them and that is about the only two I remember.

FORSYTHE: Tell me about Mr. Smith

PARNELL: One thing I remember about him particularly was that when he read my resume he discovered I was from Perry county, from Beardstown. He asked me if that wasn't on the Buffalo river, and I said "yeah" and he told me that he lived on the Buffalo river. We discussed Buffalo river and the Blue Hole. The Blue Hole is a catfish hole. In the summertime, after crops were laid by, families would go down there with an old wood burning cook stove and set it on the back on the stove and they would go down there and camp out, catch a catfish, and cook. They used to have a week party, of course after this has all been said and done, I found out Dr. Smith was talking about one Blue Hole on Buffalo river and I was talking about another. His was between Buffalo and Waverly and my blue hole was between Beardstown and Lebanon. Of course, remembering we didn't know the difference, the Blue Hole was the Blue Hole as long as it was on Buffalo river. I never did tell him about that after I found out about it. When they interviewed me, of course there was Mr. Davidson, and I was trying to think, at the moment, they are the only two that I can remember, Dr. Smith and Davidson. He would ask me about the Blue Hole. When my wife asked me, "Did you get the job?" I said, "I don't know but if the Blue Hole had anything to do with it, I did." But anyway during this period of about three months he would come by and I would get in his car and we would go out and ride around the county and discuss things, discuss county planning and this that and the other. Actually he taught me my philosophy of civilian planning. One of the things he told me that all planners or anybody that works for government ought to think about, "When you have completed a project" he said, "Or when you go up to talk to those people about this project making your decision on it, make your decision as if you were going to stand before a judge and justify it." That was one of the things that I tried to do

and I think that stood me more good during my ten years as planner for Rutherford County than anything else. I made my decision based on if I had to stand before a judge could I justify my decision. I thought that was real good advice. Then the second one he gave me that stood me in stead, knowing that I was a military planner rather that a civilian planner, he suggested that I go out and take (audit) a course in civilian planning, Studio 1 was the actual name of the course. That one had an interesting bill too, I think this might be the reason my son is an engineer,

FORSYTHE: Let me turn the tape over before you start, you told me on the phone you had some tall tales about Mr. Smith, what are they?

PARNELL: That is a good question. Well if I think of a tall tale well have to go along with the conversation as we go along we will pick it up.

FORSYTHE: OK

PARNELL: Where were we at?

PARNELL: I know I wanted to ask you about how you said you had to justify whatever you did like you were standing before a judge

PARNELL: Yes

FORSYTHE: How did you justify one hundred thousand population by year 2000?

PARNELL: Well that was based on the population growth, I was laying the background for that. Industry had just started coming in, the growth was here. You could almost see it by using the various formulas I had based on the population of other areas and the growth thing. You had certain formulas to figure that based on, in other words for each subdivision based on forty or fifty houses you will have so many kids. Each factory that comes in brings a job, it will require so many people for support, based on what the job is. There are all these formulas that you can just plug data into it. I didn't have a computer then, you did it with a pencil. The fact that I had one hundred thousand most of them didn't believe it and they thought Mr. Parnell ought to be shuffled off somewhere else because of that many people. I am unhappy that I misjudged it so much. We had one hundred thousand some time ago, I didn't realize that. One of the ones that Dr. Smith and I was involved in early was the base was going to close and they were going to give it to somebody or do something about it. By the way, Judge Threet was on that commission that had to do with the planning commission. I don't know if he was a voting member of the planning commission or not, but we asked him to give us five thousand dollars to make a study of what to do with the base when we got it. The court was wanting to know what we were going to do and this that and the other, I told him in doing master planning for the base that I had worked with an Eric Hill in Atlanta and I was quite sure for five thousand dollars I could get them

