

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW  
WITH  
LIDA LASSETER

10 OCTOBER 1995

MURFREESBORO, TENNESSEE

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

INTERVIEW #QMS.121

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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MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY

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# ABSTRACT

**ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW WITH  
LIDA LASSETER**

**Q. M. SMITH ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**

**INTERVIEW #QMS.121**

**FORSYTHE:** This tape is part of the Q.M. Smith Collection designated as QMS.1995.121. This is Regina Forsythe and I a interviewing Mrs. Lida Lasseter. Today is Tuesday October 10, 1995. The interview is being conducted in the home of Mrs. Lasseter located at 806 East Burton Street in Murfreesboro, Tennessee. The tape of this interview along with the 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. Lasseter?

**LASSETER:** Yes, that is fine.

**FORSYTHE:** What is your full name?

**LASSETER:** Lida Lee Loughry Lasseter.

**FORSYTHE:** What is your birth date and birth place?

**LASSETER:** September 22, 1914. Lascassas, Tennessee.

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

**LASSETER:** Walter Loughry. He was a merchant and a farmer. We lived in the country. He did not own a store. He worked with men's merchandise in both Murfreesboro and Nashville. I was born on the farm out on Stones River. It is still there.

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

**LASSETER:** Bessie Cannon Loughry. It was really Sara Elizabeth, but they called her Bessie. She was a housewife.

**FORSYTHE:** Do you have any brothers and sisters?

**LASSETER:** One. Ed Loughry.

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

**LASSETER:** Robert Caldwell Lasseter. He was a very fine newspaper man. He won the Neiman Fellowship, the most prestigious award a newspaperman can get. He got

it for the Rutherford Courier. It was a little weekly newspaper in Murfreesboro. John Bragg's father owned the newspaper. He and John were real good friends. Robert was the editor. He also worked on the Nashville Tennessean. When we married, he was state news editor. He came back to Murfreesboro and bought an interest in the Rutherford Courier. He stayed there until he won the fellowship to Harvard. He came back and was offered many fine jobs with various universities in the departments of journalism. He wanted to stay in Murfreesboro and stayed with that until he decided he had to make more money. We had four children. He went into real-estate business at that time.

FORSYTHE: What are your children's names?

LASSETER: Betsy Lasseter Hull, she is a fourth grade teacher at McFadden; Virginia "Kay" Lasseter Keys, in Baltimore; Robert C. Lasseter III; and Sam Lee Lasseter.

FORSYTHE: Did anyone else in your family besides yourself attend MTSU?

LASSETER: Betsy has two degrees, undergraduate and masters. Bobby is also a graduate of MTSU. Kay is a Vanderbilt alumni and Sam went to Johns-Hopkins.

FORSYTHE: What years were you a student at MTSU?

LASSETER: 1931 through 1933. My major was English Literature.

FORSYTHE: What do you remember about being a student at MTSU?

LASSETER: Of course it was during the days of severe depression. Banks were closed, there was no money. Jobs were scarce. It was very difficult times, but I don't have any unpleasant memories of it at all, because everyone lived under the same conditions. I have often wondered how much the faculty at the college made at that time. Mr. Lyon was the president.

FORSYTHE: What do you remember about MTSU President Lyon?

LASSETER: Well, I did not admire him a great deal. His son-in-law, Horace Jones, also taught there. N.C. Beasley was the Dean of Students. I remember him as a very pleasant man. I liked him very much. I remember any number of the teachers, but I cannot recall anything especially outstanding about them. I remember Dr. Golightly and Mr. Judd. Miss Green taught history and I worked for her. I graded papers for her and made five dollars a month. Can you believe it? I did some student testing for Dr. Golightly in various schools. I do not remember making more than two or three dollars for each group of students that we tested. There were two or three of us who did it. I suppose we were testing the students for grade placement. This was before the days of the various tests like the G. E.D., that are given now. I suppose it was to see how the rural schools ranked with the city schools, as far as I can remember.

FORSYTHE: Did you have any other jobs?

