

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW
WITH
LURLENE RUSHING

11 OCTOBER 1995

MURFREESBORO, TENNESSEE

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

INTERVIEW #QMS.125

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

ALBERT GORE RESEARCH CENTER

MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT



**ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW WITH
LURLENE RUSHING**

Q. M. SMITH ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW #QMS.125

FORSYTHE: This tape is part of the Q.M. Smith Collection designated as QMS.1995.125. This is Regina Forsythe, I am interviewing Mrs. Lurene Rushing. Today is Wednesday, October 11, 1995. The interview is being conducted in the home of Mrs. Rushing located at 604 North Spring Street in 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. Rushing?

RUSHING: Yes.

FORSYTHE: What is your full name?

RUSHING: Mary Lurlene Dill Rushing.

FORSYTHE: What is your birth date and birth place?

RUSHING: September 29, 1918. Murfreesboro, Tennessee.

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

RUSHING: J. P. "Jim" Dill. He was a machinist. He had a place down on West Main Street, and he retired and went to the farm. He retired from that because the depression came on and people did not pay for the kind of work that he did. You could do it in the books, but you could not collect. He decided to move his machinery out to the farm and had a shop out there. He did his work on the farm. He had a dealership for the International Harvester Company for a number of years, and he sold their farm machinery as farmers mechanized agricultural production. A lot of my father's work was repairing machinery at the farm. He also did work for the college, because he had the machinery. He ground the lime for the farmers to spread on the land to make it more productive. He also did custom thrashing or cutting of the grain before the combines came on the market. He later had a combine for his own use and never went back to public business. He rented his place of business out for a number of years. The building is still on West Main Street, right next to the creek when you cross Broad Street. It is on the left. It is a loan place now.

FORSYTHE: What kind of work did your father do for MTSU?

RUSHING: He did farm work or machine work. He could fix the boilers that heated the school. He knew Mr. Hastings really well. He knew Mr. Holmes, the Bursar for the college. Mr. Holmes was there even when I started to college.

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

RUSHING: Betty Isom Dill Rushing. She was a housewife. She married at 20. She had three daughters. Our only baby brother died at ten months of age. That was very sad for her. Daddy had a previous marriage, and his first wife died in childbirth. Daddy has a son, Thomas Dill. He still lives out on a farm that joins the original farm. My grandfather lived at that farm too.

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

RUSHING: His name is Thomas E. Rushing, but everyone knows him as Elvis. His occupation was retail grocery. He had a grocery store, C.B. Rushing and Sons, down on Mink Slide, we call it, in town. He moved and had a place of business on the corner of Vine and Walnut. He has two buildings there, now.

FORSYTHE: Do you have any children?

RUSHING: We have Betty Rushing Markham. She went to David Lipscomb University for two years and then she transferred to MTSU. Her husband did also. He took his pre-med out here. Joe Dill Rushing lives in Springfield and he is a minister. He went to school at David Lipscomb University. He went out to MTSU a little while, but he could not handle it. He had worked in high school for Richard Reeves, the pharmacist, and he encouraged him to be a pharmacist, but he could not handle the math. Well, really the chemistry. It had advanced so much. I looked at his books and I could not have done it, and I had two full years of chemistry at MTSU.

FORSYTHE: What memories do you have of being at the Training School?

RUSHING: They were fond memories. I remember going to the East door of Old Main waiting for the door to open. The custodian was so cute, he lived up to the time I went to college. Turner was his name. He was tall and skinny. He would let us in. My father would drive us in and drop us off, and we would sit on the steps and wait for the door to open. Miss Mary Frizzell was our teacher. I remember how she stressed the vowels, a,e,i,o,u. We said it so many times, that it really left an impression on me. She really stressed reading. She had little paper dolls, the Sunbonnet Girls. There is a little book with Sunbonnet Girls in it, I have seen it. The vowels were placed on the dolls. We had sunbonnets, my mother had made them with rickrack around the edge. We built a new house in 1923. We had no shade, so you had to have a sunbonnet to protect you. We had a Graham cracker and milk which was served in little paper cups. It was not a lunch, but a mid-morning snack. We went there for two full years, until the Training School, now called the Campus School was built. We went to East End Grammar School, the building is no longer there,

