

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW
WITH
ELIZABETH BRADLEY

5 NOVEMBER 1995

MURFREESBORO, TENNESSEE

INTERVIEWED BY REGINA FORSYTHE
FOR THE Q. M. SMITH ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
INTERVIEW # QMS.138

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



**ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW WITH
ELIZABETH BRADLEY**

Q. M. SMITH ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW # QMS 138

FORSYTHE: This tape is part of the Q.M. Smith Collection designated as QMS.1995.138. This is Regina Forsythe. I am interviewing Mrs. Elizabeth Bradley. Today is Saturday, November 5, 1995. The interview is being conducted in the home of Rita King at 721 North Tennessee Boulevard in Murfreesboro, Tennessee. The tape of this interview along with a transcription of this interview will become part of the Quintin Miller Smith Collection and will be available to the public. Future researchers will be able to include portions of this interview in their publications. Is that okay with you, Mrs. Bradley?

BRADLEY: Sure.

FORSYTHE: What is your full name?

BRADLEY: Frances Elizabeth Buchanan Whorley Bradley.

FORSYTHE: And your birth date?

BRADLEY: 3-19-33

FORSYTHE: And your birthplace?

BRADLEY: What we knew then as Rutherford Hospital in Murfreesboro.

FORSYTHE: What was your father's name?

BRADLEY: James McGill Buchanan.

FORSYTHE: And his occupation?

BRADLEY: He was a farmer on the Old U.S. 41 Manchester Road. We're sort of proud of that family name because my grandfather was the only governor from this county. The Buchanan town in the county is our community. Our farm was in the final running for the big walking horse, but we did not get it. They were more interested in the Nashville side of Murfreesboro.

Forsythe: And your mother's name?

BRADLEY: Lila Scott Buchanan.

FORSYTHE: And her occupation?

BRADLEY: Basically, she was a homemaker, but before she and my father married, she was a teacher.

FORSYTHE: What did she teach?

BRADLEY: Anything, I guess. She was a gifted person. She could do anything. She could make something out of nothing.

FORSYTHE: What school did she teach at?

BRADLEY: The Barfield community...I guess a one room school then.

FORSYTHE: What are your brothers and sisters names?

BRADLEY: My sister's name is Lila Graue, and she lives in Fayetteville, Arkansas. My brother's name is James McGill Buchanan, Jr. We call him Buck. He was recipient of the Nobel Prize in economics in 1986.

FORSYTHE: What is your husband's name?

BRADLEY: I am a widow.

FORSYTHE: Do you have any children?

BRADLEY: I have two, and their names are Jim Whorley. Jim is an attorney in Temple, Texas. He is a graduate of the University of Tennessee and the University of Texas with an MBA and a law degree. My other child, Jeff Whorley lives in Bell Buckle. He was a candidate for Congress last year. We won our primary, but caught up in the sweep in November and didn't win the general election. That was a big disappointment for our family. We're in the recovery stage, but we're very proud of him.

FORSYTHE: Did anyone else in your family go to MTSU?

BRADLEY: My brothers and sisters did, but my children did not.

FORSYTHE: Why did you choose to go MTSU?

BRADLEY: I grew up in a time, even though my brother and sister are a lot older than I am, there was really no choice. We were not a privileged family in regards to material possessions. We were privileged in a lot of other ways, prestige in the community, leaders in the community and all that. But, materially, my father had lost everything in the depression. So, when it came time, you went to the place where you could live at home, milk cows in the morning before you went and when you got home,

and that was it. It was a blessing now as I look back on it because it prepared me for a very, very satisfying time in the teaching profession.

FORSYTHE: What years did you go to school there?

BRADLEY: I graduated in 1954. I came back and got a master's degree a few years later, and I was one of the early EDS people. I got three degrees from MTSU.

