The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training
Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

SAMUEL VICK SMITH

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy
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INTERVIEW

Q: Today is July 9, 2001. This is an interview with Samuel Vick Smith.

SMITH: Yes.

Q: This is being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training. I am Charles Stuart Kennedy. Let's start sort of at the beginning. Could you tell me when and where you were born and a little about your parents?

SMITH: Okay, I was born in Hollywood, California in February 1940. My parents had both grown up in Washington State. My father was actually born in New Mexico, sixteen years before it became a state. Both of my parents were born in the late 1890s. Something rare in those days, they both graduated from college, at Washington State College, which is now Washington State University, in 1924. They were married in 1923. They went off to Chicago and they didn't have a child until I came along seventeen years later. My father was an engineer. He'd lost his job like everybody else in the Depression. He was working in the New Deal alphabet soup program WPA as a foreman. He was hoping to get a job as an engineer again, because with World War II already going on in Europe, the aircraft industries in Southern California were beginning to build up. So, they moved to California where they thought he might be able to get a job. Since he was a reserve officer in the Army, nobody would hire him because they knew the war was coming and they'd lose him as soon as we got in the war. I was born to two parents who were out of work. Finally, I don't know when it was, probably in late 1940, he got a job as a camp

commander of a CCC camp. The CCC was the Civilian Conservation Corps and it was a plan to get young men out of the cities, off the streets and into a healthy atmosphere working hard doing things like building national parks.

Q: Oh, yes, we are very much the wealthier because of the CCC work.

SMITH: Right. So, my father became commander of the camp in Reno, and part of our lore is that the day he arrived, the mess hall burned down. Later he went to another CCC camp north of San Francisco. Around July of 1941 he was brought onto active duty in the Army. We still weren't in the war at that time. So, at Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941, we were living in an apartment in San Francisco and the war started and my father went off to the Presidio. During most of the war we lived up in Puget Sound. My father was in the Coast Artillery and the idea was to protect Puget Sound from an invading Japanese navy. Because he was in the army we moved around a lot. We went from there to Texas, to Arizona where he had a prisoner of war camp in the desert, where the soldiers from the German army, most of them not German, were picking cotton. Then he was sent to Japan and my mother and I lived in Tulare, California. Then my mother and I joined him in Japan. After Japan, we moved to El Paso, Texas, where Fort Bliss is. By that time the Coast Artillery had devolved into the Anti-Aircraft Artillery and Fort Bliss was the anti-aircraft and guided missile school.

Q: By this time you were still, not even a teenager?

SMITH: No, we moved there in 1949 when I was nine. I lived there from '49 to '62 when I left college to go to graduate school. During that time my father went to Korea and came back.

Q: Let me get a flavor for this, while you were at home and all, were you and your family, did you read books, were books important to you or sports or what have you?

SMITH: That's a good question. My mother was an English major and books were always important to her. She did a lot of reading, but I think mostly she read magazines. We had books around the house, but not a whole lot. I was never big into sports, I was always sort of a weakling. So, I never did much in the sports area. We lived there in El Paso until '62 and in '58 I went up the river to Las Cruces, New Mexico to study at what was then called New Mexico A&M. Shortly after I got there, it became New Mexico State University, which it still is. I studied physics.

Q: Well, before we leave high school, in high school what sort of, what courses interested you most for your activities?

SMITH: Mainly math and science.

Q: This was inherited from your father?

SMITH: Kind of, I wouldn't call it inherited, but maybe some of it's inherited.

Q: Well, I was just wondering whether.

SMITH: I'd always thought that I'd be something like an engineer or a scientist, whenever I thought about it. That was what I was headed towards.

Q: Well, where you were in El Paso and all, did events up in New Mexico, the nuclear experiments and all, was that something, was the school mentioned, was this something you were all thinking about?

SMITH: Well, of course the nuclear tests (except for the first one in 1945) were all in Nevada and frankly, we sort of took them as a matter of course. This is what was done. The closest place of interest in that area was the White Sands Proving Ground where our missile tests started long before anybody ever heard of Cape Canaveral. This was the Army, and you probably know a little later there was a rivalry between the Air Force, the Army and the Navy - who was going to go into space? And I guess to a certain extent the rivalry still exists. The Army started out with the V-2s, the German V-2 missiles and German scientists. I actually saw a V-2 fired, I think in 1953, one of the last ones. As a matter of fact, one of the reasons I chose to go to New Mexico State University was that I thought that I was going to enter a cooperative program. We can call it a "co-op" program, where you would go to school for half a year and then work at White Sands for half a year in the missile program. After five years you got a degree, plus experience. In the end I didn't do that because the physics department gave me a scholarship and said I couldn't take the scholarship if I took the "co-op" program because they weren't set up as the engineering department was for you to finish in five years. They said it would take too long. So, either take our scholarship or take the co-op, but you can't have both. So, in the end I didn't become a co-op.

Q: Well, you took physics what at the state university of New Mexico?

SMITH: New Mexico State University.

Q: For how long?

SMITH: Four years.

Q: That was '61 to?

SMITH: No, '58 to '62.

Q: '58 to '62. While you were at the university did you get at all involved in the international, I mean was there any attention paid to international affairs?

SMITH: A little bit. I was interested in it. I'd been interested in it, I don't know, I don't want to say "marginally," but that's probably correct. You know, having lived in Japan, and reading the Readers Digest, I knew about the communist threat because my father

was in the army and in Korea during the war there. He didn't fight, but he was there during the war. So, I was interested in international affairs, but not to the extent of studying it in particular.

Q: Well, now the engineering school, I take it.

SMITH: But I was not in engineering, I was in physics.

Q: Physics, okay.

SMITH: Different college.

Q: The physics school, you know, you were there during, was there much any political activity going on there or was this pretty much, I mean, you're sticking to your slide rules?

SMITH: Pretty much, except I did get involved in the school politics. Nothing international. The school had a student activity fee; I don't remember what it was. It was on the order of twenty-five dollars and that was levied on all the students to pay for student activities, but it was supposed to be levied by the student government. One year, about 1960, the state legislature in Santa Fe chopped about $30,000 out of the budget for intercollegiate athletics at our college. The administration of the college needed to find that money because they had to pay the student athletes, which we called by a different name in our youth, and so, they increased our student activity fee. They ignored the student government and increased the student activity fee, and so the next semester it was higher. A number of us got mad about this and so we started a protest. Our protest was confined to running off mimeographed sheets. Modern people wouldn't even know what mimeograph was, but it was a way you could cheaply print multiple copies of the same texts before Xerox was common. It entailed typing up a stencil and getting your hands messy with the ink.

Q: Purple.

SMITH: Yes. So, we'd run these things off at night and then stick them under dormitory doors and then during times in the day when we didn't have any classes, we would sit out on the front steps of the administration building. We got to be known as the "out-of-state-radicals." We were from out of state. I was from Texas. All we were doing was protesting that the administration had upped this student activity fee without the permission of the student government. This led to me running for the student senate and winning and then running for the presidency of the student government and losing. It was probably the main extracurricular activity I had there.

Q: What happened, they charged the fee?

SMITH: No. The fee stayed the same, but about the same time we were put on probation by the NCAA, National Collegiate Athletic Association for recruiting practices. It may be

that our little escapade drew attention, but I think it's probably the other way around. They were very nervous about us, you could tell that, and I think it was because they knew the NCAA was looking at them. Anyway, whatever happened we weren't able to change anything.

Q: How was the football team? Was it pretty good for a school that size?

SMITH: It was okay. They had some stars that went on. One went on to be a quarterback for the St. Louis Cardinals. Another one became a running back for somebody.

Q: While you were getting your degree in physics, what were you pointed towards?

SMITH: Oh, I had the dream of becoming a Ph.D. physicist. That seemed to be the thing to be. So, at the end of '62 I graduated and I went off to RPI [Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute] in Troy, New York. It bills itself as the second oldest engineering school in the country after West Point. It's interesting nowadays; you see these ads for Rensselaer in the Washington Post.

Q: What were you taking there?

SMITH: Physics.

Q: Any particular branch of this?

SMITH: I was heading toward solid-state physics. This is a long story that I want to make short. I eventually quit. What happened was, my grades weren't good enough and they stopped the assistantships. This was the time of the Sputnik and the space race. Sputnik had been sent up, I guess, in '57. We thought there was a terrible gap and so we put all the emphasis into improving our ability in space. So, there was a lot of money floating around. The first year I had a teaching assistantship and the second year I had a research assistantship. All my costs in graduate school were being paid, but at the end of the second year my grades weren't good enough and I was told no more assistantship. We're not throwing you out, but we're not going to pay. So, I quit after two years.

Q: Well, how did you find RPI? I went to Williams. This was some years ago before you were there and I remember playing soccer with them. The soccer team spoke nothing, but Spanish and beat the hell out of us.

SMITH: I guess, we had foreign students. That's interesting. I never remember any Spanish kids there.

Q: I always thought it was sort of a Mecca. I mean it was the place where Hispanics.

SMITH: Yes, the upper class. I remember now there was one Mexican guy in our dorm or around our dorm. But he may have been a graduate student.

Q: So, maybe it just wasn't.

SMITH: Well, their football team lost thirty-five straight while I was there. Their hockey team was one of the best in the country. They seemed to specialize in getting Canadian students who didn't have French sounding names, but they were good. It was exciting. I went to the hockey games and enjoyed those.

Q: Well, after you had stopped, quit in about '66?

SMITH: '64.

Q: '64. Then what were you going to do?

SMITH: Well, the Peace Corps was still fairly new, and somebody came by RPI from the Peace Corps to recruit people. I took a few of their tests and applied for it. Then I went off to a summer job at Langley Air Force Base, NASA's, National Aeronautics and Space Administration's facility at Langley Field. It's listed as Hampton, Virginia, but the biggest town there is Newport News. I lived there for a summer. While I was there I got this letter saying, "How would you like to join the Peace Corps and teach high school in Uganda?" I went down to the Newport News public library and found where Uganda was and this sounded like a great place and a great thing. In September of '64 I started Peace Corps training in New York.

Q: Talk a little about the Peace Corps training in those days.

SMITH: I should say something else because without it, it doesn't show the full flavor of me. I had long been an airplane nut and so as a teenager I built model airplanes and flew them. As soon as I could, I learned how to fly. I got my private license in '62, and while I was there in Newport News, Virginia I got my commercial license in '64. It has always been my avocation and until today I still fly. The Peace Corps was an idea that Hubert Humphrey proposed and that John F. Kennedy took and made part of his campaign in 1960 and therefore started to implement in 1961. When I joined it in '64, it was three years old. Our training was at Columbia University in New York of all places.

Q: Well, that should get you ready for the wilds of Samoa or some place.

SMITH: Exactly. This was at Teachers College, which I guess is a very old and well regarded teacher training school, part of Columbia University, and we were a combined group training together to go to Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania. All were countries, which had just become independent. Our trainers were mostly people from a slightly earlier US AID program called Teachers for East Africa. These had been young people who'd gone out as professional teachers and were paid a real salary, whereas the Peace Corps got a living allowance, which, in our case was adequate, but no salary. So, we trained there for about three months from the middle of September to the middle of December. They taught us about teaching. They taught us about East Africa. They taught us some Swahili. They filled us full of shots and they threw out twenty or thirty percent of us; it was called

"selection out." The training program in the Peace Corps then and I imagine still is, was also a selection program.

Q: Did you get any feel for who was thrown out?