to help me write a plan for the county and take it over. Under the regulations the county could take it over in its entirety and operate it and we worked on that thing. The judge got us five thousand dollars some how out of the county court, I don't know how he got it. He gave me a maximum of five thousand dollars to do the work so we ended up with a plan where the county would take over the base and operate it, the entire base 2700 acres. We couldn't. The county couldn't sell an acre of it. They had to maintain that acreage. All the profits would go into the school systems. Any excess profits that they didn't need for maintenance would go into the school systems. I venture to say that now if they had taken over that thing and operated it like that the county school tax rate would have been half what it is now cause it would have been making a profit. The base operations building in the municipal airport would have been connected, under this plan, with a mono-rail that came out behind the main big hanger where they had the beach on Percy Priest lake. Mono-rail columns were all down through the lake, it went down through the lake and come back up at the metro airport up through where old Hoover's rock crusher was. It came in to meet the municipal airport there. In five minutes you could transfer a passenger, and in five minutes you were at the airport in Nashville. It would have been a beautiful situation. All the airport zoning was there. There wouldn't have been a problem with sound at the end of the runways because we had it cleared for two miles I think in most areas for tree topping to keep it clear. No buildings could be built because we might have a crash at the end of the runway, so you were safe from crashes and you were safe from the sound. It would have been some what limited. Wherever you have jets you have sound, but it would have been a beautiful operation, completely operated by the county. But politicians cut a deal. Ridley and Ben West, I guess was his name down there. It wasn't Ben West, I can't think of the mayor's name there now, Briley, Mayor Briley and Ridley cut a deal. I think they voted against it so the county would have to split it up between the three of them, but the county is coming back now, they can probably make it pay off now if they take it over. Dr. Smith aided in this. He was responsible for getting a clause in his contract that all excess profits would go into the county school system, he still remembered education.

FORSYTHE: What years did you work on the commission?

PARNELL: Ten

FORSYTHE: No, what years?

PARNELL: From 1970 to 1980

FORSYTHE: I know where we were. We were talking about the studio one class, when we flipped over, do you want to talk about that more?

PARNELL: Oh yeah, I was going to talk about my son, he is an engineer, legally. He is a legal engineer but studio one is where I am also going to give you my complaint

against civilian planning. We did a study in Murfreesboro having to do with the housing conditions in the area of Murfreesboro where they went out and found privies would be covered by rose bushes. You wouldn't have to hardly look for them to find them, where they didn't have indoor toilets in areas. We had all this propaganda together, and one of the girls named Betty Jo, was supposed to be doing the work on it. When we were rounding it up, she called me up and said, "Mr. Parnell, I've got to go to Florida, this weekend." I said, "What do you mean you've got to go to Florida this week end?" She said, "I can't work on that,"(this is when I was doing the three day deal). I said "If I can't compile that information for the study we are doing, I can't hand it in next week." I said, "Have you collected the information on everybody else?" She says, "Yes, I've got it all." I said, "What part of the ball game do you play." She said, "I was just going down to see it, can you do it?" I said, "I guess I can." I was still working at the base and working here too. My son was a junior in high school. I said, "I want you to go out to the girl's dormitory and get that thing" so he took my car and got it that night. I got that paper work so I could do the work and get it all ready over the weekend for the class for them. I think him going to the girl's dormitory and seeing all those pretty girls made him decide to go to UT. That girl was a senior and she graduated that year and went to Centerville and became a planner for the city of Centerville. I ran into her and she had a bunch of books she was giving away. I went through them and there was a history of Patton to 1940, his birth, he was born in 1800 and something, right on up to 1940 prior to World War II. I read that thing afterwards and it was identical of Patton. He is my favorite general. I ended up with him when I got down in Louisiana when they first drafted me. He came back from African and he took over Camp Hope and worked us to death. All I did then was watch them and help them dig the fox holes and fill them back up. He came back up and he took over Camp Hope. They called us all together and he said, "Everywhere I go, I fall into a fox hole or step into a fox hole that isn't covered up or catch some guy digging one." He said, "It is stupid to dig foxholes. If you need a foxhole when you get to Europe all you got to do is take one away from the German, he has already got it dug." We never dug another foxhole when I was with him, but he worked us to death. He had a lot of language that I don't use. He told us, "You have been lucky around here. You have got off Saturday afternoon and Sunday, you will be lucky from here on out it you get off Sunday afternoon," and that was true. We were lucky if we got Sunday afternoon off from there on in, they were tough soldiers. We went to the Mojave desert on maneuvers, of course I still did observation. I spent about three months flying around over the desert going over on vehicles, learning the desert getting ready for maneuvers over there. That was another seven day a week deal still under old Patton getting us ready for his maneuvers over there. One day they called and said, "Parnell is supposed to report to Pasadena Junior College at 8 o'clock in the morning." I was out in the middle of the Mojave desert so we rounded up my equipment right quick and got me a little Piper Cub that flew me into Pasadena. I made it.