but it was on East Main Street. We were in a room that might have been a chapel room. It was a large room that was divided with a pasteboard wall between it. You could not see the other class, but you could hear over the wall. We went there till Christmas, and after that we moved into the brand new building. My children have never gone to school in a brand new building, but we did. It was nice. Down in the basement, we could bring out skates, and in the winter time, at lunch hour we could skate there. We dressed out for gym. Miss Ruth was our gym teacher, and she wore serge pleated bloomer like things. We did not have specific gym outfits, but most of the girls wore an all-together Indian-like sleeveless affair. The bottoms had elastic and a bloomer effect. Another thing I remember, for several years they had an exhibit on the balcony of the gym of artworks. It was copies of paintings that was displayed for us to enjoy and look at. It was really something nice. If we sold enough tickets, we could get a new picture for our room. There was a copy of Cezanne in the sixth grade room. That was a different thing. We had more opportunity than children do today. In chapel, on Columbus Day, I had to read a poem. We had little operettas. We had little crepe paper costumes and we could be butterflies or daisies. Then we had a little garden over where the science building was. We planted little seeds in the spring time, of course school was over before we could see what happened. We also did that at the Training School. I do not remember exactly what we planted. I remember that we had science. We had a built-in sink where Roy Simpson could do experiments for us, and we would write them up. That was in the 7th and 8th grade. That helped me so much, to have an appreciation for science. Miss Ollie Greene, who was a teacher over at the college, would walk over and teach us geography when we were in the 7th and 8th grades. I sure did learn a lot of geography. She would take maps of Europe and Asia, and we would have to identify rivers, mountains, oceans, just very thorough. I've always had a mental picture. We also had to learn the crops that were grown in the different countries. She would come over from the college everyday to teach us geography. When I got to college, she was my freshman chemistry teacher. She would ask us if we had chemistry before, in high school. Many did and she liked to prove that what we had learned in high school was not going to help us one bit.

FORSYTHE: Tell me about this picture of this Easter egg hunt.

RUSHING: That was made at our Easter egg hunt, when we were in the first grade. Miss Mary Frizzell was our teacher. I do not know whether we had to pay for them or not. They were little post card pictures, in black and white. After the hunt, this picture was made. Some of us are holding our Easter eggs up. The hunt was in the area where the science building was. It was Southeast of Old Main. There was shrubbery around, places to hide eggs. It was more like a meadow.

FORSYTHE: What years did you attend the Training School?

RUSHING: I started school in 1925-26. We had eight years. We had a graduation, with dresses and white shoes. I remember my dress was tea length, organdy, and it had little ruffles on it. It was just a nice time. I do not think that they have done that in a long

time. The next biggie was high school graduation. We wore evening dresses to that, and the men wore dark coats and white trousers.

FORSYTHE: What years were you a college student?

RUSHING: Fall of 1937, and I finished in the spring of 1941.

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

RUSHING: I wanted to go to college, but I dreaded it because I knew there would be more students and people there. The thing that I remember most, was trying to decided what to take. I think that is a dilemma for freshman. I had someone that I talked to about it. There was more to read in social studies, than I could ever hope to read. What impressed me was that no one cared whether you did your homework or studied. It was a very free situation. It was very different from what I had been used to, but it did not bother me. I did my work pretty well. You were on your own. When I registered as a sophomore, I can't recall what I was taking, but Dr. Simms did not like what I had chosen. I was wide open for anyone to help me on my course schedule. I had made up my mind that I was going to be a home economics major. He said that when you were a sophomore, you think you know everything, but when you get to be a junior you've about decided you don't know so much. To me it was sort of a put-down. I knew I had to take something. I still have dreams about going to school and I picture the flights of stairs in Old Main. I am trying to get up and I cannot get up. I had this experience one time. It was during my first two years, when I got finished with my physical education classes. I did not rent a locker. There was plenty of empty ones down there, so I just found one to put my clothes in there. I went on to gym class. When I came back, I did not have any hose to put on, and my slip was gone. My skirt was a wool fabric and was not thin, but I felt so self conscious. I did not have any classes after that, but I walked home without stockings and a slip. I remember Miss Monohan one time. I would sit on the front row. I guess it was the time when they started wearing socks and she said that she appreciated me because I always wore hose. She was a sweet little woman.

FORSYTHE: What do you remember about P.A. Lyon?