SMITH: Yes, two reasons: 1) the people that they thought were in it for the wrong reason. Anybody they thought was a complete absolute draft dodger, they didn't keep; and 2) people who they, for some reason, thought weren't going to be stable enough for it. The way they did this was we all had to go have a private interview with a psychologist and then that would lead eventually to a private interview with a psychiatrist. Fairly deep into the program I went to see the psychiatrist and I was worried. We were worried we were all going to get selected out. For whatever reasons we were in it, we were enthusiastic about it and we wanted to do it. The psychiatrist said, "Don't worry, the fact that we've waited this long for you to see me indicates that we're not worried about you." But, they threw out a lot. I can't remember I used to know the percentage, but it was a lot, twenty or thirty percent. It was scary.

Q: I bet it also certainly made sense because. Well, I mean where you were putting people. An awful lot were kind of off on their own.

SMITH: Well, yes, most of us were to various degrees placed fairly far out. There's one thing I should say to the Peace Corp's benefit where I thought they did a real good job. There's something I forgot to mention in the training, was health training. Since we were going to be in the middle of nowhere, we had to be our own doctor. They'd give us very good instruction on how to remain healthy. Something that I noticed the State Department never gave me. It was valuable. They gave us a medical kit and told us what to expect and how to try to stay healthy and it worked pretty well.

Q: Well, you got to Uganda in still '64?

SMITH: No, we arrived on the second day of '65.

Q: You were there from '65 to?

SMITH: All of '65 and all of '66 except a few days.

Q: What was the situation in Uganda when you got there?

SMITH: Okay, well I should give a little background on our Peace Corps group and then Uganda. We were going to be the very first U.S. Peace Corps volunteers in Uganda. We were going to teach high school. They tried as much as possible to get people who could teach science and math and that was one reason that I was there, of course. Our arrival, about twenty or thirty of us, permitted them to double their intake into the government's high schools. A lot of schools weren't government, they were church run. But the government-run schools were able to expand their "freshmen class," double it, because we arrived. Uganda had only been independent, for three years. At the time it was using

the government that had been left to it by the British. The British left a government where there was a parliament and a prime minister chosen the usual way by the majority party in the parliament. The prime minister was A. Milton Ubute. But then there was a president also and the president was King Edward Mutesa II. The king of Buganda. Buganda was one large part of Uganda from which the name obviously comes. Buganda was an old kingdom.

Q: How do you spell it?

SMITH: Well, one is "B," and one is "U." One is Buganda and the other one is Uganda.

Q: Oh, Buganda?

SMITH: Yes, Buganda. Buganda had been an organized kingdom for a long time, I don't know how long, but for well over one-hundred years and the king was Edward Mutesa, II. The British were trying to figure out some way to make this country go in spite of the tribalism that exists throughout Africa and so, since the Baganda were important because they were the largest single unified group, they had to do something for them. So, their king became the president of Uganda. I must hasten to say that the Baganda, who are the people who live in Buganda, are not a majority. They are probably just the largest minority. The country was already riven with tribalism. The southern part of the country borders Lake Victoria, Northern Tanzania, Rwanda and the Congo. That part is inhabited by the so-called Bantu tribes who tended to be farmers. Then in the north you have a couple of other groups. The northern tribes tend to be herders and more war-like. Their languages are completely different. There's nothing in common between the languages in the north and the languages in the south. It's as different as English and Japanese. Completely different. Whereas Swahili was the lingua franca for most of Kenya and almost all of Tanzania, it only worked part of the time in Uganda. In the far north of Uganda, Swahili wasn't much use.

Q: Well, in a way, you were farther away from the Arab trading routes. Wasn't this, Swahili wasn't it a, it's a trading language, isn't it?

SMITH: Yes, but it's not an Arab language. It's a Bantu language with a lot of Arabic words. It's homeland, as you indicated, is down on the coast of the Indian Ocean, Mombasa and Zanzibar and Dar es Salaam. So, the farther away you get, the less Swahili you hear. But even right on the border with the Congo, I was having my Land Rover fixed years later when I was in the Foreign Service and the guy working on it, pulled on the fan belt and said "hi si yake." This isn't ITS. It was the wrong size fan belt. The people in that business, the mechanics and drivers and those sort of trades, spoke Swahili all over the country. When we got to Uganda, there was tribal simmering. While, on the surface everything looked pretty peaceful. I can't remember the words Winston Churchill used, something like the pearl of Africa or something like that, but Uganda was a beautiful place.

Q: Well, it was considered to be unspoiled.

SMITH: Yes, most of it is at an altitude of about 4,000 feet or higher. The climate's good. Unspoiled is a good word for that time. There was something about it that many people don't realize. Before independence it had been known as the "Uganda Protectorate." Kenya was "Kenya Colony." Tanzania was a German colony that the British took at the end of World War I.

Q: Sort of a mandate I guess.

SMITH: I don't think so.

Q: Well, whatever they called it.

SMITH: But in any case, Uganda was not a colony and that was more than a euphemism. It meant that, except for a few extraordinary cases, no Ugandan or his ancestors had had his land stolen by the British colonialists. They were all farming their own land, or if it wasn't their own land, they were farming some other Ugandan's land. The two exceptions: On the eastern border of Uganda with Kenya there was a bit of good wheat land which had shifted borders. So, when the border went farther to the east some of what had been Kenya became Uganda and there were some white farmers farming wheat. On the western border for some reason there were some British tea farmers, maybe just because tea was important. Probably 98% of the land was owned by Ugandans or the government, but not by the colonials. That made a difference, because Kenya had just gotten through the Mau Mau rebellion. Tanzania was already very socialist-leaning. Uganda was not automatically hostile to white people. Most of Kenya wasn't either, but there were a lot of Kenyans both white and black who remembered how bad the Mau Mau rebellion had been.

Q: Well, then when you arrived, where did they send you?

SMITH: Well, I went to the far eastern border outside of the town of Mbale, on the slopes of Mount Elgon which is an extinct volcano 14,000 feet high, as big around as Kilimanjaro, but 5,000 feet shorter because the top blew up. Sort of a huge crater. We lived near a village called Budadiri and we were teaching at Masaba Senior Secondary School. Masaba Senior Secondary School, a former junior secondary school had just been upgraded. When I got there, there was a British volunteer, the only white teacher among the Ugandan teachers, and a new Welsh headmaster. This place was about a seventeen mile taxi ride up dirt, muddy roads, from Mbale, which was the main town. The new headmaster, had the absolutely Welsh name of David Jones. David Jones arrived there to be the new headmaster so it could become an official senior secondary school because he had the credentials the Ugandan headmaster didn't have, and he brought me. So, that meant that there were three white people up there. When I first got there the new headmaster dropped me off and went back to where he was living. My British roommate wasn't there. It was the middle of their main end of the year school-break. Their main break was the end of December to the beginning of January. They had a trimester arrangement. Since there was no place for me to stay, he left me with a Catholic mission

and I spent a few days with these Dutch Roman Catholic missionaries who were fascinating, but probably a sidetrack to my story. In that area there were probably three of the Dutch priests and we three - the Welshman, the English roommate and me. We six were the only "European" people up there. The tribe was called the Bagisu. The district was Bugisu and they all spoke Lugisu. The total number of people, I think, was about 350,000 in all Bugisu. On the slopes of a volcano, with rich volcanic soil and adequate rainfall, the ones who had land were doing very well, growing coffee, the good coffee, Arabica coffee. That's the ones who had land, but if you were the umpteenth son you weren't very well off. It was a rich area. This didn't mean that people weren't dying in infancy from easily curable diseases, but those that survived the first few years grew up to be strong, healthy people.

Q: In the first place, you mentioned, who else was with you in the Peace Corps, were there two of you who were assigned there?

SMITH: No, just me. There was already this British volunteer. Incidentally, the British had this idea long before Humphrey and Kennedy. Humphrey probably got it from them. Their program was called Volunteer Service Overseas, VSO. Like the British, they had two classes. They had graduates and cadets. The cadets were people who had graduated from high school, but not from university and they'd be doing things where you supposedly didn't need a college degree. They were younger and they were treated differently. The graduates, the VSOs were just like us Peace Corps volunteers.

Q: Did you have to go 17 miles everyday there?

SMITH: No, no, we had a house. It was a boarding school. The students all lived there and so did we.

Q: Well, let's talk a little about the students and the classes. How did you find that?

SMITH: We inherited one class, which was in what we would call the sophomore year. I guess they called it the second form and they had been let in before the school had become an official government senior secondary school. It had been a senior secondary school run by the Bugisu district, but not by headquarters down in Kampala. These kids, a class of about thirty-five had been let in, for more than just their scholastic ability. So, I always said there was a third of them who were hopeless and some who had some hope and a third were really good. It was a shame, but that's the way they were. All had parents, who had been able to scrape up the school fees. That's something people don't realize. These people all had to pay school fees. The Uganda government was subsidizing part of this and of course the U.S. government was too, by sending us. The British government also by sending David Jones and their volunteer, but all the kids had to bring school fees at the start of every term. So, for some of these kids, what got them in was that their parents had had enough money and enough pull to get them in. We were teaching under the English system. All things considered, they weren't bad; it was a boarding school, with very young teenagers. We had to be their mother and their father and their teacher. Among other duties, I was called a "housemaster." I was responsible

for what went on in one dormitory. Every seven weeks you become "master on duty," like a duty officer. I always said that except for three or four times in my Foreign Service career, being duty officer was never as bad as being master on duty at the Masaba Senior Secondary School.

Q: What sort of things would happen?

SMITH: Well, you had to get up when they did and make sure that they were all up and brushing their teeth, and supervise breakfast to make sure that that went smoothly. Then you had to teach all day. During the lunch hour, you had to give out punishment and in the evening you had to make sure they were all studying. At night you had to go up and make sure they had gone to bed and weren't horsing around. So, it was pretty hellish.

Q: I take it these were all boys?

SMITH: Yes.

Q: Any discipline problems?

SMITH: In fact, yes, but in retrospect it was all kind of minor.

Q: Sort of horseplay type thing?

SMITH: Yes, sometimes they would throw rocks at the house. You'd have to discipline them if they didn't go to bed or if another "master," (we were "masters," not teachers,) said that Mandu here has been misbehaving in class so you need to punish him, you'd have to find some punishment for him. But it wasn't that bad. Well, we had incidents. We had a food strike. They said the food wasn't good enough. So I would go up and eat with them and prove that it was edible. Then the English teacher taught Animal Farm and one very bright, but misdirected, young kid used that as a training manual and went after one of the other teachers. By this time there was another British teacher there who didn't handle the kids as well as he should have and they surrounded his house and made lots of noise, but nothing happened.

Q: So, you were teaching according to the British system. Did you find this a difficult or really different way of approaching the language and studies and all that at the high school level?

SMITH: No, I didn't. I should mention one thing about discipline. Whenever they misbehaved in class, it was easy to get them to behave again. All you did was say, "If you're not going to behave I'm not going to teach. I'm going back to my house and when you've decided to calm down and behave send somebody down to get me and I'll come back." We only had to do that about once - because their parents were paying this hard-earned money for them to go to school and if they were sent home for not behaving they would be in deep trouble. They all realized that their only chance for a future in this developing country was an education. So, they wanted an education and so discipline

wasn't a real problem.

Q: Was English sort of the language that tied the country together?

SMITH: At that time, yes. Frankly I don't know what they've done now. Tanzania chose Swahili, Kenya used both, but Uganda used English. It was the only thing to tie them together. Swahili is a Bantu language. The southerners can learn it fairly easily, the northerners can't.

