

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW
WITH
MARTHA MOFFETT

10 OCTOBER 1995

MURFREESBORO, TENNESSEE

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

INTERVIEW #QMS.122

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Albert Gore". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'A' and a long, sweeping tail.

ALBERT GORE RESEARCH CENTER

MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT



**ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW WITH
MARTHA MOFFETT**

Q. M. SMITH ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW #QMS.122

FORSYTHE: This tape is part of the Q.M. Smith Collection designated as QMS.1995.122. This is Regina Forsythe, I am interviewing Mrs. Martha Ann Rion Moffett. Today is Tuesday October 10, 1995. The interview is being conducted in the home of Mrs. Moffett located at 2211 East Main Street, Murfreesboro, Tennessee. The tape of this interview along with the transcription of the 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. Moffett?

MOFFETT: Yes.

FORSYTHE: What is your birth date?

MOFFETT: July 1, 1921.

FORSYTHE: What is your birth place?

MOFFETT: I was born here in Murfreesboro. The house I was born in was out on what used to be Southern Spring Road, Bell Ground Drive, its Tindal Drive now.

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

MOFFETT: John Bernice Rion. He farmed, worked in a hardware store, worked in a flower shop, he owned and ran a paint shop at one time.

FORSYTHE: What is your mother's name and occupation?

MOFFETT: Mattye Gambill Rion. She was a florist and a homemaker. We started Rion's Floral Shop.

FORSYTHE: Do you have any siblings?

MOFFETT: No, I'm their only child.

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

MOFFETT: Lomas Russell Moffett. He worked in the flower shop at one time. He taught school for a while. He owned a toy and hobby shop, and later went into the real estate business.

FORSYTHE: So you have any children?

MOFFETT: Three. Jon Arthur Moffett, Richard Rion Moffett, and Elizabeth Ann Moffett Graves.

FORSYTHE: Did any other family members attend MTSU?

MOFFETT: I have a grandson attending MTSU right now, Russell Graves. My daughter has just finished taking some courses out there. She is an R.N. [Registered Nurse] and wants to get higher in the ranks. My granddaughter, Christina Elizabeth Graves Beasley, graduated from there, and is now teaching at Kasen Lane. Another granddaughter, Sheila Moffett Fabi, has taken a few course out there.

FORSYTHE: What memories do you have of being a student at MTSU?

MOFFETT: I enjoyed it, it was very pleasant. It has really changed. I took all of my classes, English, German, Social Studies, and Math in Old Main. The rest of the time I lived over at the science building. There were some marvelous teachers. The second floor of that building was the home economics department. Physics and chemistry were in the basement, while biology was on the third floor.

FORSYTHE: What was your major?

MOFFETT: I had a math, chemistry, and biology major.

FORSYTHE: What years did you attend MTSU?

MOFFETT: I started in 1939 and I graduated in 1943.

FORSYTHE: Why did you choose to attend MTSU?

MOFFETT: It was here! I stayed at home. We moved to Murfreesboro before I started to school, that year of 1939. I sometimes walked to school. I would work at the flower shop until it was time for class, and then I would dash out the door. The flower shop was across the street from where the Rutherford County Arts place is now on College Street. There are law offices there now. It was a good two miles to walk to school.

FORSYTHE: You were talking about George Davis?

MOFFETT: He was a wonderful man. He was a mountaineer from Squachie Valley. If you have ever walked with a mountaineer, they have a fast shuffling walk, you just try to keep up with them. I loved all the things he loved. We would look at birds and wildflowers. I have gone on many trips with him over the field and woods. He was a teacher that never surprised you, if you listened to him and took notes. He always

asked his questions on what he had taught. He never tested us on obscure facts that one might accidentally come across in a book. I appreciated that. There was Dr. Mebane in physics, he was a marvelous person. He came back from the Navy in World War I to attend my wedding. In fact, I think that is the last time I saw him. When he got out of the service, I think he went to North Carolina where he was originally from. He was one of these people that could write on the board and pick it up and never move. He was right handed and left handed. When you were in that amphitheater there, that is what he would do. He was a good teacher. Ollie Green was my chemistry teacher and was a fine person.

FORSYTHE: Do you remember Dorothy Edney?

MOFFETT: She was my next door neighbor. She taught me a course, in which I was the only student. With the number of majors I was carrying, I could not work her class into my schedule. She liked me she taught me parasitology all by myself.

FORSYTHE: Horace Jones?

MOFFETT: He was my math teacher. A sweet guy, I was very fond of him. He had only one problem. He was interested in many things. Those sneaky kids, mainly boys, who did not want to work, would get him started on football, or cars. That way we avoided the lesson.

FORSYTHE: What do you remember about Q.M. Smith?

MOFFETT: He was O.K. I admired him. Who ever bought his old house is still working on it, over there on Pitts Lane.

FORSYTHE: Neal Frazier?

MOFFETT: He was one of the finest men I know of. He was smart and was interested in his students. I admired him.

FORSYTHE: Dr. Sims?

MOFFETT: He was something. He was a friend before he was my teacher. I did not have a bad teacher the whole time I was in school.

FORSYTHE: Miss Mary Hall?

MOFFETT: She never taught me. I knew her personally, and she was a fine woman.