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

BRADLEY: I have memories of knowing everybody, but there was the dorm folks and the stay-at-home day students. There were two distinct groups. The day people had a big lounge on the second floor of what was then the Ad. Building. There was just the Ad. building, the library in the middle of the campus, the science building and the dorms. You certainly knew all of the professors, which ones to avoid and which ones you had to take. I was a history and English major. I had people in those departments solid. What we call the old gym now was sort of new then. I remember the sports program, big football and basketball supporters. That was before the day of track, golf and tennis. You learned as much time as you would give. That hasn't changed. Your gain was equal to your commitment. That was a time when the university was almost Murfreesboro. Murfreesboro was a small town, a small university town. We didn't have industry then. It was a farm community and the university community.

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

BRADLEY: You did not know him personally, but you felt like you knew him. His staff was very small. Everything was done from those few administrative offices. We were all interested in his speech impairment and how that happened. But you did learn to understand him, even though at first you didn't. As far as evaluating him and his administrative ability, I was not in tune to that at that time. Things moved along, and I was in college when the veterans were beginning to come back on the G.I. Bill. We had the trailer park over where the veterans lived - vet village we called it. I'm sure he provided good leadership for that period in the university's life.

FORSYTHE: What can you tell me about your aunt, Rebecca Jean Buchanan?

BRADLEY: She was known in my family as "big sister." My father was the youngest in this family, and she was the oldest girl. She and another sister lived here in town, and we lived out in the country. They came to church in the country and eat Sunday dinner with us every Sunday and would usually bring cooked apples. It amazed me that the apples stayed in one piece. When I cook apples today, they mush up. Their house in town had running water and telephones. My house out in the country didn't. When I got to come to visit them, I felt like I was really somewhere. They were very kind to me. My parents were older when I was born, so, I got the attention of being the baby. She was a speech instructor here at the university. She

never married. She was a leader in the church. She spoke eloquently. Then, she taught private lessons at her house. All the Murfreesboro notable would send their children to private speech lessons. I would come in for those speech lessons, too, and I got to know all of these Murfreesboro folks. So, when I came in from the country from high school, I had a little lead on some of my country friends because I already knew all these people. That was sort of a head start for me. I think it did change some things about my life. Instead of doing a XXX where most of my friends from out in the country went, I went into Latin and those kinds of things which sort of tracked me differently, which was probably good. The tract curriculum is not something new. You were put in your first period class and you stayed with these people all day. I don't mean to categorize people, but teachers probably saw you as the better students and they talked to you as better students.

FORSYTHE: What was important to you aunt?

BRADLEY: Her family, her religion, moral values, all of those things you can respect from a fine southern person. She had been educated at Ward Belmont, the leading finishing school. Her father had been governor. Buchanans were never privileged in an economic or material sense, but they were always privileged in regard to prestige and intelligence.

FORSYTHE: Does she ever talk about the school?

BRADLEY: Yes, but by the time I would be interested in that, she was retired. Then, I remember the Buchanan players being named for her. When I came here as a student, I felt that was a certain tie just seeing that name.

FORSYTHE: Do you know why they named it for her?

BRADLEY: I would imagine she organized the first thespians.

FORSYTHE: When you were a student here, what did you do for fun?

BRADLEY: Being a day student put me in a different category. I dated and eventually married a person that lived on campus. I married while I was in the university, but I think the fun came from your relationships and your friends.

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

BRADLEY: I have my job at home. To bring in immediate money, I milked cows. I milked fourteen or fifteen cows every morning before I came to school and after I got home.

FORSYTHE: Do you remember going to chapel?

BRADLEY: In an auditorium in the Ad. building with a small attendance. It was mandatory. I grew up when the state colleges were specifically designed to do a certain thing.

Ours was originally called State Teacher's College. Then, I came along about the same time as it changed and we had regional universities where it began to spread out. We tried to do all things for that region. I was in that transitional period, and it became MTSU. I graduated from MTSU.

FORSYTHE: What do you remember about Dean Beasley?

BRADLEY: Dean Beasley had been a friend to my family also. I felt privileged that I knew these through another connection. I just remember that he was one of those at the top.

FORSYTHE: Dean James?

BRADLEY: I knew who he was. I knew his secretary very well. She would come over to the lounge to have lunch with us. We took our lunch from home. It was perfect for the day students. We didn't have lockers. We'd just put our things there without worrying about theft. In those days, we had to put on coats if we wore shorts even to our gym class.