Q: Were there any children of Indians there?

SMITH: No. They were in other government schools in other places and also in schools run by their own religious groups. Up in that valley where I lived, there were probably 50,000 or 100,000 people and I think there was one Indian family, about six miles away.

Q: Because one hears in Kampala that you know the Indians were sort of running the small stores.

SMITH: Well, they were running the small commerce and some of the big commerce, too. The Madvani company had great sugar, and Sisal plantations and so forth. I should mention that while I was there, prime minister Obote abrogated the existing constitution and took over the government as President. When King Mutesa, the President, said, "You can't do that, get out; get out of my capital," Obote sent the army to the palace to attack the king. A big rainstorm came. The king got over the wall and escaped to London and the army colonel who assisted Obote to do all this was Idi Amin, a far northerner, from way up in the West Nile province.

Q: You were saying, the infamous Idi Amin?

SMITH: Yes, he came to prominence. I think it was the first year I was there, but it may have been the second year. So, then the government changed and Obote became president. What all this was over was the remnants of the civil war of that time in the Congo. The Ugandans had been giving some sort of aid and comfort to the rebels who'd been forced up into the last northeastern corner of the Congo and apparently they had been holding the rebels treasury for safekeeping. So, questions were asked in the Uganda parliament about what happened to the "Simba Gold." The rebels were called the Simbas which is the Swahili word for lion, as everybody knows. The Simbas were losing, in spite of assistance from Egypt and the Soviet Union. So, supposedly, their treasury and gold was in Uganda for safekeeping and then when the Simbas lost, the question in parliament was, "well, where is the Simba gold?" It was at that point that Obote abrogated the constitution. He didn't like the answer he'd have to give I guess. That was in '66 and it was 1971 that Idi Amin then overthrew his former patron, Obote.

Q: Did you feel any tremors at all from political events?

SMITH: That's a good question and I'm glad you asked it. Where we were, which was

about one hundred-seventy-five miles by road from Kampa, it was as if nothing had happened. The only way we would know about it was if we heard something on Radio Uganda, or the BBC, or the Voice of America or we'd read it in the Uganda Argus Newspaper. There was no immediate effect on us.

Q: Did you feel at all the hand of the Peace Corps in the upper reaches of it, did it come around and check on you or did you feel it much or were you pretty much on your own?

SMITH: We were pretty much on our own, but they did come around and visit us infrequently. There was a Peace Corps doctor who would come by. The Peace Corps staff was small. There was the director, the deputy director and the doctor. That's all there were. They had about thirty or forty kids spread completely throughout the country and so they couldn't visit us all very often. They'd come by and check up, but not often.

Q: What about the next crew of students who came in after, was that different?

SMITH: Yes, that's good, you picked that up. The group that arrived just as I arrived were much better. The new students, the new "form one" were a whole lot better. I can't say for sure, but probably looking back, actually the group after them was the best. The third group that came in, the group that came in at the beginning of '66, could probably master anything that was being taught in the curriculum. They were up to it. The second group frankly I'm beginning to forget. A lot of them came from our junior secondary school, which was already there, and they weren't as good, but they were still better than the first group.

Q: Well, were you teaching physics or the equivalent or science?

SMITH: I was teaching mathematics and biology and frankly I guess I was teaching physics, too, yes.

Q: Was this a problem, I mean were they sort of prepared for this sort of thing?

SMITH: Some of them were, some of them weren't. In retrospect, they were pretty good.

Q: Did you get any feel for where these students in this on the side of a volcano were going?

SMITH: No, I think I had the same view they had. They wanted to successfully leave that school and go on to university, to Makerere University down in Kampala and then get whatever job they could get. Most of them probably thought of some government job.

Q: The subject really hadn't gotten going too much, but I was wondering whether the concern was in the Peace Corps about Vietnam and all this. Was this around or not?

SMITH: It was around. This was when the Vietnam War was really heating up. So, I paid a lot of attention to that. I was reading Time and Newsweek cover to cover every week

and hearing news on the Voice of America, too and the BBC. It was big news, but I didn't have that much contact with other people in the Peace Corps most of the time.

Q: How did you get along with the Welsh headmaster?

SMITH: Good, I got along very well with him. I still correspond with him and his family. Later the first British volunteer left and I still correspond with him. Then two more came and I still correspond with one of them.

Q: Well, did you get out and see much of the country?

SMITH: Yes, a lot, because there were three midterm vacations during the year. One, as I said, around Christmas and New Year's, one around Easter and one around August. Most of us volunteers used that time to travel around, so I traveled a lot.

Q: How did Africa strike you? Was it a place you continued to want to be involved with?

SMITH: Oh, yes. Yes, I thought it was wonderful. You know, I was lucky. The climate in East Africa is good. In those days the political climate was pretty good also and it was a wonderful place to be.

Q: Any problems with the residue of the Simbas and all that?

SMITH: No.

Q: Did we have an ambassador?

SMITH: Yes. When we arrived the first ambassador was still there. Olcott Deming, Rusty Deming's father. He left, and Ambassador Henry Stebbins came. He'd been ambassador in Nepal where the Peace Corps was the *real* Peace Corps and he was very high on the Peace Corps. One of the first things he did was to travel around and visit all the Peace Corps volunteers.

Q: Stebbins?

SMITH: Yes.

Q: Henry Stebbins.

SMITH: That's him.

Q: Did you have any interest at the time or any curiosity about the Foreign Service?

SMITH: Well, the Foreign Service stimulated that. They actively recruited Peace Corps volunteers. As you know the Foreign Service was expanding then, too, for the same reason we were there, all the new African independent states. They wanted people like us

who had proven we could live in Africa and so they actively recruited us and encouraged us to apply to take the written exam. Some of my colleagues did it and passed, and so I said, "well, if they can, why can't I?" One of the two that did it was a math major. So, I said, in spite of not having studied for the Foreign Service, "if Mike can do it, so can I." So, I took the written and passed it. They said, well, when you get back to the States, take the oral. Then they sent me a letter saying, it's possible we could send a team out to East Africa to give the oral exam. Which embassies could you get to the most easily and how far would it be? So, I told them how long it would take me to get to Nairobi and to Kampala. They sent back and said they were giving the exam in Kampala on these dates, show up.

Q: So, you took the exam there?

SMITH: Of course the written is always given in an embassy and that's where I had taken it the year before, and I took the oral in the embassy in Kampala. There were about eight of us I think. One had come all the way from Malawi.

Q: Do you recall any of the questions or anything about the oral exam?

SMITH: Yes, I remember at that time they were using the good-cop, bad-cop method. You had a panel of three people and one was sort of the moderator and one was the good cop and one was the bad cop. The function of the bad cop apparently was to needle you to see what your reaction was under stress. The way he needled me was to ask me a question and when I couldn't come up with the obvious answer he kept needling me more and more until I said, well, I don't know what you're getting at, but I can't get there. The question was, "Okay, Mr. Smith, you are at the embassy here in Uganda and you're going to send a foreign visitor, a Ugandan government official, back to the United States, to find out about America. What are the places you'd have him visit so that he would know what America is about?" I had him going to farms and industries and God knows where. "But isn't there some other place you want him to visit?" I wracked my brain and I could not think of this other place and it was years later after I was in the Foreign Service I realized where he wanted me to send this guy: The State Department.

Q: I would never send somebody to the State Department.

SMITH: Well, I'm sure that's where, he wanted him to go, to visit the desk. I'm sure that's what he was getting at, but I couldn't come up with that answer. So, that gave him a pretty good chance to needle me.

Q: Well, then you finished up in the Peace Corps. Well, one thing I'm just interested in, how did you find the Peace Corps, I mean here we were sending many single young men and women out there and the interacting. Was there much you might say socializing and all?

SMITH: A little bit. There were a couple of married couples. One of which quit even before they started. They got there and then they quit and went home. Another couple

stayed on. Because we were so spread out, there was very little socializing between each other. We had two big parties at our school that the other volunteers and I organized and we'd get some people to come - both British and American volunteers - who would stay overnight. In places where there was more than one volunteer in the same town they would get together. You know, our job was to be there at the school teaching and so during the sessions we couldn't go anywhere.

Q: Yes, I was just wondering about dating local girls and that sort of thing, was that pretty much out?

SMITH: I don't think it was done a lot, but it was done.

Q: No, because sometimes you know you get these cultural problems and all that.

SMITH: Yes, from both sides.

Q: Yes. Well, you left the Peace Corps, you left Uganda when?

SMITH: I left the Peace Corps in December of '66 and then I stuck around because I wanted to travel around East Africa. So I climbed Kilimanjaro a second time, and I hitchhiked down to Victoria Falls and back and hitchhiked around Uganda to see a couple of places I hadn't seen. Then, late in January of '67 I left and I decided I wanted to take this opportunity to see much of the rest of the world. So, I traveled on the cheap. I had to fly up to Ethiopia and I went by land most of the way from Ethiopia through the Sudan and the Middle East, through Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Iran, Nepal and India and finally in Calcutta I had to buy an air ticket. I went by air the rest of the way across South and East Asia.

Q: How could you cross some of that terrain, you were saying, how did you go from point A, hitchhiking?

SMITH: A lot of it was hitchhiking, sometimes buses, sometimes trains, sometimes boats. The only times I flew was when there was a political constraint. Northern Kenya was not safe to travel in. The only way you could get to Ethiopia from Kenya was by air.

Q: What was happening in Northern Kenya?

SMITH: Oh, I guess they call them the "shiftas." The northern tribes in Kenya are as warlike if not more than the northern tribes of Uganda and it wasn't safe.

Q: How far did you get around the world?

SMITH: Well, I got all the way. I went as much as I could by land. The only other two places I took air was from Cairo to Beirut and from Herat, Afghanistan to Kabul. At that point once you were in the country you could buy a ticket from Herat in far west Afghanistan to Kabul in the east of Afghanistan for the equivalent of ten dollars. Finally

when I got to Calcutta you had to fly unless you had infinite time, which I didn't, because my money was going to run out eventually. I bought a ticket on Cathay Pacific and flew on different airlines to the U.S. West Coast.

Q: When you got back we're where, in 1967?

SMITH: Right. In April or May.

Q: Did you have any plans other than waiting for the Foreign Service?

SMITH: Mainly I was waiting for the Foreign Service. I made a few halfhearted attempts to get a job as a pilot, but that didn't pan out. Finally the guy from the State Department's security office in Seattle tracked me down to where my parents lived in the center of Washington state and banished my father to the garage so that he could interview me in private at the dining room table. That was all that was keeping them from inducting me; they needed the security interview. Then I entered in August of '67. At this time I was twenty-seven years old.

Q: So, you went to Washington?

SMITH: Here.

Q: Yes. In August of '67. What was your basic officer course like?

SMITH: It was a large one, 58 new FSOs. We were called the eightieth class at that time. There were all kinds of people in it. We had Theodore Roosevelt, IV in there. We had half a dozen people who became ambassadors. We had one guy who at his first post was caught selling visas and I don't know if he went to prison or not. We had many USIS FSIO. We had, as I said, people from all over. We had graduates of the Air Force Academy, ivy leaguers, the whole business.

Q: Did you have any idea I mean when you joined, did you want to go back to Africa?

