

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.108

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
SAMUEL PARNELL**

Q. M. SMITH ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW #QMS.108

FORSYTHE: This tape is part of the Q.M. Smith collection designated as QMS.1995.108. This is Regina Forsythe, I am interviewing Mr. Sam Parnell. Today is Wednesday, September 27th, 1995. The interview is being conducted in the home of Mr. Parnell located at 713 Craner Rd. in Murfreesboro, Tennessee. We were talking about Mr. Smith.

PARNELL: Yes. You were asking what we did more than anything else.

FORSYTHE: Right

PARNELL: When he would come by the planning commission, we would discuss the work more than anything else. He liked to go out and look at the projects. He would come by and we would go out. Of course some things are hard to remember. I remember that when Pillsbury and that bunch came in where that area is and Rich Foods in that area, we went out and looked at that. For some reason there was a golf course that had been there. He wasn't sure that wasn't going to interfere with the golf course. He didn't seem to think that the lack of Pillsbury and those plants coming in there would be as much benefit some other time as the golf courses and the recreational area would. I can't remember exactly how it was and it may not even be worthwhile, that when we got over across the river where it was going to be he seemed to think that that was an ideal place for an instruction area. Of course Rich Products and Pillsbury are there now. I don't know what else has really developed into an industrial park. Trying to quote him and what he said at those times, the memory doesn't come back. We went out and looked at them and developed them and we didn't see anything wrong as we went through those things in the interchange city down in LaVergne. We were down in that area all the time, rode down through there with some cedar logs to an old barn down there. He was interested in those logs. It was too bad that they were going to rip them up. Come to think of it, those logs could be used for something 'cause they were just hand hewn cedar logs that they just bulldozed when they were getting ready for interchange city. I think that is where Firestone is now. That area is where he was talking about. He enjoyed going out to look at them. I just don't remember any statements that he made about the projects as much as I do the two that he made to me. I can remember those things as vividly as if he said them yesterday, but what he said when we went out in the field, I don't know. We went out and rode and discussed the projects.

FORSYTHE: Let me ask about some of the other people you talked about. You talked about Slick Davidson, what was his real first name?

PARNELL: That is all I can think of. That is all I ever called him. He was a magistrate, an insurance sales man, and I think his brother had a son the same age. Of course Vester Waldron was a member of the planning commission. He was a member of the court. Thad Elrod was a member at that time.

FORSYTHE: What do you remember about Slick Davidson?

PARNELL: He was an insurance sales man and he was a fun-loving character, always telling a joke.

FORSYTHE: And Mr. Waldron?

PARNELL: He was a developer from LaVergne, and pretty civic minded. He was one of the fellows that donated some land out of one of his projects for public service. You would get land set aside for the community for schools, churches, and public service areas like parks and recreational areas. One of the subdivisions on the old Nashville Highway, I think he gave a couple of lots out of it for recreational areas. I understand that the county has given it back to the adjacent property owners because they don't want to assume responsibility for it. They are now working again on a comprehensive type plan on impact fees. Dr. Smith went along with the impact fee deals. Let me see I was trying to think of two or three more planning commission members.

FORSYTHE: How about Clyde Elrod.

PARNELL: He was a pretty good old fellow. Like me he is getting a little old and has quit his job. He is a WWII veteran, too, I think.

FORSYTHE: Judge Threet

PARNELL: Judge Threet was another one, actually he was another fellow that was interested in the base and its development. He had a heart attack shortly after I came aboard about a year, year-and a half and died right suddenly. He didn't last too long. He was another one I would ride around with. He had a telephone on his van and when he wasn't using his station wagon I always borrowed it to stay out of the office as much as possible, ride around over the county and see what it was all about. With that job you have to learn the county. Then one of the Ridley boys was county judge after that. I don't think he was on the planning commission, well he was on the planning commission but he was in another county. Judge McFarland was another one that was there while I was there. He wasn't on the planning commission, but he was county judge. I used to remember those guys names one right after the other, but they won't come to me now.