RUSHING: I remember one May, in the second grade, we had learned to make little paper baskets. It would have a little handle on it. I was chosen to put a May basket on his door. We knew who he was, and knew where his office was; but in the little grades, we did not see him that much. I went down to Rutledge Hall and walked past a bush that was blooming. I picked some of those and put in that basket. I remember hanging the basket on his door. When you went into Old Main, his office was on the left side. Mr. N.C. Beasley, the registrar, had an office on the right. I would see him around. He was president emeritus. He would speak in this big room. His daughter was the one that did the lunch room at the Training School. She had good sounding sandwiches and soup. I carried my lunch from home. I remember her son,

H.G. He was a great big boy and he would skate on the tennis court. I can remember him as an upper classmen.

FORSYTHE: What do you remember about President Smith?

RUSHING: When he came, we would still meet up in that big room. I'm not sure that the auditorium was yet finished. I did not ever live in the dormitory, because home was just two and one half miles from the campus. I did not have that much college life. I would go to chapel and could get a feeling of what was going on in the school.

FORSYTHE: Can you tell me more about chapel?

RUSHING: When it was completed, we were assigned seats. Mr. Baldwin led us in songs. We would usually sing a hymn or two and then a funny song. President Smith would give a talk. He had a hesitancy in his speech that bothered me in the beginning. We thought it was from an injury that he had during WW I. You got used to it. One time we went to a reception for all the seniors. My friend says that I went and she took her friend who was not a college student. We had made evening dresses in our home economics class. We had a lot of activities going on in the home economics department. We had meal planning and would invite people to come. Clayton James came once. Some of us never got past the kitchen. We had to take turns. Some of us would have to serve, cook, or clean up. I spent a lot of time in the science building.

FORSYTHE: You said that the Woodmores lived in the basement of the library?

RUSHING: Yes, and it was new. We had just started to school. Elizabeth started to school when we did. She was a pretty little black headed girl, sort of plump, but not unpleasingly. She had a short shingle-style haircut. Her mother made her dresses. I guess Mr. Woodmoore was still at the book store. The apartment was in the basement of the library. The whole basement was the apartment. You went in and down some steps in the back of it. I remember the concrete floors being nice. When we'd go home from school, we would walk down Baird Lane. As school let out, we might stop by and go in, and play a little and go home.

FORSYTHE: This is a continuation of the interview with Lurlene Rushing by Regina Forsythe on Wednesday, October 11, 1995. You were telling me about there being one car on campus?

RUSHING: I'm sure there were others, and people came to school in cars. The boys certainly did not have cars, but a few did. I cannot remember whose car it was. That was when I was a sophomore. It was a model-T with no top, or if it did it was open. They would get ready to go to town, and everybody would just pile in. Everyone seemed like they were having such a good time. I knew that because I was there after school one day. There was a little girl from Tracy City named Doe Goodman. We were boning up for a chemistry exam and I went to her room. These were upper

classmen that were going someplace. We went over to one of the other girls room and she was my husband's first cousin. She lived in Huntland, Tennessee. I think I had just started dating Elvis, and I knew who she was. She was an awful pretty girl. She had gotten a package from home. It seems like her mother had sent her a black and white check dress. She married a Carl Young here. I do not know what class she was in. He was in the building business, Young and Oglesby. They built many of the new houses that were built after FHA came along. They had a good business here. She died young, she had euremic palsy with the birth of a child.

FORSYTHE: You were telling me about how you sold your books to buy more books?

RUSHING: Yes, of course I would have to add some to it. I kept my Meal Planning books and a few others, but I sold most of them. I bought second-handed books. You could get them at the bookstore. It was not that expensive, it seemed to me, to go to college, because I was staying at home. My mother was sick at that time and I had a lot of responsibility.

FORSYTHE: What do you remember about Neal Frazier?

RUSHING: I had many courses with him. I took Old Testament and New Testament under him. I had the course about the beginning of language. I had to make a chart for that course. I enjoyed him as a teacher, I thought he was a good man. He was an inspirational man.

FORSYTHE: Dr. Golightly?