SMITH: Oh, yes. I told them I'd like to learn more Swahili and go back to East Africa. They said, well, you know, we have this war in Vietnam and we have this pacification program. What would you think of going there? I said, well, if I get sent there, I'll go. Some people said later that I'd volunteered, but I hadn't. They'd warned us. The first day, they said, those of you who are male and single and have never been in the military are likely to be sent to Vietnam. There was roughly ten in that category.

Q: That was you.

SMITH: They picked six of us. One or two of those were volunteers, the other four of us weren't. So, after the A-100 course they put us into Vietnamese training.

Q: How did you find the A-100 course?

SMITH: I thought it was fine. I guess you could say I enjoyed it. I just took it as it came.

Q: The Vietnamese training, how did that work?

SMITH: First they had a period of about a month of what they called "operations." So, we didn't have any Vietnamese language. That started around the end of '67 or the beginning of '68. Then early in '68 we entered Vietnamese language training intensively and that was like most of the courses, six hours a day, five days a week and you're supposed to study tapes two hours a night. As you know, it's a Tonal language. The only saving grace is that it's not written in characters like Japanese or Chinese, but it's not simply written either. They put us under a lot of pressure. The course was forty-two weeks long. That meant seven segments of six weeks. At the end of every four weeks they would say it looks like you're not progressing fast enough. We'll give you two weeks to shape up. If you don't shape up at the end of the six weeks, you're going to ship out without the Vietnamese. The problem was, when the State Department sent us into the Vietnamese language course they told us that because it was a "hard language," we only had to get a S2/R2 to be qualified in it. This will get you off language probation and of course you'll get step pay increases, too. But unfortunately, the linguists at FSI thought the aim should be S3/R3. So, they were throwing out people who might have been able to get a S2/R2, but they thought weren't going to get a S3/R3. It was very, very difficult. Some of my friends used to say that if you could find the tables where we studied you could still find my fingernail marks in the edge of the table. It was very tough. Fortunately, about halfway through, they changed the policy for those of us who had hung on. They said, alright, even though we want you to get a S3/R3, as long as you're progressing to the point where you'll get a S2/R2, we'll keep you on and won't throw you out early. I ended up with a S2/R2+. I don't think it's any coincidence that the two best people in the class were the two musicians. At the end there were only five or six of us that lasted through it. The only one who did worse than me only got a S2/R2. He is a very bright man who has gone on to be ambassador.

Q: Who was that?

SMITH: I don't want to say. I always said the reason was he didn't guess enough on the reading. For the reading, you just read a newspaper story. I don't think he filled in the blanks and that was the only reason he didn't get a S2/R2+. He was the one who stayed in Vietnam the longest.

Q: Was there much in the way of indoctrination as to why we were in Vietnam and what you were going to be doing in Vietnam?

SMITH: Well, I wouldn't call it indoctrination. We all took this original course of four or six weeks which was called "operations" where they told us what we would be doing, more or less. Then we had about an hour of that every week, too. They explained all the programs and they gave us history. They gave us some pretty good history of Vietnam over the last one hundred-fifty years, especially over the last ten to twenty years up to

that period. As far as indoctrination of why we were there, there wasn't any. I think everybody had their own views. I think most of us were with the program. The brightest were the most skeptical.

Q: Well, were you running across, I mean by this time the opposition could pick up and organize and all, was this hitting your group at all?

SMITH: No, I don't think so. I think there were people in our group who were maybe sympathetic to the opposition, maybe, but not so much that they were going to quit or resign. There was one young man who had had one tour in Latin America and had decided this was the way to jump-start his career and he had volunteered. He had a family, two or three little kids, and the rest of us were single. He actually went to Vietnam and then realized this was a big mistake and he came back and had to resign and that was tragic. I kept in touch with him for a couple of years, but I don't know what happened to him. It was just too bad. I think if I'd been married and had kids I would have looked at it entirely differently, but I was single. I hadn't volunteered to go, they chose me to go and I was willing to go. It was at least going to be interesting and exciting probably.

Q: When you went to Vietnam, you were there from when to when?

SMITH: Well, I got there I think in late October of '68, it may have been early November. I can't remember which now. I was supposed to spend eighteen months, but as will become obvious later I left in June of '69. I was supposed to be there until what would be the spring of '70.

Q: Well, where did they send you?

SMITH: As you will know later, I married a Vietnamese lady who I met here and she has written out the places correctly spelled with the diacritical markings. They sent me down in the delta to a province, which we called Kien Hoa. Before it had been called Ben Tre, and after the communists won the war they renamed it Ben Tre again. The capital town of the province was Ben Tre and that was one of the towns that infamously was said "had to be destroyed to be saved" during the Tet Offensive in early '68. To get to this province by normal means you would take route four down to My Tho and instead of turning right and going deeper into the delta, you would take a ferry across the My Tho River, which is the northern big branch of the Mekong. Then you'd be in Kien Hoa Province which was bounded by arms of the Mekong as it went down to the ocean, or the South China Sea. There were nine districts in this province. I think the population in the province was half a million people. So, each district was in the order of 50,000, and my district was Binh Dai.

Q: When you get a chance to correct this, you can fix up the spelling.

SMITH: Binh Dai was an interesting little district. I was sent there to be the deputy district senior advisor. The way the Vietnamese had their government organized was you

had about forty provinces and each province had a province chief. Most of these were Vietnamese army colonels. Each province had from four to ten districts. They each had a district chief. Most of them were Vietnamese army majors. Our "pacification" program was known as "CORDS." Originally it was "Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support." The Vietnamese said we've got one revolution already, we don't need another. So, we changed it to "Civil Operations and Rural Development Support." This was an integrated program, which I guess was started in '67, and it had the U.S. Army, the other U.S. military, USAID, USIS and everybody working together within an integrated command structure. So, you could have military people supervising civilians and civilians supervising military people. It was all run by the deputy for CORDS up in Saigon who, when we got there, was William Colby.

Q: William Colby.

SMITH: Right. The country was divided up into four military regions or corps and the fourth corps was the delta, which is the rice basket of Vietnam. There I was down in this district, Binh Dai and there was a major who was the Vietnamese district chief. His advisor was a U.S. army major who was district senior advisor and he had two deputies, a captain for military matters and I was the deputy for administration. My counterpart was the district chief's administrative officer who was a young army lieutenant who didn't wear a uniform because he was doing a civilian job. He had a white shirt and slacks. I should say a little more about the advisory team. We were in a district of 50,000 Vietnamese. It was an island with a major river on one side and a minor river on the other side, the South China Sea at one end and a canal at the other end. Our district advisory team was the major, the captain, two or three sergeants and me. We were the only Americans there. There was no Vietnamese regular army force, and no American army force at all. The district chief had four "regional force" militia companies. Then he had about thirty "popular force" platoons. These regional forces, and popular forces were what he was supposed to use to counter the communist insurgency which controlled admittedly probably fifteen or twenty percent of his land area in the day time and a lot more at night.

Q: You came there oh about ten months after the Tet Offensive?

SMITH: That's right.

Q: How had the Tet Offensive been carried out in your area?

SMITH: I think it concentrated on the province town, the province capital of Ben Tre, and that's why Ben Tre had to be "destroyed to be saved." I guess they overran some other areas. I think there was one district town they overran, but they never completely overran Ben Tre and they didn't do much at all in our district that I ever heard about. Again for those who aren't conversant with all this history, there was something important that happened while I was in the training. I remember it very clearly. When we entered the training at the very beginning of '68 we were told there were about 300,000 communist soldiers in South Vietnam. About 200,000 were local guerrillas and about

100,000 were North Vietnamese Regulars. Several months later they were giving the briefing and they said there are about 300,000 communist soldiers in South Vietnam. About 200,000 are North Vietnamese Regulars and about 100,000 are guerrillas. I put up my hand and said, "That's not what you said before." The briefer said, "Well, it's changed now." During the Tet Offensive a great part of the communist guerrillas were wiped out and this is why people say that it was a tactical victory for the South Vietnamese and the Americans but a strategic defeat because the communists won the war here instead of there. Where I was it was never anything but guerrillas. It was a real guerrilla war. I'm sorry, I cut you off.

Q: No, no. Because you know I think it's interesting to get a feel for the time. What were you doing?

SMITH: Well, I was supposedly trying to aid the district chief and his deputy for administration on "winning the hearts and minds." Part of this was to go out to areas which were sort of contested and provide more goodies from the government. A big part of my job was to complete the hamlet evaluation system form every month. The famous HES Report where we rated every hamlet. A number of hamlets made up a village, a number of villages made up a district. We had about eighty hamlets and the only way you can really do this report halfway honestly was to go out and visit the hamlets. So, I did a lot of that. The hamlets were rated A, B, C, D and V, -V for VC, so V was an F. We conceded a number of hamlets to the Viet Cong and these were in what we called "free fire zones." These were places where any American artillery or air force or navy plane could shell or bomb at will without anybody's prior permission, because the people that lived there were supposed to be communist. Then the rest of the district as I said were the areas where you could usually travel safely in the daytime, but at night you might not want to try. I spent a lot of my time going out and visiting these hamlets to see what was going on. You did learn things. One of the things I remember: I can't do it anymore, but the Vietnamese they taught us at FSI was good enough that I could find this old lady who had never spoken anything but Vietnamese in her life. I could ask her "at night do the Viet Cong ever come out of that tree line over there and come into the village?" She could understand me perfectly and then she'd answer and I couldn't understand the answer. She'd say, "yes" and then give me a lot of details and I never could get the details. At least I knew that this was a place where on the hamlet evaluation system form, I would have to say we don't control it at night.

Q: The hamlet evaluation program came under a lot of criticism because there was a lot of pressure particularly on our military commands to make it look good.

SMITH: Oh, yes. There was pressures of various kinds on us, but I never felt any. I think the most pressure I had was I wanted to be a success. I wanted our district to be a success. So, I just naturally I tried to make it look as good as I could while not lying to myself. I was still only twenty-eight and twenty-nine. I was a former physics major where things are black and white, and I don't think I fudged very much. If I fudged, if I made a mistake it was an honest mistake.

Q: What were the Viet Cong, I mean was it mainly Viet Cong in your area or regular North Vietnamese?

SMITH: There weren't North Vietnamese, it was all guerrillas. I think there were village units and then there was an infamous 519th battalion. The 519th Battalion roamed around the whole province and they were the ones who were causing the most trouble. There were all these areas that they could stay in safely. Our district was one of the better districts, so there were other neighboring districts that were worse where they could have refuge. Our district chief would get an order at night from the province, a coded order over the radio, which would tell him to run an operation the next morning. The next morning he would gather up two of his four companies of regional forces and commandeer a couple of boats and we'd go up the Mekong. In this case it was the My Tho River and we'd go up the My Tho to some place and disembark and go into a village where we would find nothing. The worst that ever happened was we'd find that they'd abandoned the place or a couple of times there were booby traps. The communists, to my mind, clearly knew we were coming. Somebody was telling them we were coming whether it was a leak at the province or a leak in the district, but since the orders were sent out overnight, by the next morning, they'd had enough time to skedaddle. I frankly think the district chief probably didn't mind that at all.

Q: How about the problem of corruption?