FORSYTHE: Big change

PARNELL: I stayed at Pasadena for, I think, it was three months. I was out there during the riots when everybody was killing everybody else. I don't like Pasadena and I still don't like Pasadena. I thought I was through with Patton forever and eternally, real happy, so I stayed there my three months and they decided Pasadena Junior College didn't have what I needed. They sent me to work in a state college and I stayed up there six months. I decided I had enough education so they transferred me to Washington. I get out there and I can't find my outfit. Finally they decided that they were out in Yacama, Washington. So I go out to Yacama, Washington and work with them out there. They discovered I hadn't had a vacation or leave since I had been in the military, I had one but I was AWOL.

FORSYTHE: You have to explain that.

PARNELL: Well absent without leave.

FORSYTHE: I know what that means.

PARNELL: Well, I decided I wanted to go home and you could get a three day pass. That was before Patton got down there. I got to Alexandria and I said, "Sam you are crazy if you go home while you are AWOL, you'll get in trouble. You better get another three day pass." I already had a three day pass and I figured if I got another one I would have about a week. So I called back to the office and told them I was at Alexandria and I was on my way to Memphis and that I would like to get a hold of the old Captain and get a three day pass so I could go home legally. He said, "What do you mean go home legally, you know you can't get two three day passes in succession." I said, "I don't know that I can't. Nobody ever told me I couldn't." I just thought it would be a good idea. So we fussed over the phone for a while. He says, "I tell you what I am going to do Parnell, when you get home you will get a three day pass. I am going to mail it today, but you will be sorry when you get back." So I got home before I got the three day pass so I was legal and had seven days off. I get back to town and they called roll my first day back. I answered roll call, and the first sergeant says "Parnell, report to the office 8 o'clock next morning." I reported and I figured they would remove my stripes or something like that. I walk in and the captain was sitting right there. He says, "Parnell, you think you are a smart aleck don't you? You got your seven day pass didn't you?" Well I didn't think so. He said, "You think I am going to get your stripes don't you?" I said, "Probably." He said, "I ain't going to get your stripes, I am going to do something worse." I said, "What is that?" He said, "I am going to give you seven weekends in charge of quarters, and you are restricted to base for seven weekends" Seven weekends, I didn't leave the base. Friday morning I would move my cot over to the office and run the battery for seven weekends, seven straight weekends. I earned that seven days

FORSYTHE: You sure did. You were telling me they found out that you didn't have a vacation. That is how we got side tracked. What happened after you left Washington, they looked at you records.