RUSHING: The only "D" that I ever made, I made in his class. He taught psychology. To be a teacher, you had to take many of those courses. It seemed like we had a test in measurements under him. I cannot remember which course it was, but someone said that he could not see very well. I liked to sit at the front, so I would not miss anything. I was struggling with this test that he gave. Everyone in the class had a copy of it. They said that they had the test answers at the back of the room, but I was at the front. I taught two full years at Watertown, and then I taught some in the service. They were advertising for teachers in Tampa, Florida. They were so hard up for teachers, everyone had gone into the service. They said you could go to the University of Tampa and sign up. I was so homesick and lonesome that I did not know what to do. They had a job in general science and allowed me to teach it. That was an interesting and nice thing. I was afraid I would not know the children. We were twelve miles out and one of the teacher had a B-card [a ration card] that she would drive to school on and she'd pick several of us up. We taught at that little school. I taught one year there, and I enjoyed it. The professor was a Mr. McClain that had gone to school at Peabody College, so he was familiar with Middle Tennessee. One time we had a faculty meeting. Some of the faculty members were quite old at that time. He was so very complementary of my teaching. I've never had that to happen before, nor since. I felt like crawling through a little hole, because I knew I was not that good. I had two years of experience, but not a lot.

FORSYTHE: Did you student teach at the Training School?

RUSHING: Yes, in home economics. One of our students made a velveteen skirt. It was the first time she ever sewed and that was what she brought. We had a good time. She is now married to B.B. Carr. Sissy Carr is her name, she still lives here in town. We had home economics in the 7th and 8th grade at the Training School. When we were doing the practice teaching, I think it was just the 8th grade. When we started out, the first thing we taught was how to hem a cuff. They learned the machine and the parts of it and how to really sew. They learned to make breakfast, and a luncheon, and to cook the things that it took. We fixed foods and had a little picnic in the class. We had a little breakfast table in one of the workrooms that we could serve our little meals in. We had a little notebook that we kept recipes in. The second year, I made beach pajamas, and a beach hat, and a slip and we did dinner meals too.

FORSYTHE: Why did you decide to major in home economics?

RUSHING: I enjoyed it so much. I never could have gone far away from home to go to college.

FORSYTHE: Do you remember Philip Mankin?

RUSHING: Yes, I knew him. I knew of the Mankins because I lived here, but I never did have a class under him. He taught many of the freshman. My freshman class teacher was Miss Anne Ordway. I had enough hours in English to have a major in English, but I did not have a few of the right classes. After the first quarter, I began to take a few more hours until I got a feel for the school. I wish I had taken a course in music appreciation. I took one in art appreciation with Miss Hester Rogers. I enjoyed that. Now, since I'm older, I see many girls make a cedar chest in woodworking. I think that is good for girls. I am sorry I did not get the chance to do that.

FORSYTHE: What do you remember about Miss Anne Ordway?

RUSHING: Some people dreaded her, but I really liked her. She had you doing a lot of writing in the freshman year. I was weak on some things. When we got to high school, some of us had a hard time with grammar. Students were better prepared later. I had to monitor some classes that Mary Francis Snell taught and she was very thorough. You did not write any messy papers and send into Miss Anne. You corrected them. She would knock you down for simple mistakes that anyone would have known better to have done. That is good, because then you are not so sloppy in other work. I enjoyed her a lot.

FORSYTHE: Miss Hester Rogers?

RUSHING: I enjoyed her. Her brother had the neighboring farm to our farm. Her father had moved here from Smith County. There was a bunch of children, and he came here

to educate his children. The had the farm that joined my grandfather's farm. I did not know her, but I knew who she was. She was very good. We had one course that we had to take with her, it was about colors and design. That was a required course for a home economics major. The art appreciation was really fine. She was our teacher sponsor for Tau Omicron. One time we picnicked together and went down to the park. She talked to us about the Parthenon and some of the things that were in it. She gave us a real appreciation, for things that we might not have done otherwise. You did not do as many things as kids get to enjoy now. You remember the little things.

FORSYTHE: What do you remember about Mr. George Davis?

RUSHING: He was my neighbor too. He lived at the end of Dill Lane, at the corner of Dill Lane and East Main. He walked to school and walked home. He taught human physiology. He was very particular, too. Even though the answer to a question was a phrase, we had to put a period after that phrase. He would count off on it if we did not. He gave us a pop test, just about every day. That was the only course I had under him, but I knew him. When I was a child, I picked his strawberries. He would let us come down and pick some berries. I guess we picked some for him too. My sister and I were fourteen and one half months apart, and we did things together always. One of the things older people liked to plant was an asparagus bed. He had one of the nicest. It was near the fence. I have always liked asparagus. The fresh is so much better than the canned. I remember him for that. His son, James, was my teacher in high school. He was my third year English teacher. He taught me chemistry too. It is true, I had a hard time with valence. When my daughter was taking chemistry, she had a hard time with it too. I sat her down and told her that she needed to learn the valence table or she would never be able to balance an equation. She told me later on that if I had not worked with her, she would have never made it through high school chemistry. I taught some chemistry for a couple of years.