SMITH: Before we get to that I ought to talk more about the war. Write corruption down so we don't forget it, but there were attacks near us. The government had something called the RD Cadre, the Rural Development Cadre. These were young men who were probably better educated than the soldiers and were supposed to be idealistic. They were in platoon-sized units and they were supposed to go out and bring security and development to the people. It was a way they could get out of being in the army. We had one of those little platoons in our area and they got attacked in the middle of the night and about eight of them were killed. They killed at least one Viet Cong with claymore mines, which I can describe if need be. They were pretty unhappy. This happened in the middle of the night. Then a couple of other nights we were mortared in our compound and one of the attacks was clearly aimed at us Americans. We were living in a long building and their sixty millimeter mortar was set up perpendicular to our building. Its rounds all fell short, just parallel to our building. What had happened, obviously, was that somebody had paced off the distance because they just went down the road from where we were and set up the mortar in the middle of the night in somebody's backyard. Either they paced it off wrong or the wind was wrong and the mortars fell about fifty yards short, parallel to our building. If they had hit our roof we would have all been killed because they would have exploded on the roof and then showered us with shrapnel. When things like that would happen we'd go and hide in the bunker for a while.

Q: Did you have any sort of quick response teams, military?

SMITH: That was all up to the Vietnamese. When the communists attacked this Rural Development cadre camp, RD cadre camp, the district chief and my boss, the major, and

some other people got together and went out to see what had happened. Of course everybody was afraid that they would get ambushed on the way because the common tactic of any good insurgency is to attack one place and then ambush the rapid response team. They weren't ambushed. That was about all that could be done. The district chief presumably could have always tried to organize something like this. In this compound where we lived there were two regional companies, the militia troops; there were also two 105mm howitzers from the Vietnamese army. The artillery were the only Regular Vietnamese Army in the whole district. They would sometimes, if there was an attack on a village, give fire support up to their range maximum which may have done some good.

Q: How about naval craft, river craft?

SMITH: We had a lot of contact with the U.S. navy and we always felt that if we ever got in trouble ourselves and had to ask for help, the only chance we would have had was some navy helicopters which were called the "Sea Wolves." I think it was considered a wing of attack helicopters. There were only two or four based anywhere near us. These were Army surplus helicopters. You could still see on the sides where they had painted "Army." They were armed with rockets and machine guns. They would visit us and we'd give them a Coke. The navy had small fiberglass speedboats which were called PBRs which had two .50 machine caliber guns in a kind of a turret on the front and a couple of machine guns in the back and a crew of four or five. They used to bring us fresh water. The Vietnamese had to live off water from a brackish well or rain water. The dry season being half a year long, you couldn't use rain water half the year. We would get jerry cans of fresh water from the Navy. The U.S. Navy as far as our little district was concerned, was the only U.S. military that could do much for us with these lightly armed speedboats and helicopters.

Q: What about from Saigon? You used to send out progress reporting officers who would spend time out and you know, ask around, were you, did these come through there at all?

SMITH: Never saw any?

Q: You were out of sight, out of mind?

SMITH: We weren't easy to get to. The only way to get to us was by helicopter or Air America HelioCourier or boat. You couldn't drive there because in the center part of the island, the road wasn't completely safe and at the other end of the island where the canal was, you couldn't get across. We were only accessible by air or sea.

Q: Was Can Tho ever the big city?

SMITH: Yes, Can Tho was the big city to the Vietnamese, but it was in a different province. Everything for us had to radiate out of Can Tho to give you an example of how things worked. The abnormal way we got to Saigon was, first of all, a boat or a helicopter or a light airplane took us to Ben Tre. Then another Air America airplane took us to Can Tho, which is farther away from Saigon, and then finally a bigger Air America airplane

would take us to Saigon. Well, that could be a two or three day trip.

Q: Sure.

SMITH: The Vietnamese, either the communists or the non-communists, could probably get to Saigon in five hours by taking a boat up to My Tho and taking a bus.

Q: I was wondering if near that river was there a?

SMITH: Excuse me. My Tho is where the PBRs had their little base and then just up the river a big American army base called Dong Tam which was part of the U.S. ninth infantry division, was where the navy helicopters had their base.

Q: Yes. Somewhere around there, there was a famous monk who...

SMITH: Yes, the coconut monk.

Q: It was cult there around the monk. Was he ever...

SMITH: Was this the guy with the garish temple on the river?

Q: Yes.

SMITH: Yes, he was called the coconut monk. He was an engineer. If you took the ferry from My Tho across the rivers to get to our province you'd pass one little island out there. The end of the island looked like Disneyland with all these big steel things that this engineer had built, painted garish colors, red, yellow and blue. That was his establishment and that's all I know about him.

Q: Well, I went to visit one time. You know I wanted to see it.

SMITH: Did I describe it right?

Q: Yes, absolutely. All of a sudden here you are in the middle of a war zone or something like this you run across Disneyland west or east.

SMITH: But the boat, the ferry I was on would just pass it and we'd look. I probably took a bad picture of it.

Q: Did you run across Howard Gross while you were there?

SMITH: Don't think so.

Q: You mentioned talking about corruption. What about it, this was always a concern of ours, wasn't it?

SMITH: Yes, and I tried to be a corruption cop and didn't get very far. I would inventory the supplies in the district warehouse and try to account for the roofing, aluminum roofing. Aluminum roofing was a big commodity. The commodities in the warehouse were cement and roofing. Roofing was easy to count. I'd count it and I'd count it again and it wouldn't come out right. Finally the poor old guy who was running the warehouse came to me with an interpreter and fessed up that he had been stealing the roofing. I was so sorry for him that I didn't do anything about it. It was penny ante compared to what was really going on, it was nothing.

Q: Well, I mean the real problem often would be I guess, at the district level?

SMITH: This was the district level.

Q: I mean higher up, what would be higher up?

SMITH: The province.

Q: The province level. I doubt in the Delta there was as much as, you know one thinks of Da Nang and that sort of place.

SMITH: Well, I think what we're edging up to is, if there's not much to steal you can't have much corruption. There wasn't that much down there. Looking back on it, I was wasting my time. It was nothing really. There wasn't that much coming down to us to be stolen. There was probably all sorts of other stuff going on. The district chief was probably getting kickbacks. There were probably soldiers who never showed up by giving a kickback, things like that, but how was I to know?

Q: What about that whole area was the sort of rice bowl thing. Was there good rice production?

SMITH: Yes. Since I was only there a short time; most of the time, the rice wasn't growing. I arrived after one harvest and left just as they were getting ready to plant.

Q: How did things play out there because you left in June of '69?

SMITH: How things played out was I was on one of these trips to visit the hamlets so I could fill out the HES form. I was in an International Harvester Scout with an American army master sergeant who had only been there a few weeks and our interpreter was a Vietnamese master sergeant. The main district road ran right down the middle of the district. It was up on a dike with rice paddies on both sides. This was in June of '69, the rains had just begun to start so that the rice paddies had become wet and dried out again. It was just at the beginning of the wet season. On the way out from Binh Dai we passed one of the MATS team; which was a small group of American army troops who were supposed to be advising a small group of Vietnamese militia troops. These MATS teams typically had about two officers and three enlisted men. The senior guy would be no more than a captain and often a first lieutenant. We stopped by this MATS team to get a spare

battery for our radio because we thought the battery in our radio was going bad. The battery was about the size of a carton of cigarettes, a big, wax covered box. It really was a battery because there were lots of little cells inside and at the end were a couple of wires you plugged into the radio. So, we got to where we were going and we spent the night in this mud fort with the popular forces. It was clear that our battery was going dead. I switched the batteries and then it became clear that the new replacement battery was already dead. It didn't work. The next morning, rather than continue with the trip we drove back to get another battery because it wasn't safe being out there without any communication with anybody. We were just two Americans, and one Vietnamese. On the way back we happened to pass a unit of American army engineers who were working on the road. We got their call sign and asked if they had a battery, which they didn't. We kept going and we got to a village where, by this time, it was probably nine-o-clock in the morning. I asked the village chief in my Vietnamese if the road ahead was secure. In Vietnamese he said "yes." Then my Vietnamese interpreter asked the same thing so there wouldn't be any misunderstanding because it was his neck, too if it was not secure. So, we drove off down the road. There were places in this road on top of the dyke where years earlier the VC had destroyed the road so that the tide would go back and forth between the paddies and so there was a large dip. At the bottom of this dip it was muddy from the rains that had just started, but not in earnest. The mud had dried out into these big cakes about the size of a pie plate, sort of a hexagonal shape. We gingerly went down into this dip and kawhami; the left tire hit an anti-tank mine (we presume because that's where they'd been laying them.) These anti-tank mines were about six inches in diameter, two or three inches deep and they are made to blow the tread off a tank. These were things we'd made and given to the French and the VC had gotten them. It takes an International Harvester Scout and just rolls it over a time and three-quarters. I remember uttering the immortal, "What happened, did we hit a mine?" We're upside down; my glasses are broken or gone, and I was in and out of consciousness. The American army sergeant wasn't badly hurt and pulled me out of the overturned Scout. I had sandbagged the Scout as best I could for mines.

Q: The Scout is like a large...

SMITH: Like a Bronco or something.

Q: So it's sort of like a large jeep.

SMITH: Yes, except that the jeeps were made so you could put sandbags up under the pedals and the Scout was made so you couldn't. I won't go into the geometry of it, but there was no easy way to completely sandbag the driver's position. It was my tire that hit the mine. The American Army sergeant dragged me out. We were all three scared. We were laying against another paddy dyke waiting for what comes next. We were trying to use our broken radio and I was in and out of consciousness. The two things I remember the Vietnamese interpreter saying to me was, as he saw this blood from my face and down my chest. "Ong, Smith, you very bad." I was bleeding a lot, but not too much. The main injury was my left ankle, which was all smashed. I had shrapnel up and down my left side from my knee to my arm to my face. The other thing he said confirmed what

we'd always thought - that he wasn't Vietnamese. He was really Chinese. He said, "Those damned Vietnamese, they said this road was safe." He had been in the back seat and so he was the least hurt and I don't think the American army sergeant was more than scratched. Nobody had seat belts. Fortunately the weak radio could reach that engineering group and we had their call sign. They called a medevac and a medevac came in and picked us up and took us to Dong Tam and that's the last I saw of the other two.

I should say some other things just to give the color of it. I think the medical corpsman in the back of the helicopter was fascinated to find this young civilian American in the middle of nowhere blown up, more fascinated when he found pistols on me. I had a .38 pistol in my pocket and a .38 pistol under my armpit. I gave that to the corpsman. I was in and out of consciousness. At one point the corpsman said, "Sit up, the pilot wants to take your picture." I sat up and the pilot took my picture. Probably the first American civilian he'd ever picked up and I gave him a sign. Frankly I don't know which one got the pistol. Then we get to Dong Tam, this big U.S. army base, part of the ninth infantry division. They had taken this huge area, it was probably a square mile and just denuded it of everything and built a fort. The hospital, which was called the Third Surg, was huge timbers with sandbags and dirt to protect it from mortars and rockets. Inside was an inflated hospital, which was pumped up with air-conditioned air, and inside everything else was like any normal army hospital. They did the surgery on me. That was in the morning. Probably that afternoon a young army doctor came in and said, "Well, your left ankle is badly broken and the rest of the stuff we fixed up and you're really lucky because, do you know what the carotid artery is?" I said, "No." He said, "Well, that is the big artery that carries all the blood to your brain. It's got a sheath around it, the carotid sheath, and the shrapnel cut the sheath, but it didn't cut your artery, so that's why you didn't bleed to death out there in a few seconds." He said, "We picked little gears and little things out of your cheek." I said, "Could I have those?" He said, "No, we threw them away." These little gears were either little gears from the speedometer or little gears from the mine itself and I wish I had those, but I don't. Within twenty-four hours I was on a helicopter up to Vung Tau, a more established and safer hospital, but older and not as good. That's a story I won't bore everybody with, but I was laying flat in this big army CH47 helicopter.