PARNELL: Oh they looked at my records on that AWOL deal. They discovered I had never had a furlough. That was the only furlough I had had for seven days, so they gave me back a seven day furlough. Well it goes a little further than that one. That one didn't turn into an AWOL, but when they shipped me to Oregon State I had an appendicitis operation. When I was getting my appendix out, everybody was getting a thirty day recuperation leave back home. Well I came when I got out of the hospital. Instead of letting me go home they had me back in that class, after I had come out of the hospital and ready to report for duty instead of going home for a thirty day convalescence. Classes were starting so they had me registered and all my books were in my room and they wouldn't give me my convalescent leave. I went down and complained to the Colonel or the commander. I said, "How come I don't get a convalescent leave, every body else gets one?" He said, "We need you here." I said, "Well I guess I will stay here then." So, I went to school and stayed in school. They decided that they shipped out a whole gang of people, I think it was over two hundred of us at the same time. They had a whole list of names on a roster of who they were shipping out and where they was going but it didn't have when they left Oregon State. It didn't have when they was supposed to report to their duty station. This was getting back to what was lost. The first sergeant and I was pretty good buddies and I said, "Sarg. I haven't had a leave since I have been in the military." He said, "Yeah looks like it, the record doesn't show any leave." So I say, "How about me going home on this one." He said, "You can't get it, they still aren't giving you any leave." I said, "How about me just going AWOL?" He says, "What do you mean go AWOL." I said, "Look at this paperwork, I have got everything I need, the army don't even know I exist except for what is in this folder." He said, "That is right." I said, "Why don't I just go home and if the APs catch me I will tell them I am on my way to Ft Lewis." He said, "How are you going to get by with it." I say, "We ought to be able to figure out something." So we sat there and we decided that if he gave a class A pass I would carry my class A pass with me. He wrote my name, and there were over two hundred people whose name was on that list. The travel orders were all legal, in a big folder. He said, "If they catch you going you may have to do some fast talking. If they catch you coming back you can ride in. You will know when you get to Ft. Lewis." So we figured it all out and I take my folder and everything the army had on me and head for home with all my gear. I spent three of four weeks and I decided to go back home. I went back to Washington and I got there and I went into the main gates. The MP's didn't have a list of the FOP's. They had all shipped out where I was supposed to go. I was sitting there and luckily they saw this jeep and it had 14th FOB on the back of it. I says stop that guy, that is where I am going. They were doing occupation duty in a old part of the base training. There was nobody out there but the FOB. We was waiting for World War II to go to Europe. We didn't know what we were doing. We were just stand-by, fully trained, ready for combat duty. When D-day

started we were on our way. They finally got us on a train and headed us for Europe. I missed D-day by 87 days, but when I landed at St. Lowe, I found I was back with Patton and the 3rd Army.

FORSYTHE: I want to bring you back to the Rutherford County commission. What other projects did you work on? From there on in I helped devise the rough subdivision regulations and revise the zoning resolution and this sort of thing. Of course then the rest of it was just routine planning - new subdivisions and this that and the other. Never did anything on it other than just routine work

FORSYTHE: You mentioned something about aerial photographs,

PARNELL: Those were the ones we used before I started to work. Colonel Fitzhugh, he was my man that was listed to run the base if the county took it over, went to work with Metro and ran the Metro airport. Now he is back down here, but he was the guy that was listed to be our man to run base operations if the county got it off. Colonel Fitzhugh was the guy who flew me on that route, just before the base closed. I picked up the phone one day and some guy, tactical air command, wanted to know who that SOB was that canceled the order for air space clearance. I said, "What do you mean." He said, "There is somebody down there that canceled the project that they didn't need to clear those treetops any more." I said, "The base is going to close here in about another sixteen months or something like that sixteen or eighteen months and I don't think we need it." I took Transit out there and shot a point on everyone of them. I didn't see a treetop no where. The only thing there, was a flag pole on the Sam Davis home that would be in the way. It has been in the way ever since there has been a base out there. Nobody has flew into it yet. So I canceled it and I thought I would save the government some money. He says, "You're crazy." I said, "Well it is canceled anyway, we aren't going to do it," and that is where that came in.

FORSYTHE: You told me earlier that Mr. Smith told you to do that

PARNELL: No he didn't do that, I had done that on my own

FORSYTHE: What was that Mr. Smith said about photographing all the ...

PARNELL: Yes, he asked me if I could get those photographs and then Colonel Fitzhugh was the fellow that flew the air plane. I figured that the colonel wouldn't fly us into any trees out there. He picked up a C47, one of those little-bitty birds that used to fly around. He flew us around and we took pictures of all the intersections. You could see new developments there and the road grids they were good for briefing people. We took, I think, a couple hundred slides during that time. They had a flood while I was there, and I had one of my surveyors get a plane out at Murfreesboro Airport and film all the flood planes all over the county so we could use that. By the way, the county won a suit on account of we turned down a

project and his engineers said it wasn't in the flood plane, but our slides showed that it was flooding during the flood.

