Recollections:
The Middle Tennessee Voices of Their Times Series

Television Program with

Charles “Bubba” Murphy

1984

Interviewer: Dr. Bob Bullen, Professor of Educational Leadership
Middle Tennessee State University

Produced by Television Services, Middle Tennessee State University

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ABSTRACT: An interview with Charles “Bubba” Murphy, alumnus and revered coach of MTSU, as well as a WWII veteran. In Part 1 of the interview, Murphy discusses his time as a student athlete at MTSU, playing under Coach Floyd, playing for the New York and New Jersey Giants and his service in the Navy in WWII. In Part 2, Murphy begins with discussing how he received the job as coach at MTSU, offered to him by President Smith. The remainder of the interview covers the coaching career of Murphy, as he discusses his coaching style, the players he coached, and the changes he saw in both the game, and in MTSU, during his time coaching.

PART 1

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<tr>
<th>Time Count</th>
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<tr>
<td>0:00:00</td>
<td>Intro Music plays.</td>
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<td>0:00:10</td>
<td>Dr. Bob Bullen introduces his guest: Mr. Charles “Bubba” Murphy, a MTSU alumnus considered one of the finest coaches of his era and a Lieutenant in the Navy during World War II. He scored an impressive record as a coach and won or tied for seven championship titles. In 1965, 55 of his former players were high school coaches in the area. After college he played baseball with the New York Giants farm system.</td>
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Murphy recalls how he became a student at Middle Tennessee State Teacher’s College.

Murphy talks about how different basketball was in high school and college in his day compared to the present. He mentions two of his high school coaches, Mr. J.E. Marsh and Kenneth Miles, who had completely different coaching styles.

Murphy discusses how different football and basketball equipment was when he was a player several decades ago.

Murphy talks about how small the school was back then, saying that there were very few teachers and only around 500 students.

Murphy remembers buying a car with Rush Taylor; the two of them along with Murphy’s roommate split the cost in thirds and shared the car. They often rented out the car to people since cars were so expensive back then, and one time a guy had even put a full tank of gas into the car.

Murphy tells Bullen how he felt about President Lyon, saying he was one of the greatest presidents he has ever seen.

Murphy explains how he got his nickname, saying his sister could not pronounce “brother” so she just called him “Bubba” and the nickname stuck.

Murphy recalls playing football for Coach Johnny “Red” Floyd as a picture of Coach Floyd is displayed on the screen.

A picture of the 1935 undefeated MTSC football team is shown on the screen.

Murphy answers Bullen’s question about Athletic Chairman Horace Jones as a picture of Mr. Jones is displayed on the screen along with Coach Murphy and Teddy Morris.

Murphy discusses how injuries were treated.

Murphy recalls some college rivalries, specifically a game against rival Western Kentucky, as a picture of him as a college football player is shown on the screen.

Another picture of Murphy as a college player is shown on the screen as he talks about a game against Western Kentucky.

Murphy remembers a few of his teammates: Woodrow Smitherman, John Hammerick, Manny Bass, and John Braggen. He recalls playing a game of baseball with John Braggen in 1938.
Murphy answers Bullen’s question about playing for the New York Giants, saying he always wanted to play pro ball and talks about his four year career playing with the New York Giants and the Jersey City Giants.

A picture of the Jersey City Giants is displayed on the screen as Murphy continues his discussion of his baseball career.

Murphy recalls how far the team traveled sometimes to play a ball game.

Murphy answers Bullen’s question about his dreams of making the big leagues, saying that he always hoped he could make it to the big leagues, but he did not make it. He then discusses how he liked playing baseball and coaching high school ball at the same time.

Murphy describes how players are different today than they were back then and how hard it was to coach football when he did not really know what to tell all of the players to do.

A portrait of Murphy and his wife is displayed on the screen as he verbally recalls December 7, 1941 when Pearl Harbor was attacked.

Murphy explains how he got into the Navy and how he was able to continue his involvement in sports during his service.

A picture of baseball players on a Navy base is displayed on the screen.

Murphy recalls playing baseball on a number of Navy bases, as well as playing basketball against the Globetrotters.

Murphy remembers being visited by Bob Hope, Jack Dempsey, and Dinah Shore at the Navy base.

Murphy answers Bullen’s question about continuing his education after the war, saying he finished his Master’s degree at Peabody University.

Bullen concludes part I; credits roll with a sketching of a baseball player in the background and music playing.

END OF PART 1

PART 2

Intro Music plays.
Dr. Bullen continues his interview with Mr. Charles “Bubba” Murphy.

Murphy answers Bullen’s question about how he almost did not make it to MTSU as a coach, saying he was offered a job at MTSU and talked to President Smith, who offered him a job immediately. He decided not to accept the job at first but later called back and accepted the job.

A picture of Murphy’s first team at MTSC in 1947 is displayed on the screen as Murphy discusses how nice it was to coach a team full of war veterans.

Murphy recalls winning his first game and Coach Floyd’s comments on his coaching—a picture of Coach Floyd is displayed on the screen.

Murphy describes peoples’ reactions to his decision to drop his single-wing coaching style and why he made that decision.

Murphy remembers some of the exceptional players he coached over the years, including: J.B. Crawford, Maxie Runion whose picture is displayed on the screen, Kenny Marsh in 1965, and Clark Maple.

Murphy mentions that he still sees some of his old players occasionally, and that a lot of them have become great coaches, such as Calvin Short, Gary Whaley, Dean Fisher, Billy Derek, Nicky Kutcher, Charlie Daniels.

Murphy answers Bullen’s question about his coaching philosophy, saying that he surrounds himself with good, loyal, and like-minded assistant coaches. He also looked for good players that were also good students and had good character.

Murphy answers Bullen’s question about how he handled fights between players during practices, saying he once tried to make a couple guys settle a fight with boxing gloves on and the players thought it was so funny that they never got into a fight again.

Murphy describes how he prepared his team for a big game, saying he really had a good team of players that wanted to play and were always ready to play.

Murphy recalls a time when he hired a new assistant coach who only got the job because of his status as a Church of Christ member.

Murphy talks about how the school’s athletic budget increased as school enrollment increased. He also recalls how his players did not have any kind of faceguard until a player broke his nose in 1948, but those were dangerous and did not last very long. Finally in 1952 a better designed faceguard was available that the players liked to use.
Murphy answers Bullen’s question about having a coach watch the game from the press box, saying that the coach would use a phone to discuss the game with the other coaches or players.

Murphy discusses how he called plays from the sidelines and how he made sure quarterbacks knew what to do. The quarterbacks often had wristbands with plays in them that would let the quarterback and coach coordinate without having to delay the game.

Murphy describes his memory of his favorite game which was played against Austin Peay, his most thrilling game, against Tennessee Tech, and his favorite team to coach.

Murphy describes what it was like to win a bowl game. A picture of a pep rally celebrating the bowl win in 1959 is displayed on the screen.

Murphy recalls some of his favorite coaches from his time.

Murphy answers Bullen’s question about his opinion of the Ohio Valley Conference (OVC), saying it was a great conference to coach in.

Murphy gives his advice to any youngsters looking to become a great football coach, saying it is very hard work and you really have to want to do it. He really enjoyed his coaching career.

Bullen thanks Murphy for being on the show and concludes the interview.

Credits roll with music.

END OF PART 2