Q: The Chinook?

SMITH: Yes, it flew me up there, me and a bunch of other people, strapped down in stretchers.

Q: They shake a lot, too, don't they?

SMITH: Oh, yes, they make awful noises. Especially when they stop it when they're starting and the crew chief runs out the door with a fire extinguisher. That's scary. Anyway, we got there and then I spent about eleven days in this hospital in Vung Tau where, since the water was minerally rich, all the bed sheets were a light tan color. We had a ward in a Quonset hut of about sixty people and there were about two sets of crutches, which was always a problem. Whenever they would move you from one place

to another, they had to lift your blanket to make sure you weren't stealing crutches because there were never enough crutches. Another thing I learned there was that, in our district, whenever a helicopter came in to pick up wounded, if we gave them a wounded person on a stretcher, we had to get a stretcher back from them or we wouldn't have a stretcher. So, anyway, I spent a long time in Vunc Tau. The surgeon of the Third Surg had operated on my ankle and then they operated on me twice more there in Vung Tau. They never could get it set right because you know; the ankle is just a bunch of bones. It was shattered so badly there was nothing they could tie together very well. So, it's still not right, I can walk okay, but it's still not right. If you look on an x-ray, you can see how bad it is. I stayed there a long time, I think, because the embassy in Saigon had to fill out the papers so that the Air Force would evacuate me. Without the papers and the agreement to pay I was stuck. So, finally they all got their act together. Then another trip to Tan Son Nhut where we spent the night and then a C-118, which is an old DC6, over to Clark Field in the Philippines because no matter what happened to you, the State Department evacuated everybody to Clark Field. I got to Clark Field and the Air Force doctor said, "Well, what are you doing here? You're leg is badly broken, we can't do anything more for you. You might as well go home." Well, then of course the State Department had to get into the act again and so forth after every surgery. Every time we took a trip by air they would go to all this trouble to put a cast on and then they took a little saw and sawed the cast off so that if you went down in the water you wouldn't sink. So, I spent about a week at Clark Field and finally again the State Department got its act together. Incidentally the day I was blown up was D-Day, the 6th of June, 1969. Finally we left Clark Field and we were supposed to go to Yokota Air Force Base outside Tokyo, but a typhoon intervened and we went to Guam. Then we went to Yokota and finally after all that, the next trip was the trip that finally got somewhere. We left Yokota and refueled in Anchorage, refueled in St. Louis and ended up just before the 4th of July weekend at Andrews Air Force Base. I had been told that I was going to Bethesda Hospital. I was put into a civilian ambulance at Andrews Air Force Base and I said, "Am I going to Bethesda?" The driver said, "No, you're going to George Washington University Hospital. That's what the State Department told me to do with you." I saw this little box of records. You always have to have your medical records. There was this little box, six by six inch box, with all my medical records in it. Off we go down the Suitland Parkway to GW on a hot July day and I arrived there and the first time the first doctor showed up, the question was, "Where are your records?" So, somewhere after the ambulance arrived at GW and before the doctors could get to me, my records were lost. Part of the trouble of course is being named Smith. This happens. So, I had to tell the doctors what had happened. I had to tell them the ankle was broken and they'd tried to set it three or four times. This was a mine explosion and all this other stuff is from shrapnel. I didn't mention that at one point in Vung Tau every time I ate, saliva would come outside my left cheek from this scar here and that was worrisome until finally the saliva glands I guess atrophied. I probably have five saliva glands now, instead of six. I was in GW Hospital for about another week and finally they operated for perhaps the fifth time and that time the surgeon that had been assigned by the State Department didn't give me any anesthetic. He just gave me a sedative. I didn't go to sleep. He had one nurse pushing down on my knee and another one pulling on my leg. He would try to set it by sound and when I made too much noise, he would stop. I said, "Why didn't you give me a

anesthetic?" He said, "Well, you've had General Anesthetics five times in the last two or three weeks and sometimes people don't wake up." So, from the sixth of June until about the first of July, it took that long to finally get back here to Washington, DC.

Q: Well, then this is a good place to stop, but I'd like to put at the end so we know where to pick it up, what happened to you?

SMITH: Well, let me, I'll say a little bit.

Q: Yes, I was wondering about how the State Department, you know, sends out these brave heroes, but also, how do they receive them?

SMITH: Well, the first thing that happened was, I got a letter from Marshall Green, the Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia, in which he started, "Dear Vick." Well, that's what my father was called. I've never been "Vick"; I've always been "Sam." So, I told the poor staff assistant who brought the letter, "Take it back. I don't want it; it's not addressed to me." Then people from the Vietnam Training Center came over and they were standing over me looking down at the bed. They said, "Well, Sam, we've got good news. You've just been promoted to FSO-6 and we're going to send you to Nairobi via Swahili training." So, finally what I wanted came true. I said, "Thank you, thank you." I looked up at them and shook their hands. When next we talk, we can talk about that and we can talk about what I did in-between which mainly was once I got out of the hospital, but on crutches, I went to the Vietnam Training Center to help on the staff. Of course, that was really good for morale for the new troops to see me hobbling around on crutches. By that time the method they were using to recruit people to go had gotten pretty dishonest, too, whereas in our case, they were honest with us.

Q: Well, why don't we talk about what you were seeing, I'll put this at the end so we'll know where to pick it up. We're into the late summer of '69 I guess.

SMITH: That's right, or mid-summer.

Q: You're recovering from your wounds and you're at the Vietnam Training Center and you were mentioning the recruitment was not as honest as it had previously been.

SMITH: I had this cast on. All you could see was my toes and then the cast came all the way up to my trunk. All the way, a full leg cast with a pin going through the heel to try to keep it pulled out. The pin went through one side and out the other and it had two knobs on it so, the steel pin wouldn't catch on things.

Q: Okay.

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Today is August 10, 2001. Sam, I assume you were out of the cast by the time you went to the... I mean, you didn't operate until you got out of your cast.

SMITH: Well, I guess. I was in the cast until October and during that time I was working at the Vietnam Training Center on the staff. In retrospect, it was something for me to do.

Q: I would think that they would try to keep you out of sight.

SMITH: Well, that was what was amusing because they didn't. So, I'm sure I was a morale booster to the rest of the troops going out. I said I wanted to talk about the recruiting.

Q: Yes?

SMITH: I think I probably said that when I entered in August of '67 they told us in the A-100 course that those of us who were single males and had never been in the military were likely to be sent to the CORDS program. So, there were about eleven of us in that category and about six of us were sent. By the time I got back into the Vietnam Training Center two years later in the fall of '69 you had the situation where they would phone up young men, mostly young men I guess. I don't think they did this to any women, but I wouldn't be surprised if they did. They would say, "Well, you've done fairly well on the exams. If you will agree to go to Vietnam, you can join the Foreign Service." One fellow I knew or maybe more than one, wanted to be in the Foreign Service so much that they agreed and they sat down the first day in the A-100 course and the guy next to him said something like, "I wonder where I'm going to go." The other guy said, "Well, I'm going to go to Vietnam. They called me up." So on and so forth. The other guy said, "Yes, they called me, too and said that if I agreed to go to Vietnam I could enter the Foreign Service. I told them no and then six weeks later they called me up and said, 'By George, we've found a place for you.'" This is the story I was told. I believe it was true. There was one guy I know who was married and had been a marine in Vietnam and he was being sent again.

Q: Well, you're running across what so often happens in personnel things, often you get a junior officer sitting on the phone, trying to get as many people as he can. I've heard people even say that, "you know he was just getting married and wanted to have a day off to have a honeymoon or something." The person on the other end says, "There's no time for that if you really want to be in the Foreign Service" and arrives and discovers that the guy who said that is as new as he was, but just putting the pressure on. It is very hard to get the real word out. How did you feel about this, I mean working at the Vietnam Training Center? Did you, did people come up and say, gosh how did it happen and what's it like and all that sort of thing?

SMITH: Not very much. I mean the word was out one way or another. I probably told a few and those that wanted to know knew, and those that didn't, didn't.

Q: Well, what happened after this, it was '69?

SMITH: I don't know if I said, when I was lying there in the GW Hospital, the head of

the Vietnam Training Center, and his administrative officer came to see me and said, "Congratulations, Sam, you've been promoted to FSO-6 and we're going to send you to Nairobi." It's where I wanted to go in the first place, anyway, via Swahili training. I already knew this was coming and that probably kept my morale up. Probably in January of '70 I started Swahili training. Shortly before that I had consular training, too, one of the supposed benefits of going to Vietnam, was that you didn't have to take the consular course.

Q: How did you find Swahili?

SMITH: I already knew a little bit of it from the Peace Corps days. I had gotten some Swahili training in the Peace Corps training course in New York and then I used it all the time in East Africa. I could speak it well enough to get around, but it wasn't very good Swahili. I knew the basics already and it's sort of a deceptive language. It's not as easy as it looks. People think of it as some sort of pigeon because they find out the word for bicycle is "baisekele" and the word for blanket is "blanketi," but after that the words are no longer English. A lot of the words, it turns out, are Arabic, but I never knew it. I've come to realize that later. It's a Bantu language that grew up on the Indian Ocean coast of East Africa and has a lot of Arabic words.

Q: Traders and such.

SMITH: Well, people lived there. I guess you could call them traders. It's a very well-developed language with a fair amount of grammar in it. Once you get past the S2/R2 and S2+/R2+ then it starts to get pretty hard. It's not a real hard language, I like it. There are no real pronunciation problems.

Q: So you went out to Nairobi?

SMITH: Yes, we went there. The important thing was that in the summer and fall of '69 I started courting my future wife. We were married in early April of '70. That might be of interest, too. What you had to do if you wanted to marry a foreign wife before those days, was to submit a letter of resignation. Then after they did a security check on your intended spouse, if they didn't like what they found they would accept your letter. Well, they quit doing that sometime before I had to go through with it. I had to give a letter to somebody in personnel saying that I intended to marry this person. Then they asked me to give them one hundred-twenty days within which to investigate her. So, we set our wedding date at one hundred-thirty days.

Q: I'd like to get to the family connection. What was her background?

SMITH: She is Vietnamese and came from the center of the Delta along one of the arms of the Mekong, the Hau Giang. It's the one that runs through Can Tho. She'd grown up on an island out in the middle of this river about twenty or thirty miles upstream from Can Tho and where her grandfather I think owned half of the island. She was from a moderately well-to-do family. The old grandfather read and spoke French. He could read

Chinese also. He was sort of a mandarin type. She had lived in the Delta and then a lot in Saigon and I can't remember the exact order. She had worked for various U.S. government agencies including AID and USIS and had come over here first around '62 with the IIE, The International Institute for Education.

Q: International Institute for Education, yes.

SMITH: It was a program that the federal government sponsored, which sent young people to America to get advanced degrees primarily. She got a masters degree in teaching English as a second language at the University of Indiana. She had been a schoolteacher in Vietnam. I guess that's why she was chosen. Then she taught Vietnamese at FSI. Then she went back to Vietnam. Then she came back here again to her sister's wedding. By this time, her sister was a teacher at the Vietnam Training Center. Both of them were teaching at the Vietnam Training Center.

Q: You hadn't met her in Vietnam?