FORSYTHE: What memories do you have of growing up in Rutherford County?

RUSHING: Just precious. I had a little bit of it all, we were not far from town. We were not afraid to walk home from school. As we began to go to school, the Woodbury highway had not been built, it was a pike. Then they paved it all the way to Knoxville. I remember my first little pencils getting tar on them, where they had tarred the road. We walked. Parents would not let their children do that now. I walked home from college, most always. That is another thing that is a no-no now. I would ride in the morning with my sister who went to the business school, and then I'd walk home in the evening. I did not know it then, you do not realize what a nice situation you grew up under. My father worked in town and would come home and talk about things that happened in town. When the depression was, I remember him talking about it. He would say there was a run on the bank. I remember he told mamma to go and get whatever they had in the bank out. She said that Jesse Beasley was there with a truck bringing money to the bank. There was a run on the

bank. With FDIC insurance, you did not have that to happen anymore. I remember him talking about the Roosevelt days, I was in the 7th grade, talking about using the script of whatever that was. We were able to get through that time. It did not last long. There was a man that climbed the courthouse one time, and I think he fell. Flagpole sitters, things like that, that happened around the town. Dad would bring that information back to us. I remember there was some sort of thing about Look, Lee, and Caldwell, in the Nashville Banner. Daddy would bring the newspaper home from the shop. They would read the paper. It was a political some sort of thing. My mother stayed with me five years before she died, and I now have my baby sister, that is five years younger that has lived with me. My mother was not a bed patient until the last few weeks of her life. She had a stroke and I thought she would get to the hospital. The doctor said I could care for her with the help of a nurse's aid. She had not ever been in the hospital before. She was 89 years old. She died in dignity at home.

FORSYTHE: Are there any more memories that you have of the school of Murfreesboro?

RUSHING: I can remember the Carnation Milk Plant coming and the parades, and barbeques. Maybe a circus coming to town.

FORSYTHE: What did you do for entertainment when you were a child?

RUSHING: We climbed trees. We liked to climb the little peach tree and eat peaches. We had a rock up in a glade where we would play house. We would take shards of glass and rock and make little rooms for our house. Sometimes with neighbors we would take a little lunch out there. We would walk rail fences. Daddy finally did away with the rails and put up better fences. My grandmother lived within walking distance. When things got dreary, I would go over to my grandmother's house and she would let me do anything I wanted to. I could hunt up the eggs, and I could water her flowers, and when she did not feel good, I cooked once. She just bragged on anything I did. If you ironed or helped out she would just tell you how well you did. There was always something going on, on the farm. When I was older I would help mamma cook for the hands. The noon meal was the big meal that we fixed. At Christmas time, my brother, would take us to the show. If there was something that the teacher felt that we should see, like "Oliver Twist" or the "Tale of Two Cities." We would go see it. I had cousins by the dozen. They did not live here, but my grandmother lived in Eagleville and it was not that far away. We would have a birthday celebration in April. We would meet in November too. We would meet at Thanksgiving and Christmas. I had cousins living close on the weekends. I had a neighbor whose father was a preacher. She had the "Tarzan" books. She had "Little Women," "Old Fashioned Girl," and she would let me read those in the summer. I helped out on the farm. One of the things we did several summers was to patch sacks. I hated that, but did it. We had to help out. We had a garden and gathered things from our garden. It teaches you a lot. Some of our children will never know.

FORSYTHE: Did you have a job while you were a student at MTSU?

RUSHING: No, I never did. You could have, we had the NYA, but we never did. That was how a lot of people came to school, working. I would have probably had to have a job if I had boarded away from home.

FORSYTHE: Can you tell me about you campus activities?

RUSHING: We had Home Economics Club that met in the afternoon. We had little parties and helped out. That kept us really busy. I was president of it my senior year. We had a mother/daughter luncheon in the springtime. We were on quarters then. We had plenty to keep us busy.