

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW
WITH
CHARLES PIGG

23 OCTOBER 1995

MURFREESBORO, TENNESSEE

INTERVIEWED BY REGINA FORSYTHE
FOR THE Q. M. SMITH ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
INTERVIEW #QMS.134

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

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ABSTRACT



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FORSYTHE: What about the Art Barn Annex?

PIGG: That came about primarily to alleviate or remedy a fire code problem that had developed in the old art barn which was the old dairy barn. We had welding operations in there and we had ceramic operations in there, and the fire Marshall just didn't like that at all. So, the funding for the little art barn annex came about during the period of time when the state was appropriating money to correct problems associated with OSHA and or fire code alterations, and we were able to get the money for that which in essence took the welding shop out of the old art barn and took the ceramics area out and the foundry. I think the foundry was in there. So, you could see those two or three operations were dangerous, really, to be in that old art barn. Because a spark here and there and that thing would have been gone. So, we were able then to get the funding to construct the little annex building.

FORSYTHE: What about the art lab?

PIGG: The art lab is just a phase two that took the paint shop out of the old Art Barn. Another operation that would not meet the OSHA requirements from the standpoint of ventilation. It was on a second floor level to begin with. It was a disaster waiting to happen. It was just a phase two of OSHA funding and fire code funding to alleviate problems that were in the old art barn itself.

FORSYTHE: How many phases were there?

PIGG: I think that there was just the two that we built-the art barn annex and the art lab. We pulled out the dangerous operations from the old art barn itself.

FORSYTHE: You were talking earlier about your involvement in the business building that is being built now. Can you tell me about that?

PIGG: The concept of programming and budgeting for facilities is a long evolutionary process in the state hierarchy of things. They don't just happen over night. We were talking about a new business building at least ten years ago. I could go back and we could look at our capital outlay documents that were submitted to the board of regents, and I feel confident that we'd find a business building summarized in there and quantified from the standpoint of money to build a business building. So, you plant those seeds early on and you do a lot of planning. In fact that planning took place on an annual basis. Every year we would go back and update those planning and programming documents and submit those to the Board of Regents and then they'd submit their whole package to the Higher Education Commission. You'd go through that same ritual and that same machinery on a yearly basis. But, the business building had been planned and programmed about ten years ago. Now it's been updated and modified on an annual basis. I'm sure when we first started out we weren't talking about \$22 million like it is right now either. So, it's been added on to obviously in the ensuing years.

FORSYTHE: Did you place it where it's going to be?

PIGG: That was done on the master plan. The master plan was started when Dr. Prescott was here. It was finalized after Dr. Walker came on board. That was one of the things that was done with the master plan. Mass Comm had already been predetermined where it was going. In fact it was probably under construction. I can't remember. But then the decision was made by the planners at the time, "ok we've already set one quad of this major core activity. We think the business building ought to go on the north of that core. We think the library should go on the south end of that. On the east end where the temporary buildings are now and the graphic arts would be, I think at that time they were talking about either the college of liberal arts if they built a new facility, or a college of education. But you would have four major facilities that would create a quadrangle that would be highly dense, highly utilized, student demanding type facilities.

FORSYTHE: Would you do away with that little graphics office?

PIGG: I don't know. That was undetermined at that time. That thing evolved because it was initially or the first portion built in 1957, I think for the fire training

center. The state fire training center which didn't have anything to do with MTSU except it was located on our campus. It was the fire training center which is now located on Old Fort Pkwy. They've got their own place out there, and have had it for a number of years. Firefighters from all across the state would come here for their fire training. When they left the campus in mid 60's to late 60's, we used the facility for various and sundry functions. I think security was in it for a number of years. Then, when graphic arts became a major discipline we looked for space for them. It was decided they would go there. But when it went there, we needed to add on to it. We got money to expand the facility. It is a small facility that's probably in a very strategic location in the future development of this campus.

FORSYTHE: Was the fire school next to the married student housing?

PIGG: No. It was just a bit beyond. The housing was west of here, behind the student center and Davis Science Center. That's where the primary housing was. That would have been just across the street east of here.

FORSYTHE: Were they setting fires in there?

PIGG: No. But they did have a facility they would start a fire in and they would put the fire out. It was a chimney or tower that they would climb in.

FORSYTHE: I was just thinking that it would be too close to the family area.

PIGG: Yeah.

FORSYTHE: What about the Mass Comm building?

PIGG: That was a building, too, that had its very beginnings several years before it became a reality. It was in our planning documents for a long time before we were able to get funding to do it. Several people were instrumental in that becoming a reality. Not the least of which, Dr. Scarlett and Dr. Kimbrell were very instrumental in getting the program started. Dr. Kimbrell continued to give tremendous support for funding. He had certain contacts that he would contact for support. Rep. John Bragg was very instrumental in helping the institution secure appropriate funding for that facility. I'm sure speaking encouraging

words to the appropriate people in the state administration. That came about over a long period of time to be honest about it.

FORSYTHE: The nursing building?