SMITH: No. I'd seen her here once or twice in 1968. She came to the States the second time just before I went to Vietnam, but I knew her sister, the other teacher, who had been my teacher a little bit in 1968. By coincidence her sister was married to an FSO in my province, Jim Russell. He came back on the leave that married people could get to visit his new wife in early '69, and at age twenty-seven he died of phlebitis at GW Hospital. So, my former teacher was a widow. When I came back and was laid up in GW Hospital I didn't know very many people here, because all of my other classmates from the A-100 course were off in the world and I'd come back unexpectedly early. I called up the older sister from the hospital and she brought along her little sister as sort of a chaperon and that's really how I met my wife.

Q: Well, then what did she think about the Foreign Service as a career? I mean she must have had intimation. Her brother-in-law had been in the Foreign Service?

SMITH: Yes, and she had been working with Foreign Service officers and training Foreign Service officers, so she knew as much about the Foreign Service as I did, really.

Q: After Swahili training and whatever, you went off to Nairobi. You were there from when to when?

SMITH: From June of 1970 to December of 1972. So, two and a half years.

Q: What was your job?

SMITH: I was an Economic/Commercial officer, the third person in a three-person section. I forget how the numbers worked in those days, but I guess the head of the section was an FSO-3 and her or his deputy would be about an FSO-5 and then the junior officer was me at this point, an FSO-6.

Q: Who was the ambassador when you got out there?

SMITH: Almost the whole time I was there it was Ambassador Robinson McIlvaine.

Q: He just died.

SMITH: He just died, I think maybe since we last saw each other. I went to his funeral. A wonderful man. A man who hadn't really gotten into the Foreign Service and the State Department until he was forty or fifty.

Q: He was a newspaper editor.

SMITH: Yes, I guess owner and editor.

Q: Yes, a small newspaper.

SMITH: Yes. I didn't know until I went to this funeral service that he'd actually written a book about it which had been made into a movie. I think it's called, It Happens Every Thursday. I've got to see that movie. So, they had a weekly newspaper obviously. I just want to say that I can't say enough good things about Robinson McIlvaine. A wonderful man.

Q: Yes, I interviewed him a long time ago, but he struck me as being a very solid, nice guy.

SMITH: Solid, intelligent, a real gentleman, not a wimp, a gentleman.

Q: During this time, I know, you were at the bottom of the food chain, how did you see American relations with Kenya?

SMITH: Well, they were very good. Kenya had only been independent for seven years at that point. Jomo Kenyatta was still the first president. He and us and the British didn't like communists and were more or less in favor of a capitalistic society and not in favor of socialism. So, on almost all policy issues and for all I know, all policy issues, we got along very well. Mombasa, Kenya was one of the few ports on the Indian Ocean coast of Africa that the U.S. Navy not only could go to, but wanted to go to. So, one of my jobs in addition to being the Economic and Commercial officer was to take care of the U.S. Navy when it showed up in Mombasa, because this was one of the many periods when we did not have a consulate or any other office in Mombasa.

Q: What sort of commercial economic work were we doing?

SMITH: Thinking about it, I guess the commercial work that I did was all kinds of trade promotion. I was in charge of the commercial trade center we had which we called the "commercial offices." A separate office in an unsecured area where businessmen could come in and out and be assisted. We had two or three staff there. We would have catalog

shows and other sorts of trade promotion events. Some of them we would gin up ourselves and some we would do at the behest of the Commerce Department. I enjoyed that and I got to meet a lot of the American businessmen who came through. In those days at least, Nairobi was one of the places that American businessmen wanted to go to for whatever reason and they'd come there to try to sell their things or buy something or invest. Everybody was pretty optimistic that Kenya was on the right track and that these relationships would prosper. The economic work I did was mostly the scheduled reporting, but I did a little bit of spot reporting on things that interested me like aviation, but most of what I did on the economic side, was the old CERP reports.

Q: These were reports on, I can't remember were these reports that were on a CERP system?

SMITH: Yes. Every post was assigned to do a certain amount of reports. Most of these were reports that lots of posts were doing and CERP I guess was called the "combined economic reporting program" and I think it depended on what kind of post you were in, what report you would do. There was a long list of these and in fact there was even an IBM card you were supposed to send in when you did the report. It produced a uniform reporting system.

Q: Did you find that sort of a bureaucracy or the way business was conducted, was conducive to Americans selling items there?

SMITH: Whose bureaucracy?

Q: The bureaucracy of Kenya.

SMITH: Even then it wasn't always easy. I think the investors were the ones that soon became the most disillusioned. At that time it was all very new and there were, probably four big U.S. investors who'd come in there optimistic and they were beginning to get less optimistic. The one I remember in particularly and I guess I shouldn't mention the name of the company, in fact I won't even mention what they were making. They were a large American company with a well-known product and they were told that once they invested and started production they would have import protection. It didn't come to pass and they were bitter. They were in production, they were employing, I don't know, a couple hundred Kenyans, they had a large plant and I don't know how many millions of dollars they'd invested and they had all new equipment and they were making a good product, but they had competition, which they hadn't counted on. They were also unhappy because just across the border in Tanzania another U.S. company had set up a plant to make a similar product. That company had brought in old equipment and I suppose their investment was less and that was part of their competition. I think at one point they had thought that by setting up this plant in Kenya they would be able to service all of East Africa. Well, that wasn't going to be true. Those sort of things happened. It was all very new at the time I was there. You couldn't say it developed into a pattern. I believe that it did though. I believe that other investors were unhappy, too later, but I can't say that for a fact because then I got out of that business and the rest of it was only

hearsay.

Q: What about competition with the British? I would have thought that by the time you got there the British would have had very deep roots as far as their products and all that, how did that work?

SMITH: What you had more were British trading companies whose products might come from anywhere. In many areas we weren't really competitive for a lot of reasons. For instance, motor cars. In those days, you may remember, our cars were these great big boats. They were horribly fuel inefficient and they weren't very good for the bad roads, as opposed to in the '30s. I used to talk to friends who had been in Kenya in the 1930s and they said in those days the only cars that would navigate the roads of Kenya were American cars because they were built for our bad roads here. By this time, if you had a lot of money you bought a Mercedes. If you didn't have much money at all, you bought a Volkswagen or an English Ford. If you were in the middle level, you got a Peugeot. The Japanese cars were just starting to come in. The most evident were the Toyota Land Cruisers. We should have been competitive with Jeeps and I don't know why we weren't.

Q: Did you find in the economic field, particularly in the commercial field, was there a major problem for American firms dealing with it because of payoffs, bribes, corruption and that sort of thing?

SMITH: I didn't find that. I think that later it became a real bad problem, but to tell you the truth, the time I was there I don't remember anybody saying that. There may have been problems. There was a competition for East African Airways for new airplanes. There were three international manufacturers interested in it. The rumor was, it was only a rumor, that each of them had had his man in the woodwork and one of them won.

Q: Which one won?

SMITH: McDonnell Douglas sold them DC-9s, which did very well, but there wasn't much business after that. I was in Madagascar, probably around '77 when the East African community just fell apart, and East African Airways did, too.

Q: While you were on the economic side, did you get involved in observing and listening to others talk about the political situation there?

SMITH: Yes, and as a matter of fact, I was also sometimes the labor reporting officer. I read about it in both open and closed sources.

Q: What about the political situation? Was Tom Mboya a figure?

SMITH: No, he was murdered while I was in the hospital in GW in the summer of '69 or shortly before then.

Q: He came out of the labor movement, didn't he?

SMITH: Yes, he did.

Q: How did you see the labor movement when you were there?

SMITH: A good question. We saw it as an important force, which we were trying to influence. We've always tried to promote free trade unions and the trade unions in Kenya were fairly free. There was probably some politicalization of them, but not that much.

Q: Did the embassy sort of play any role? Did we have any you might say favorites or was the political system one with which we were comfortable with and we just sort of observed it as it tipped over?

SMITH: I don't quite understand what you're saying.

Q: Well, I'm saying were we concerned with elements within the political spectrum at that time?

SMITH: I don't think we were very much unless there might have been some very small ineffective elements that we were concerned about, but as long as they remained small and ineffective we weren't. Of course, President Kenyatta did his best to make sure that they remained small and ineffective.

Q: Was there any spillover from Tanzania where you had a country in the area who was playing with a very socialist regime and monkeying around with the economy and with the populous and all that? I was wondering whether it had any repercussions up in Kenya.

SMITH: I don't think it did. I think the only repercussion was that most people looked at what was happening south of the border and were saying, boy we're glad that's not happening up here. At that time Tanzania was trying all of these things and I think probably it was too early to say they weren't working. In the end they didn't work. The one thing that Nyerere did which I think deserves some credit is that he managed to create a political system that didn't depend upon tribalism and also didn't seem to be ruined by tribalism. I think he had advantages going into it. There wasn't, as far as I know, in Tanzania, any one single large tribe. But he, for all his faults, and there were many, mainly along the economic lines, he caused Tanzania to avoid the horrible excesses of tribalism that we saw in Uganda and the continuing tribalistic resentment that we see in Kenya and the mess you see over in what has become the Congo again. So, I think Tanzania's Nyerere deserves a lot of credit for that. I think, we all know he was the darling of the world's socialist governments and I think one other point is I don't think anybody's ever laid any charges of corruption against him. He was, I think, a guy trying to do what he thought was best. It just didn't work out.

Q: Now did you, you spent your time in Uganda and when you got over to Kenya, this time could you sort of from what you saw, say how was Kenya different from Uganda?

SMITH: First of all you had the difference that I mentioned earlier that Kenya had been Kenya Colony and Uganda had been Uganda Protectorate which meant that, except for a few minor exceptions, the Ugandans hadn't had their land taken away from them by the white man, where in Kenya, the British came in and took the very best land in the highlands and sort of pushed the Kikuyu off of it. I feel certain this was the thing that caused the Mau Mau rebellion in the 1950s. So, you didn't have any leftovers from that in Uganda and you still had the leftovers of that in Kenya. Although it was hard to tell that there were any leftovers. It was amazing what Kenyatta had been able to do, and what the British had been able to do to bring the country to independence with Kenyatta as president. He had been in a prison out in the middle of the desert. He became president and they're all good friends.

Q: How did you see the British?

SMITH: I ought to say a little bit more. What was the difference between the two countries? In those days Kenya was leaping ahead of the other two countries economically. It had always been more developed. There had been more European type industries established in Kenya and fewer in Uganda and Tanzania. So, at that time it looked like it was really surging ahead economically. The others were lagging behind for various reasons, one reason being that Tanzania was much bigger and didn't have the immediate economic wealth Kenya had. Uganda was landlocked.

Q: From your perspective, how was tribalism, what all did you see? I mean you'd been in Uganda and you were now in Kenya. Did you see tribalism playing a major role in sort of a social and economic life of the country?

