

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW
WITH
MATTYE RION

10 OCTOBER 1995

MURFREESBORO, TENNESSEE

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

INTERVIEW #QMS.123

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

EDITORIAL NOTICE

This is a transcript of a tape-recorded interview conducted by the Albert Gore Research Center at Middle Tennessee State University. The original recording and associated materials are archived at the center, whose collections may be accessed in person or via the web site gorecenter.mtsu.edu. After a draft of this transcript was made, the interviewer, or in some cases another qualified staff member, reviewed the draft and compared it to the tape recordings. In a few cases, the interviewee also contributed editorial corrections. This final transcript incorporates the corrections and other changes suggested by the interviewee and interviewer. The transcript follows as closely as possible the recorded interview, including the usual starts, stops, and other rough spots in typical conversation. The reader should remember that this is essentially a transcript of the spoken, rather than the written, word. Stylistic matters, such as punctuation and capitalization, follow the *Chicago Manual of Style*, 15th edition. The transcript includes bracketed notices at the end of one tape and the beginning of the next so that, if desired, the reader can find a section of tape more easily by using this transcript.

RESTRICTION

The interviewee has donated her or his copyright in this interview to the state of Tennessee through Middle Tennessee State University and has agreed that use of the recorded interview and transcript shall be governed by the director of the Albert Gore Research Center.

Researchers may read, quote from, cite, photocopy, and download this transcript without permission for purposes of research only. Publication is prohibited, however, without permission from the director of the Albert Gore Research Center.

ABSTRACT

**ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW WITH
MATTYE RION**

Q. M. SMITH ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW #QMS.123

FORSYTHE: This tape is part of the Q.M. Smith Collection designated as QMS.1995.123. This is Regina Forsythe. I am interviewing Mrs. Mattye Rion. Today is Tuesday, October 10, 1995. The interview is being conducted in the home of Mrs. Rion located at 2211 East Main Street, Murfreesboro, Tennessee. The tape of this interview, along with the transcripts 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. Rion

RION: Yes.

FORSYTHE: What is your full name?

RION: Mattye Paralee Gambill Rion.

FORSYTHE: What is your birth date?

RION: September 8, 1899.

FORSYTHE: What was your birth place?

RION: I've lived in Rutherford County all my life, but I was born in Smyrna.

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

RION: James Porter Gambill. He was a farmer and grocer. He did anything he was able to do, in order to work and support a big family. He was in the timber business before he died during World War I. He purchased tracks of land with trees, cut the trees, and sold the lumber. He also made charcoal.

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

RION: Annie Mai Potts Gambill. She was a house wife and stayed busy raising children.

FORSYTHE: How many siblings did you have?

RION: There were eight of us. Two died as small children.

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

RION: Jon Bernice Rion. He was a farmer and business man. He had a paint store, furniture store, hardware store, automobile shop, and flower shop.

FORSYTHE: Can you tell me about living on the farm at MTSU?

RION: I lived in one of those small houses there. My husband was in World War I. We married within a year after he came home. He was the manager under Dr. Harry Ogden, who managed the MTSU farm and livestock. He specialized in fine Jersey cows. My husband was in charge of the cows and farm hands. Martha was a baby at that time. There was a Jersey heifer there and she had a baby calf. She won an outstanding record for giving milk.

FORSYTHE: What years did you live on the farm?

RION: About 1920 to 1922.

FORSYTHE: Which farm house did you live in?

RION: There were two houses down there, west from the old cow herd. They had a big herd of pure bred Jersey farm cows.

FORSYTHE: What do you remember about the farm house?

RION: I do not know whether it was really a house. It had three rooms and was covered in weather board. It was O.K., there was not a thing wrong with it, but no one lived there. When my husband got out of the service, we married. They offered us that house. They did not charge us rent, and painted and fixed it up. It was clean and convenient. He could not have afforded to go back and forth to work. He could stop and eat his lunch at the house.

FORSYTHE: When did you attend MTSU?

RION: I just went one year, in 1918.

FORSYTHE: What do you remember about being a student?

RION: Our president at that time was R.L. Jones. He was so tall and had a big voice. He scared us when he spoke. Horace Jones was his son. He was a good strict president. I think he had been in the state government and had some pull to get things done. This college was young at that time. The man under him was P. A. Lyon. He was one of the nicest people I ever knew. his daughter married Horace Jones.

FORSYTHE: Why did you chose to attend the Normal School/MTSU?

RION: I graduated from Smyrna High School, and one of our teachers had gone to the Normal School. He took boarders. There was one or two girls that lived with them, and they would go back and forth to school. They lived on Maple Street, where the Sigma Alta Epsilon is.

FORSYTHE: What can you tell me about going to school in Smyrna?

RION: Well, I went to school there and played around like all the rest of them. I went to church, and was interested in church affairs. We grew up just like anybody else in a small town.

FORSYTHE: What do you remember about women getting the right to vote in 1920?

RION: I was married then. I did not make much difference to me. I was tickled that the first time I went to vote for president, my husband and father-in law were for one candidate and my mother-in law and myself were for the other candidate. They should have just as well stayed at home that day, because our vote canceled their votes! I don't know who got elected, I think the one I voted for did. [In 1920 Republican candidate Warren Harding won over Democrat James M. Cox.]

FORSYTHE: Do you remember attending chapel at MTSU?

RION: We went to chapel in the auditorium. Someone made a little speech or something. I do remember one boy that was a natural born musician. He played by ear. He could get up on that stage and play for hours. He played "Humoresque." That was one of the things we enjoyed so much. Then we had different societies on campus. The men had two organizations and the women had two organizations.

FORSYTHE: Let me ask you what you remember about these professors, Rebecca Buchanan?

RION: She was the English teacher. Dr. Neal Fraiser taught there and his wife did too. He was a good and fine man. He did some preaching at a Methodist church.

FORSYTHE: Eugene Murphy?

RION: I liked him.

FORSYTHE: Which teachers do you remember?

RION: Dr. Eugene Tavenner taught Latin and languages. He was also a dean at one time. There was a Dr. Fraiser there who taught English. George Davis lived near us, and he was a good teacher. Dr. Archibal Belcher was the chemistry teacher. He was a great big man. I liked him. He was also the head of the activities department. I liked him because he was a good teacher and was good to his students. He helped them a lot. I had chemistry under him, so I know.

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

RION: Good ones. I would have kept going to school, if I had not married. I did not think I could raise a child and go to school at the same time. My education consists of high school and one year of college. My husband went to work when he returned from World War I. He was older than I was. My husband was one of the first students there in college.

FORSYTHE: Did he ever talk about his college days?

RION: He liked it, but I cannot remember anything in particular.

FORSYTHE: Is there anything else you would like to tell me about?

RION: Well, living on the school's farm, we were really proud of that cow that won awards. It was a great accomplishment for the agriculture program of the college, at that time. My husband would get up at night and go milk that cow. Cows had to be milked three or four times a day. He was interested in cows. There was a test farm there. The researchers came from Knoxville. They grew all kinds of beans and stuff. My husband was involved with those experiments. When I was in college, the only dormitory was Rutledge Hall. I lived in the house on Maple Street.