FORSYTHE: Miss Ollie Green?

BRADLEY: I got along fine with Miss Green, but she cut you no slack. She could make geography as hard as calculus.

FORSYTHE: Roscoe Strickland?

BRADLEY: I had a lot of courses under Strickland. I loved him. Of course, I later came back and his child was in Campus School. He usually kept his head down, but his presentation in history became very much alive. It was mainly just words, no visuals. I like history anyway, and I thought he was super.

FORSYTHE: Norman Parks?

BRADLEY: Yes, hard, terribly hard. I thought I would fail, but I ended up doing very well. It was very difficult, and it demanded a lot.

FORSYTHE: Robert Corlew?

BRADLEY: I think of him in regards to Southern history. I came back and taught his children.

FORSYTHE: Gene Sloan?

BRADLEY: When I was there, Gene Sloan was always the "Sidelines" person, and publications person, and alumni person. Later, I came back and taught a lot of Sloans.

FORSYTHE: Emily Calcutt?

BRADLEY: My classes with her were always in the afternoon when you were so sleepy and so tired, and it was so hard. She was probably an eccentric. I had a lot of classes under her because I was an English major.

FORSYTHE: Richard Peck?

BRADLEY: Richard Peck was a sweetheart to everybody, he and Virginia, his wife. I had classes under both of them. Very demanding, but lovable and likable. Not as much fear involved there, but Dr. Peck was very hard.

FORSYTHE: Lane Boutwell?

BRADLEY: I had my speech classes under him. I had had some training, so I enjoyed those. It all made sense to me. I always particularly enjoyed his oral interpretation in which you read something that was given to you. I think it's important that people know how to read material well.

FORSYTHE: Edwin Howard?

BRADLEY: Now, we're getting to people where I was more contemporaries teaching at the Campus School than I am having them as teachers.

FORSYTHE: E. Mae Sanders?

BRADLEY: I had music lessons with her. I was scared to death. I couldn't produce what that woman wanted me to do, go up to the front of the room, not very happy memories.

FORSYTHE: Will Bowden?

BRADLEY: Dr. Bowden and Miss Mary Hall were the Education department when I got my first degree.

FORSYTHE: Bealer Smotherman?

BRADLEY: He was in charge at that time of all the teaching audio visuals. At that time, audio visuals were simply reel, tape recorder, and slide projector. That was about it. I had an association with Bealer Smotherman prior to that because he had been county superintendent of schools here in this county. His wife had taught at my school.

FORSYTHE: What years did you teach at Campus School?

BRADLEY: 1966-1985.

FORSYTHE: What years were you the principal?

BRADLEY: 1979-1985.

FORSYTHE: What memories do you have of being a teacher?

BRADLEY: I had taught some years before my children were born, and I had said that I would wait until after they were in school before I went back into the classroom. One was in kindergarten and the other was a pre-schooler, and they needed somebody. You had to have a certain number of years experience and a master's degree to teach there. I qualified for that. So, I came back and did not know how I would adjust to teaching in a fish bowl. There, I was being observed all the time. There was a big waiting list to get on. It doesn't mean those children are any brighter. It just means those parents early on have thought about where their child can get the best education. So, that puts you in a certain classification of parents. We had some very super students who have made their mark and will continue to do so. Later on, we moved into teaching some university classes. It was like having two jobs. You had to teach these little kids and then college kids, too. Then, I became principal and that was really like having two jobs. It was a fascinating and interesting time.

FORSYTHE: Tell me about your classroom.