LASSETER: When I graduated I went to work as a librarian at the high school. I had no library training whatsoever. It was just a matter of there was a job available and I did it. I spent the summer working at the library at the college. Miss Bettie Murfree was the librarian at that time. In order to know something about what I was supposed to do, I volunteered to work at the MTSU library. The library was a little building right across from Old Main. There were not many buildings out there. The boys had one dormitory, the girls had two dormitories. I do not know when the science building was erected. There was the cafeteria. The gymnasium was part of the main building at that time, it was small. The county tournaments were held there. The basketball team was much more interesting than the football team. I do not remember much about football. It seems to me that Mr. Faulkinberry was the coach and that he coached both basketball and football. He committed suicide. I was trying to think of things to tell you last night and I can't remember much. The thing that stands out in my mind was the fact that Frank Faulkinberry committed suicide while I was a student out there. I remember it was on a Saturday. It caused quite a commotion among the small student body.

FORSYTHE: What was the condition of the buildings?

LASSETER: Fine. It was nothing outstanding. I do not know when the main building was built. All the buildings were still relatively new when I went to school.

FORSYTHE: What do you remember about going to chapel?

LASSETER: I can't remember anything very outstanding about any chapel, except the routine stuff.

I belonged to the debating team. How on earth I ever became a debater, I do not know. It seems that Mr. Judd was the coach of the debating team. I have forgotten who my partner was. There were two of us. I remember we went to Johnson City [Tennessee] to debate East Tennessee. Ms. Tommie Reynolds was the girls gym teacher. She took us. Otherwise, I do not have any special memories. Nothing was air-conditioned. It was all out in the open.

FORSYTHE: What do you remember about the library?

LASSETER: I spent a lot of time in the library. I used the resources. I studied over there in the afternoon, as a rule. I remember Miss Bettie Murfree quite well. She was a member of a prominent Murfreesboro family. She lived on Main Street. The house is still there. She was a fragile little woman. She had one daughter who just died in the past two or three years.

It seems to me it was very quite. There were no drugs or alcohol, particularly. I do remember Ed Bell, who was a student. I knew him quite well. He and my husband were very good friends. In fact, after his death, his daughter, Emily Farmer gave Mr. Lasseter some of her father's manuscripts which had never been published. My husband, as a labor of love, put together those papers, and called the volume, "The Lonely People and their Strange Ways." I think Ed was expelled from the college. John Bragg knew him quite well too because he worked at the *Courier*. He published two books, Tommie Lee Feathers, which was a black football player who was at the black high school in Murfreesboro. Another one which concerned Smithville, Tennessee was called, *Fish on the Steeple*. He died of a brain hemorrhage. He and my husband were very good friends.

FORSYTHE: What did students do for fun?

LASSETER: I do not know that we had much fun. There was no particular organizations or activities other than the sports that we watched. It was all just going to school, as far as I can remember.

FORSYTHE: Did you live on campus?

LASSETER: No, I lived with the Rogermans in town. I walked to school. I walked from half way down Main Street. It was not a problem, everybody walked. People did not have cars like they do today. They just did not.

FORSYTHE: Did you teach at the Training School?

LASSETER: I taught three years at the Campus School, 1934-1936. I taught with the fourth and fifth grade and also ran the cafeteria. Dr. J. C. Waller was the principal and a very fine educator. I've never run into any one since then, who could do what he could. The last year, he was sent back to the college faculty and Frank Bass became principal of the Campus School. It was called the Training School at that time. That was the only place that the students from the college were. You had to take three months of practice teaching. Now, they are sent all over.

FORSYTHE: Who did you do your practice teaching under?

LASSETER: Miss Franny Snell, quite a character. There was Mary Francis who came after Miss Fanny. I do not think any of those faculty members are living now. Andrena Briney Greene is still living and she has just recently moved to a retirement home in Nashville, McKendry Center.

FORSYTHE: What do you remember about your time at the Training School?