PIGG: Yes, the need was there, and we recognized the need for the nursing facility because prior to that time it was operating out of the Stark Agriculture Building upstairs. The nursing program was a growing program. It had gone from a two year program to a four year program. Again, it was a matter of our being able to portray our needs to the State Board of Regents and the Higher Education Commission in order to get into a high priority funding situation. They recognized the need, but in the overall list of priorities state-wide it just did not have that kind of status. Fortunately, the institution was granted funds from the Christy Houston Foundation which is headquartered and located here in Murfreesboro and that was the financial impetus that got it going.

FORSYTHE: You mentioned the Wright Building as being the last permanent building before all this.

PIGG: That would have come about probably in 1980 for about \$2 million (in that range). Again, the need was there for that facility. We had up until that point in time that discipline operating almost exclusively out of the Saunders Fine Arts Building. They had vastly overgrown the facilities there. We did not have up until this time the building came on board a mid-range auditorium type facility. We had the Tucker Theater in the Boutwell Dramatic Arts that would seat 1100-1200. But that was for musical and dramatic presentations. We had the little Circle Theater in which you could get probably 150-200 people. We had the Murphey Center which would get 11-12 thousand. But we didn't have the mid-range type thing in there for 500 or so for concerts which the music people wanted and needed. So we were able to get that type of facility as well as other laboratory and office suites for private instruction which was desperately needed.

FORSYTHE: And Jones Hall was renovated quite recently.

PIGG: Well, Jones Hall was added on to recently. We renovated it in 1974 I think and that's when it was converted from a dormitory. It was a men's dorm on campus and stayed that way 'til 1952. Then it was a girl's dorm for a while and back to

men. It flip-flopped there for a number of years. In 1974 we converted it from dormitory to faculty office. It has never been a dormitory since then. Well, for a number of years one of our major shortages around here was for faculty office space. We had people in clothes closets and broom closets and all that stuff. So we could justify our asking for additional office space to the point where even the Board of Regents and Higher Education Commission understood that, and we were finally appropriated some money to build two wings onto Jones Hall that added a significant number of office spaces. That building was built in 1921. We attempted as best as we could to match the architecture of that. I think, we did a real good job. The brick, the windows, and the whole aesthetic signature and value of that building was retained. I think it has been a very pleasant addition to that building.

FORSYTHE: When you renovated in 1974 were there any problems changing over from a dorm to faculty office spaces?

PIGG: Not really. Although we had shower rooms we didn't know what to do with. Basically, we turned a dormitory room into an office. Some of those rooms were fairly good sized and people came out with some really nice office space. I think people like the faculty liked the building and still do I guess. It's a very comfortable, roomy type building.

FORSYTHE: What did you do with the shower rooms?

PIGG: I'm not sure. They may have made flower gardens out of them. I don't recall.

FORSYTHE: Are there any other buildings you could talk about or maintenance problems?

PIGG: No. Parking is always a problem. It always has been, and perhaps it always will be. I don't know. That's something we dealt with almost on an annual basis. We tried to create and generate and provide additional surface parking as we could, to try to keep up with the demand. I know that over a number of years we looked at the idea of a parking facility. Again, that is the type of thing that the State will not appropriate money for. It would have to be self-generating, self supporting. Every time we analyzed the situation, we came up with a figure on a monthly basis, and we didn't think people would use it, particularly students. It was going to be a hefty fee to park. Providing mass surface parking on the periphery seemed logical. I think the concept of transportation, busing, is the

answer. I think this is the responsible solution to the situation and one that the students will tolerate. I don't think we're in a situation where the students are going to support a parking facility that is located somewhere close to the heart of the campus. I don't think they will be able to support it.

FORSYTHE: Why did you leave in 1992?

PIGG: There was an architectural firm in town that asked me on occasion if I would work with them. I said, "Someday." I saw some things unfold here, and I thought that maybe this is that time. I had 30 something years in total state service. So, I contacted them at the time, and they said, "Great, we'd be happy to have you." I told them that I was only interested in working 3-4 days a week. They said, "We're busy right now. You don't mind working full time do you?" I said, "No, I'll work it for while." We've been really busy, and I enjoy it.

FORSYTHE: Is it a state job?

PIGG: No, it's with a private firm, Johnson and Bailey Architecture, in Murfreesboro. We do all the work for National Health Corporation, nursing homes and retirement centers all across the southeast United States. Although I'm not involved directly with that, but I am involved in the public sector work such as schools, public type facilities. We are doing a tremendous amount of work here in Rutherford County - new schools, additions to schools, VA hospital additions. I did a project for Tennessee State University in McMinnville, a nursery research center. I haven't gotten that far removed from the type of facilities I was doing here. It is a different perspective. I'm looking at it on the architect's view of things. Whereas, here I did it from the owner's viewpoint. It's interesting, but I could certainly take the experiences I had here to that job.

FORSYTHE: Is there anything else you want to add?

PIGG: I've been a basic part of the development of this institution for a number of years. I have watched it grow and develop. I'll certainly want to continue to be a part of that growth and development in the years to come.