MOFFETT: You have missed a character, Dr. Cheek. He was an excellent teacher, and knew his German, but he was different. He was from Virginia. He liked to get a one horse sleigh and take the girls ridding. We had some bad winters during the time I was there. They all enjoyed it. I believe he taught Latin, also, but I took German under

him. When World War II started, he enlisted. I thought, "Oh, no" the poor guy will stay a private because it seemed like he lived in another world. You know man teachers who are intelligent seem like they live in another world. The government was smarter than I thought. They put him a translating German unit, where he could use his language skills, and he came out a sergeant.

FORSYTHE: Since you were at MTSU during World War II, how did war change the school?

MOFFETT: We lost a whole lot of the boys. There were ones over in Tullahoma, and we had maneuvers move through. So many of our boys went hither and yonder, everywhere. Like I said, some came back and some did not. Maneuvers were in this whole area. The school just made do and kept on going. When the boys came back and went to school, they put barracks out there, beyond Jones Hall, the only boys dorm at the time. So many of the boys had gotten married and had families and they lived in the little barracks apartments. One of them caught on fire some way, I do not think I ever knew how. But the tales they told of things that went through windows under stress that could not go through those windows. But they did. Like a baby bed, they put it through the window. They did not lose any people. I do not know how much damage was done. The fire department got out there immediately and got it under control. The ones that were out of a place to stay, lived out in the apartment hour [on East Main across from Mrs. Moffett's home] that is no longer there. That was a interesting time. My husband was going to school during that time period with the GI bill. He got his masters degree from Peabody College [now Vanderbilt University]. The thing that is really different now, is just comparing the campus I knew, to the one it is today. There was no loop that went around the middle section. The library, where Peck Hall is now, was a pretty little one story building. There was a long walkway that stretched from Old Main straight down to the library. It seemed liked I lived in that library at times. The lady who was the librarian lived on Main Street. The library had lots of books, and it was quiet and well organized. In those days, the gymnasium was behind Old Main. That is where the heating plant is now. I took tumbling and stuff like that for gym. Inside the gym, there were balconies. We did a lot of good playing over there.

FORSYTHE: What was the Moffett House like?

MOFFETT: I do not know, I never when in there, it was just a boys dormitory. That was named for another Moffett family a long time ago. I have no idea which Moffett it was named for.

FORSYTHE: Eva Mae Burkett?

MOFFETT: She came after my time. Lomie, my brother, was in her English class. I think he liked her well enough. I would not have recognized her if I had seen her, I had a child--I did not go to school.

FORSYTHE: Betty Murfree?

MOFFETT: She was the librarian who lived on Main Street. Sweet little woman.

FORSYTHE: B.B. Gracy?

MOFFETT: He was in the agriculture department and he was a doll. He taught the gym classes. You would be amazed to see that long tall man in his 60s doing all kinds of flips on that exercise horse. He finally began to get sciatica which, of course cut down on what he could do.

FORSYTHE: Baxter Hobgood?

MOFFETT: I went to school with him in high school. He was my basketball coach. I was not good in basketball, but he gave me a letter. I told him that it was the letter I was proudest of because I had worked hard to get it. He and his wife are still my dear friends. He is a smart man. I took debating and American history under him. He gave us a final exam that was all true and false. I thought surely no one would make a test where the answers were all the same. By golly he did and I missed one. Until a few years ago, he still played tennis.

FORSYTHE: Nooby Freeman?

MOFFETT: I had him for typing and it is something I have used more in my life than all the other subjects. He did not do the class primarily himself. They hired girls that were going to school to take care of thing like that. I like Nooby.

FORSYTHE :Mary Frizzell?

MOFFETT: I never had her for a teacher, but I think she was an outstanding person.

FORSYTHE: Clayton James?

MOFFETT: I liked him. I do not know that I had classes under him, but he was a good smart man.

FORSYTHE: Dean Beasley?

MOFFETT: I spent a lot of time with him. He was a personal friend. A wonderful man.

FORSYTHE: Catherine Monohan?

MOFFETT: I have a tale to tell about her. She was a very devote Catholic. She would not have said a nasty thing for anything in the world. She was so naive/good that she never realized that she told a dirty story once. I never did hear what it was, but it was a dirty story. She hear it from someone and it fit into the lecture that she was giving one day. She did not realize it was a dirty story, to her it was a tale that just had a

meaning. That spread all over the campus, and all of her lecture classes were full. I do not know whether she ever heard about it, surely she did. Bless her heart, I know it just upset her to death. She was just a fine woman.

FORSYTHE: Tommie Reynolds?

MOFFETT: She taught me freshman algebra, and in gym. She was a big, blond woman. A smart, good teacher.

FORSYTHE: Did you student teach?

MOFFETT: No, I never took education classes, because I realized that I just did not have the patience.

FORSYTHE: What had you planned on doing with your education?

MOFFETT: At one time I wanted to be a doctor, but then I fell in love and got married. I liked art and enjoyed doing it. I could do art and also work in the flower shop. I think student did well in everything because we had good teacher. They were dedicated. The kids were not really going to school to take "campusology" like so many students in the later years. Money was not plentiful and that did make a difference!