FORSYTHE: Where are those slides now?

PARNELL: They are at the planning commission office. When I left the planning commission I didn't bring anything but myself

FORSYTHE: I want to go back to Q.M. Smith, what do you remember about him?

PARNELL: He would come by, and I would get us a county car and we would go out and ride over the county. We would talk education, and Buffalo river, and various and sundry things. He was of my father's generation, so I could talk his tone a little bit. One other interesting thing about him, one day we were talking. He said, "Sam you know the biggest problem I had during the war?" He was from world War I. I said, "Which war are you talking about?" He says, "World War II," he never would talk about his war experiences, for some reason it didn't appeal to him or he had a bad experience. He said, "The worst problem I had during World War II at the University," (you got a guess as to what it would be).....supply, and students. Some kind of supplies they couldn't get.

FORSYTHE: Well you could, they had a farm.

PARNELL: Not for him, but for the University. The biggest problem at the university, was the toilet paper. He said that the biggest problem during the war was getting toilet paper for the dormitories.

FORSYTHE: That is interesting.

PARNELL: We never could figure out if they were stealing it for the classrooms or if they were carrying it home with them.

FORSYTHE: They were probably taking it home. What else did he talk about?

PARNELL: Well actually the growth of the county and fishing in the Blue Hole. I would go out with him and he would show me his pictures that he had in his den. He had a den that was just loaded with things like that. I can't think of too much more. When you try to think of something it just doesn't work out.

FORSYTHE: What kind of man was he?

PARNELL: He was a wonderful man. His integrity was impeccable, no question about it. When he told you something you could stand on it. Actually he thought more of the university and the end results than anything else. He tried his best to get the things that would be good for it, same as he did with the county. One time I went out there and I went to ask him to sign some papers. There was a lot of things you

had to have his signature on. He had his tractor out there and he said, "I have got it all set up, you want to go for a ride?" He had a pump, a pump sprayer, not power operated, off the tractor just a two and a half gallon spray pump tied of the side of that thing. I said, "What are you fixing to spray?" He said, "Some of these thistles. You know, in Europe they have thistles and they use them as flowers, they are beautiful but I hate those things with a passion. Somebody just brought them over here, they aren't native to America." He hated the thistles. He had a couple of horses on the farm at the time and a few cattle. We road around and of course you can't talk too much on a tractor. He would see a thistle and he would drive over to it and spray it with that herbicide. Other than that, he had a pretty good farm back there and he wanted to keep it. I don't know what happened to his farm, I guess they have sold it by know. It is probably that subdivision out there. I haven't been out there since I went to get his signature. One of the real good stories on him, we had a subdivision that came up and something happened on it he wanted to remove something from it. I let them get an error through and I guess I was responsible for parliamentary procedure as well as him, but any way, there was an error in the parliamentary procedure in the subdivision. We had to correct it. I was a little hesitant about trying to tell him what to do 'cause I couldn't remember. I knew my parliamentary procedure rules of proper procedure pretty well, but I couldn't figure out what to do. He would look at me and I would look at him. Finally he says, "Well, we'll figure it out, everybody just be quite." I was trying to get the process for motions to be made and how to do it and he was doing the same thing. I was going through my mind to see what I could remember, but I never could figure out what motions to be made. One of the planning commissioners says, "Dr. Smith, are we going to sit here all day waiting for this?" He looked up and he said, "I don't know what I am going to do, right at the moment but until I do, you shut up and be quiet till I get through." Nobody even breathed. I don't think, if I had thought of what to say I would have told him. So it was five minutes I guess, ten minutes, I don't know, a long period of time. Directly he started rattling off the procedure, as to how to do the job. Of course we taped all of our meetings. He told the commission what to do. The office didn't have a parliamentary procedure book but I had one that belonged to me personally from the credit unions. I came back and looked it up. He had stepped that thing out, not word for word, but step by step, all the way through to where it says "Motion had been made."