FORSYTHE: You told me earlier that someone came and asked your advice based on your previous study of the population explosion, that survey you did. Do you remember what I am talking about?

PARNELL: Yeah

FORSYTHE: Tell me about that.

PARNELL: After the survey was all over, after the survey was made, nobody at the county believed that it would be that much. They almost fired me before we got started on that one, 'cause they just couldn't conceive it to be. I really got shaky about it, after they started telling me why it wouldn't be, but now it gets me back to my water survey. Joe Lovell, on that water plan, we was projecting that we would be short of water. He told me I was crazy, that there was enough water to serve anybody in the world and to serve Rutherford county in these caves out there between here and Murfreesboro, the Double Springs creek comes through here. Well, all this whole county is caves but all the water under there is contaminated. It gets so contaminated you can't clean in up anymore. I worry about the water, more than I do the air.

FORSYTHE: How did that water get contaminated?

PARNELL: Septic tanks. I bet you there isn't 10% of the septic tanks working at total efficiency in this county, including mine. You've got this crest rock limestone, and when you have that type of land the water is going to go right down through the cracks. It goes through the septic tank and the septic tank doesn't kill all bacteria and it doesn't kill any virus. It will kill most bacteria but it doesn't kill any virus. The bacteria will liquefy it and let it go on through. Your bacteria which it hasn't killed will go on through, if the septic tank is overused, it will go through before the bacteria has time to act on it. That is one of the things that the military is very efficient on, sanitary systems. I've put in systems, an electric system for restrooms, use the potty, push the button, there is a little plastic bag in there, a 220 volts heating unit comes on the bag drops down in it, vaporizes it, a little fan comes on and blows the ash out the stack. You got a gas one will do the same thing, for isolated areas. The military in the field was always sanitary. You either had a slip trench or a little shovel that the individual carried, that was how he dug his cat hole. It was a court marshal offense not to. So with the military sanitation, you start thinking about it. If you are never in the military you never know what is happening. We developed septic tank systems, the military wouldn't put a septic tank in some of the areas they put it in here, cause they won't work, 100%. Of course we could use, in addition to that, composting systems, your bathroom, you can use a vacuum system using water as a lubricant rather than water as a carrier, just enough water to keep the pipes lubricated. When you flush it there is enough to carry the small waste with it. That would save all kinds of water. There is another one they could use, using a vaporizing system, in sand above ground, evaporation type, I don't think too much of that one. The county is in this growth system, we don't conserve our areas. We grew up in a county that uses it up, throws it away, gets a new one. Because we wanted to manufacture it, we don't think about the world environment. If we want to keep our plants working we have to send it to the areas that don't have the

capacity to do the manufacturing and recycle stuff. We are going to have to do it. I have a recycling bin that has been back here for probably thirty years that I use. Anything that is compost goes in it. Go back and stick your hand in some compost, you are not gonna keep it in there.

FORSYTHE: I wouldn't stick it in there no how.

PARNELL: Well it's because of the heat

FORSYTHE: I know. We grew up in the country. We had a compost pit. I used to be the one who had to stand on top of it and tap it down. It is hot. What other projects were you involved in?

PARNELL: In the county, nothing large. The biggest one I did was trying to get that base for us. The rest of them were just routine projects put in by someone else. Just doing day to day work, one of those jobs you hate to go to sometimes, 9 to 5. The military is exciting but this one wasn't after we got the subdivision regulations pretty well set up, zoning resolutions. It was just a routine deal, 9-5, 4-8 or 8-4 whatever.

FORSYTHE: Did you have any other projects Mr. Smith was involved in?

PARNELL: Not out here. His was just about the same thing, he was just chairman of the planning commission. He came and did the work other than the one from, the base deal, other than that, he was one of those that if you got stuck with a problem and went out there and asked him, he gave you an answer. You almost forgot what happened, you didn't realize what he was doing to you. It was one of those deals where he kind of hypnotized you. He was one of those fellows that you never knew he was indoctrinating you at the time. A lot of the time your idea was his idea, but you didn't know it. He planted those things gradually.