BRADLEY: I think that good teachers go on the premise that whatever works and whatever makes children learn - go with it as long as it doesn't violate any principles of some sort. That was the premise I used. I thought children learned best when they were in happy surroundings. I thought they learned best when they had a good relationship with their teacher and felt comfortable and really had a good time at school. I devoted most of my life towards trying to make that happen. There were a lot of things going on in my room. I taught about dinosaurs way before they were popular. We used our research skills to find out about dinosaurs. We went to the public library where there was array of information about dinosaurs. Parents came in to view the dinosaurs we constructed after our research. Those are the kinds of things, bringing things into the classroom, that fostered learning in children. We were able to do that before the day of saying, "This is the skill you teach this week." Classroom teachers had a lot more latitude than they do now. I do not know, had I stayed in the classroom how I would have adapted. It's hard for me to envision that teaching is really as much fun as it was when I did it, because I was given so much latitude. If your children were reading up to a certain level and doing their math, it didn't really matter what route you took to get there. It wasn't like on a certain day I had to check off a certain specific skill. I'm not here to say that one is right and one is wrong. I'm just saying that we were given a lot more latitude within our classroom than we are now. I think it's showing up. You saw this week that the children are deficient in their geography skills and their social science history skills. At that time, and going back to the dinosaurs or whatever, we taught a lot of social studies, geography and that sort of thing. Then, we came along a time where students were deficient in language arts and math, so we'll have this set of skills. There's just so many hours in the day so something has to go. Unless this very gifted teacher can really incorporate that all, something is being neglected. For example, the world series was going on. Cleveland and Atlanta were playing. Then,

you should have the map pulled down and show the students where Cleveland and Atlanta are and where we are in relation to them. Then, discuss different transportation methods. Then, college professors wouldn't tell you that they knew much about teaching first grade, and they don't. They are sort of used to this sterile setting with this professor and there's a row of chairs. That's not the way children learn when they're small. This bothered him. His wife taught with him. David Singer is who it was. This bothered him. He'd be over there to see his wife and he'd come by my room and he would just say, "What in the world is happening here?" He is the same person who said I was a scarf person. My neck is as long as a giraffe, and I am very conscious of that. I love scarves. He asked me if I thought my head was going to fall off because I always had it tied on. We had a good time together.

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

BRADLEY: I like to see children learn, and I like to see teachers grow. Then, I had a third dimension there. I wanted to see some people who wanted to be teachers grow, because we had all the people that were planning to be teachers put there for the early experiences. So, I was really given three dimensions towards growth. One was the child learning, one was the pre-teacher, and one was teacher growth. Although we did get a little supplement, we didn't get anything to compensate for the hard work and stress that's involved in teaching in a fishbowl everyday. You have every move of every time you've corrected a child or didn't correct him or taught a concept and having that evaluated and realizing that you were changing some. It probably turns out though that the better teachers in Tennessee were from MTSU. Everybody wanted teachers from MTSU because they had had this hands-on experience.

FORSYTHE: Was there anything or anybody else you want to talk about?

BRADLEY: It's just fascinating to see the growth of Murfreesboro and the growth of MTSU. I come back about twice a year and something is always changing. This time it's the new recreation center. It's just a fascinating experience to see the growth that's going on. We know that growth brings on some kind of problems - traffic - but that's just part of growth.

FORSYTHE: Can you tell me about growing up in Rutherford County?

BRADLEY: It's painful anytime to leave an area that's dear to you. It's painful for me to leave although I'm married and have moved to Texas. Now, I have two sets of dear friends. I have a set of dear friends here and a set of dear friends in Texas. I'm proud of them both.

FORSYTHE: What memories do you have of growing up in Buchanan community?

BRADLEY: Those memories nowadays seem like I had a very hard life. I was born in the midst of the depression. My father had been a prosperous farmer and lost everything. After that time, he was never willing to take any chances. If he couldn't pay for it that day, it didn't happen. I did not have many material things. I realize now that that's probably a benefit although it would have been hard to see that earlier on. It makes me appreciate how material possessions are gained through hard work. I grew up in a family where there were certain things you didn't debate and were givens. I've tried to explain this to a lot of people, but it doesn't make sense. It made me the person I am today. We were Presbyterians. I've never branched out. We were democrats. I don't always agree with them. I don't always agree with Bill Clinton and what the democrat party does, but my roots are there. If I had to make a choice, I would believe more that way than the other. We love sports. We love the political process. We love the activeness in regards to making something happen in the party of your choice. We love pets. I think that makes living a life very interesting. We're about to lose our Houston Oilers to Tennessee. That's a sad day for me because I'm a big Oiler fan. Those are certain institutions that were instilled in me, in this family. I'm sure my parents didn't sit down and say, "Are we going to make this child forevermore Presbyterian" or what have you. It was an unconscious thing that happened, but I do think they keep you on some sort of path as an adult. A negative part of this is that it may not have caused me to think and make choices enough. It did give me a basis and roots that is very important. I was able to rear two boys, a lot by myself, that had no problems with drugs or alcoholism or any of that sort of thing. They did not have an easy life particularly, but I think some of that root business translated into values.