LASSETER: I do not know, I had a good time. I was the youngest member of the faculty. I think Dr. Waller thought I was a child and took me under his wing. Everyone else

was either an old maid or married. I thought they were as old as the hills. I was only 22 or 23 when I taught down there. I married when I was 24 years old. We made fifty dollars a month. That is what everyone made at the Campus School. We lived off of it.

FORSYTHE: What do you remember about J. C. Waller?

LASSETER: He was a very positive person. He was very thorough. He taught me a lot about teaching school.

FORSYTHE: Mr. Frank Bass?

LASSETER: He was a politician. He is no longer living, so I guess I can say that. I remember him as a politician, not of the academic world, like Dr. Waller was.

FORSYTHE: Let me ask you about some of the people who were at the school while you were there. Philip Cheek?

LASSETER: I remember Philip Mankin, but not Philip Cheek. Philip Mankin was an odd individual. He lived on this street, down where the hospital area is. He lived in a little brick house. I do not remember Philip Cheek. I did not take that much foreign language. I did take some French, but Philip Cheek was not my professor. It was a much older man.

FORSYTHE: Elizabeth Schardt?

LASSETER: I knew her quite well, a lovely person.

FORSYTHE: Mr. Judd?

LASSETER: I was very fond of Mr. Judd. I had a number of courses under Mr. Judd, political science and history.

FORSYTHE: Horace Jones?

LASSETER: I avoided math like I did foreign languages. I knew him quite well, too. He was a classy person. He was married to Mr. Lyon's daughter. I played bridge with him, after his retirement. He had two sons close to my age, Bob and H.G. Jones. I knew them quite well.

FORSYTHE: Anne Ordway?

LASSETER: She was a lovely person. I remember her. She lived out not far from where Wal-Mart is today. She was an old maid and lived in the country. She was a very attractive person. They grew daffodils. She shipped daffodils all over the eastern

part of the United States, when the daffodil season came. She was a very fine instructor. She had a sister who taught at Ward-Belmont College in Nashville.

FORSYTHE: Q.M. Smith?

LASSETER: He was after my time there, but I knew him because he had a son my daughter's age and they were close friends. He was a very popular person in Murfreesboro. As far as knowing him personally, I did not.

FORSYTHE: Did you live in Murfreesboro during World War II?

LASSETER: Yes. We went to Boston during that time. My husband was exempt from the service. The time has passed and I do not have any bitter memories except for the friends I lost. I lost a first cousin who was a bomber. He went down in France and they never found him. I can't remember anything other than anxiety over who would survive.

FORSYTHE: Can you tell me about growing up in Lascassas, Tennessee?

LASSETER: It was a very rural life. It was a very pleasant country life. We had no amenities whatsoever, when I came along in 1914. No electricity. No refrigeration other than ice boxes. We practically lived off of the land. The wheat was taken to the mill to be ground for flour. The corn was ground into cornmeal. The only things that you really bought were the staples like coffee, sugar, salt, otherwise everything was produced off of the land. We lived off the land. We had beef, lamb, pork, all from the farm.

FORSYTHE: Is there anything else you would like to tell me about living in Rutherford County?

LASSETER: No, I've been gone. In 1974 my husband gave me a home on the beach on Barron Island in South Carolina called Polly's. I lived down there from 1974 until 1988. I came back to Murfreesboro in 1988. I came back to visit, some. We maintained our home in Murfreesboro. He stayed here, he would not stay down there with me. I just recently sold it in the last two or three months.

FORSYTHE: What were you telling me about the entertainment in the 1920s?

LASSETER: In the summer "Chautauqua" came to Murfreesboro, which was a traveling show under a tent. The tent was set up on what is now the heart of the middle school. For a week there was afternoon and evening entertainment consisting of musicals and drama. People came from all over to go to "Chautauqua." It was quite an event in Murfreesboro. Other than that, the theater or picture show, was about the only form of entertainment we had. The "Chautauqua" would stay a week and then move on. There were also big revivals. On Main Street where the Scientist

Church is located, the revivals came. People attended that as if it were entertainment.