FORSYTHE: Could you tell me about your brother, the Nobel Prize winner?

BRADLEY: I'm very proud of him. My mother was probably a very intellectually unique individual, so I guess he got an overload of those genes, because I didn't get much. Growing up, I had to be quiet because Buck was studying. We just had one warm room in the house. Early on, we realized that he was gifted and talented. Then, he went into the service and went straight up to the XXX staff. He came out and got his PhD and began doing a lot of writing and developed these distinct theories about things. I try to read all of his books, but they're beyond me. He made a name for himself in the field of economics worldwide. Then, in 1987, he was the sole recipient, most win it with someone else, his was by himself. He has been XXX a lot to enter politics and get on somebody's cabinet, but he's always shunned that. I guess I got an overload in that department. He stayed clear of that, but I think he feels strongly about something that is debated a lot now. A balanced budget is going to have to be a constitutional amendment, because as long as your elected officials are dependant upon balancing your budget, they are always going to be worried about getting re-elected again. It's going to be what's best for my district and not the whole thing. He probably is not a democrat. I think he just votes for the person. I don't think he aligns himself with any party. We're quite proud of him as any family would be. I was able to go to Stockholm to see him get his award. That was an experience. I've been blessed with a lot of. . . I guess I don't think there's any such

thing as a mediocre experience. There have been some very, very big experiences and I'm not really talking about marriages and births. I think those are the "biggies" in your life, but I'm talking about beyond that. I've had some real "biggies." I was a delegate to the democratic national convention one time. Going to the Nobel Prize assembly was a "biggie." I was state president of my Delta Kappa Gamma, and I traveled all over the United States. I've been a privileged person also in regards to my health. I'm sixty-two years old and perfectly healthy. They are blessings and I realize that.

FORSYTHE: Tell me about being a delegate.

BRADLEY: Well, you have to run just like you're running for office. It was my first experience on that end of running. I got elected, and it was when Jimmy Carter was up for his second round. The convention was in New York. Every delegate has an alternate. I'm not a very selfish person by nature, but my alternate did not get to go much because I knew that would be the only time I was there. It was in Madison Square Garden. I had a seat mate here who was able to spot all of these television personalities and all. It was just like it is on television, but you're really there. Some of my folks went to see the Yankees play. I did nothing but attend that convention because I thought I'd probably be back to New York, but I'd never be another delegate. We got back, and Carter didn't get elected. His staff called and wanted the Tennessee delegation to come back to Washington for a weekend. We were treated royally and were invited over to the White House. They told us we were going on to see President Carter. Everyone was lining up against a door, and I was at the back of the line. It just so happened that the President came out the other door which put me first in line. Before I could bat an eye, I turned a corner and there stood Jimmy Carter. It was like I was drained. I just couldn't believe it. I had met Roselyn. I had talked to her a lot. She had been to Murfreesboro. I had seen Jimmy Carter on the podium, and I realized he was warm and a southerner and all that. But, when I was right there talking to him, it was amazing.

FORSYTHE: And you were President of...

BRADLEY: Delta Kappa Gamma. It's an honorary teacher's club. Don't call it a sorority. They don't want you to say it's a sorority. I met a lot of very dear friends all over Tennessee.

FORSYTHE: What was the purpose of Delta Kappa Gamma?

BRADLEY: To promote women in education. We have seven big purposes, and one is to foster your professional growth, but mainly to promote women and to look at issues that affect children in learning.

FORSYTHE: Was there anything else you wanted to talk about?

BRADLEY: No, not really.

FORSYTHE: Thank you very much.