SMITH: Yes, we did. The Kikuyu were the largest single tribe, not a majority, but the largest single tribe. They were also the tribe that had been behind the Mau Mau rebellion and, therefore, felt that they were the tribe that had brought Kenya to independence. The rest of them, the rest of the tribes hadn't done that much but the Kikuyu had, and Jomo Kenyatta was their leader. So, in the period I was there, you saw the Kikuyu gradually taking more and more control of the important aspects of the country, the politics, the military and the economy and you had Kikuyu starting to go off into the Rift valley into lands that they had not occupied before or traditionally and taking them over one way or another which was causing a lot of resentment. (I should parenthetically say that, in the way they tended to do things in colonial times, the British would pick one ethnic group to be the army. The group they picked was a group called the Wakamba. I should say what the tribal areas were. The Kikuyu areas were in the central part of the country so their province was known as the Central Province. That's the so-called white highlands between Mount Kenya and the Aberdare Mountains and north and south of that. Nairobi is just on the southern end of the Kikuyu area as you go off into the dryer plains. To the southeast of them, sort of on the south side of Mount Kenya, was where Wakamba lived. A much dryer area, much harder to get by on. Then out in the far west, the second largest tribal group was the Luo, living on the shores of Lake Victoria. Their language is a different language group from Bantu. Kikuyu and Kamba are Bantu languages like

Swahili, whereas the language group of the Luo is called a Nilotic Language. They were the group, the tribe that during the Cold War had appeared to align themselves with the Chinese. The infamous man was Oginga Odinga who had been the vice president, but was from a different tribe, a different tribe for sure and a different political party than Kenyatta. I'm a little on shaky ground there, but in any case he got on the outs with Kenyatta while I was in the Peace Corps in Uganda. The Kenya police raided his office building, the vice president's office building. They found in the basement a cache of Chinese arms. I believe he went to prison. When I was in Kenya the vice president was Daniel Arap Moi who was from a small group of small tribes called the Kalenjin who were way out on the other side of the Rift Valley and have yet another whole different group of languages. In the past they had not been an important political force at all and one could think that that might have been why Kenyatta chose Moi to be his vice president and head of the police force. Well, that's how Moi became the president when Kenyatta died in about 1979 and he's still there twenty-two years later. I understand he has now, in spite of the small size of his tribal group, put his people in all the important positions, but I only understand that, I don't know for a fact. (Note; in December 2002, Daniel Arap Moi permitted free elections and Mwai Kibaki became Kenya's third president, defeating Moi's chosen candidate, one of Kenyatta's sons.)

Q: Do you feel, you know, when you're in the Peace Corps, you have this sort of certain freedom, you're not particularly defending anybody's policy. I mean you're going out and doing your thing and you're coming up during this, particularly during the '60s, kind of I won't say rebel period, but you know. Did you find it hard to come back to Africa and be a non-Peace Corps person and be part of the American establishment there?

SMITH: No, no, not at all because my views on most things hadn't changed and I hadn't been particularly quiet about my views on those things when I was in the Peace Corps.

Q: Were you able to, did the embassy do you feel have relatively good contact with the various elements of Kenyan society, the tribes and all?

SMITH: I think so. I think we did. Needless to say the political section wasn't huge, but they made an effort to deal with all sides and all parts of the political leadership. A conscientious effort to not be dealing only with the Kikuyu or whoever.

Q: Well, you didn't mention the Masai? Are they from that area?

SMITH: The Masai are in the Rift Valley also, but more on the southern end and in the lower ground, too where the Kalenjin are sort of on the other side of the Rift Valley, up the west side of the valley up towards the north. Incidentally that's the tribal group that produces most of these long distance runners.

Q: Did you get much of a chance to travel around?

SMITH: A fair amount, yes, but mostly as a tourist. The only travel I did on business, except for a couple of trips, were these trips down to Mombasa to take care of the U.S.

Navy and that would mean taking the train or plane down and back and then being there on the coast. I had to go meet the ship, take the captain, to meet the mayor and the district commissioner, then back to the ship and over to the Kenya navy and so on and so forth.

Q: How about Mombasa? I have a, why was this a place that the navy liked to come to?

SMITH: It was a very good port, which is still run well. A sheltered port and lots of facilities and touristic things for the sailors to do. Among underdeveloped countries, a port and tourist industry that was even in those days quite well developed.

Q: Did you find yourself at all acting as protection and welfare officer down in Mombasa when you know, I mean, there's always some 17 or 18 year old sailors getting in trouble.

SMITH: Except for one case, I stayed out of that. That would be taken care of I think quite adequately by the Kenyan police and the two navies. I think, well, I think most of the time they behaved themselves. When they did get in trouble, it was minor. The one case where I got stuck with it was when and I was already back up in Nairobi when a young ensign lost his temper and his cool in a bar and started throwing his shipmates across the bar. Somehow he was subdued and ended up in the only mental hospital in Kenya, which is up in Nairobi, and I had to get a Navy psychiatrist to come down from Naples to escort this young giant back to Naples on an airplane. That was the only time I was involved in that sort of thing. I should have mentioned and I'm glad you asked. Since our embassy only had one full time vice consul, we other junior officers had to fill in behind her whenever she was away or if things got too heavy. So, I often did consular things and of course I was duty officer every ten or twenty weeks and had to do it then, too. I did a lot of consular things and it would tend to be these welfare things - American tourists in trouble. An American tourist turns up in the newspaper being accused of being a demonstrator and it turned out the poor guy was having some sort of seizure, a shell-shocked veteran from the Korean War. I later heard he had a history of going to the mental hospital in America and being taken care of and subdued and taken the cure, so-to-speak, released from the mental hospital getting a new passport and going off to some foreign country and then gradually losing it. It would then come to the attention of the American Embassy and he would be sent back to America and start all over again.

Q: A friend of mine, Fred Elfers, I'm not sure if it happened during this time, was killed in an automobile accident. Was that during your time?

SMITH: No, he was the chargé in Madagascar, wasn't he?

Q: Yes.

SMITH: That happened just before I went to Madagascar in 1976. By the time I got there, there was a new chargé and everybody was still talking about Fred. Fred was killed on a highway near Thika in Kenya. It was in the middle of the night and he was killed. This is what you and Ken Brown and I were speaking about a few weeks ago; the number of Foreign Service Officers who died on the highways. We lost our beloved political

counselor there in Nairobi, Howard "Hap" Funk. He was out doing just what you were asking about. He was on a field trip in Western Kenya to visit the Luo, to see what was going on, feel the pulse, etc. He was in the back seat of a car that came around a corner. A truck coming the other way ran over him and the only one killed was poor Hap. This was on the four-day Easter weekend of 1971. I was the duty officer. Ambassador, Robinson McIlvaine, called in the administrative officer, told him to take over the duty officer desk and told me to go to the airport and hire a plane and pilot and go get Hap. While we were in Kenya a young marine guard was killed in a car wreck. After I left Madagascar in '78 my replacement, Jerry Cook, was killed in a car wreck in Madagascar. Howard Funk's and Jerry Cook's names were added to the AFSA memorial plaque in the H.S.T. building lobby in May 2003.

Q: Where were you while you were in Kenya?

SMITH: I didn't answer fully other travels. I went out on at least two trips with Ambassador McIlvaine to things he'd been invited to. One was to a sort of a labor ceremony celebrating the establishment of a youth training facility in the Rift Valley. Another one was the opening of a school or something very far out in the west. Then the other travels I did were on my own in this old Land Rover I'd bought from my predecessor and also, as I said earlier, I was flying. I was able to fly around there, which was excellent. I could get to a lot of places other people got to with great difficulty and with great expense.

Q: Later it became almost endemic, but how about at that time with burglaries, violence against people, how was that?

SMITH: At that period in the early '70s it was practically nonexistent. It was almost unheard of.

Q: Was there any residue of the old happy valley crowd of British expatriates? Particularly during the '20s and '30s they were expatriated mainly because their families didn't want them back and they were almost remittance people and they were sort. Was there any of that stuff going on or was that pretty well over?

SMITH: All I can say is what I saw at the Aero Club of East Africa Christmas party where in the afternoon there were these grown men throwing buns back and forth across the Aero Club dining room. I thought that was kind of strange.

Q: Well, apparently it's down in the regimental messes.

SMITH: Apparently, but I'm sure there were all sorts of things going on that I didn't know about. It wasn't very noticeable.

Q: Well you left there in '72, is there anything else you should tell do you think?

SMITH: We had an official visit from Vice President Spiro Agnew where my job was to

find a portrait of each vice president, Daniel Arap Moi and Spiro Agnew, that matched and to make sure that the Kenyan police band could play the Star Spangled Banner. I owe my colleague of that time, Bob Blackwill (recently U.S. Ambassador to India), a lot for that. When I told him the Police band said that they have the music and they can play it, he said, "Go out and listen to them." He was so right because they started out with the Star Spangled Banner and went a few more bars and then stopped. I said, "Where's the rest?" They said, "Oh, you want us to play the rest?" They didn't realize that we played the whole thing. So, that would have not looked good in front of Vice President Spiro Agnew. When they played the two nations' national anthem ours would have been abbreviated. Fortunately I had the good advice of Bob who was probably all of two years older than me.

Q: What was your impression of the Agnew trip? This was your first sort of official.

SMITH: Everything went smoothly as far as I could tell. There was, let's see that was in the spring of 1972, so the election campaign was on, but not the election. As you know, Nixon was reelected by a landslide. Nobody was paying much attention to the two young reporters of the Washington Post and Nixon required that all the ambassadors submit their resignations and he accepted them. So, Ambassador McIlvaine left. Then before he could appoint a new ambassador, the whole Watergate thing blew up and the chargé ended up being chargé for a long, long time.

Q: Who was the chargé?

SMITH: I can't remember anymore, he came after I left in December 1972.

Q: Well, then in '72. Did you have your orders and know where you were going?

SMITH: Yes, I was going to take the Econ course starting in January of '73 because I wanted to be an Econ officer. I should have mentioned that I had crossed the junior threshold. This was something new, another little hurdle to hop. I crossed that and therefore, became an FSO-5 and to get my career going, I was going to take the Econ course and my career development officer back in Washington had convinced me that it would be a good idea to stay six months longer in Nairobi so that when I came out of the Econ course it would be in the summer assignments cycle rather than dangling around in December and January. I got back to Washington, remember this is now the end of December '72 and I was walking across Pennsylvania Avenue and I ran into this admin officer from AF who said, "Oh, Sam, I hear you're going back to Vietnam." My jaw dropped and he said, "Yes, they need people to be peace watchers." You may remember the Christmas bombing had succeeded. The North Vietnamese had come back to the table and peace was at hand. So, the Foreign Service was going to send out people to observe peace in Vietnam. Of course all of us young Vietnamese - speaking veterans were the likely choices. Well, I wasn't very happy about that, considering the circumstances under which I'd left and now I was married and I had a little kid and I was about to take the Econ course and I didn't relish the idea of going back at all. I went back over to the Department and asked around and I finally got down to personnel and they said, "Oh, that

was a mistake. We all agreed that you shouldn't be forced to go back there and risk your life a second time considering what happened to you the first time." So, I did go into the Econ course and did fairly well mainly because, as a former physics major, the math wasn't a problem.

Q: Because usually the math is the thing that creams our liberal arts graduates.

SMITH: Yes. These are people who just as you say, had avoided math all their lives, while it was only nine years since I'd left graduate school. It seemed like a long time then, but it wasn't. It was all still fresh in my mind and I could do it easily. I think I was third out of thirty in the class. I got about the eightieth percentile on the economics graduate record exam at the end of the course, which was funny, since I'd only gotten about the fiftieth percentile in physics in 1962. Everybody was trying to find a job after the Econ course and it really wasn't easy because here you had thirty people suddenly all disgorged, all thinking they're great economists and trying to find someplace in the Foreign Service for themselves. I ended up in EB in the Office of Telecommunications and what I ended up doing mostly was working on COMSAT and INTELSAT.

Q: Explain what these were.

SMITH: I will. At that time both of them, what was this, this was '73, so both of them were about ten years old. The International Telecommunications Satellite Organization was an international body at the top of which were governments, which produced the international communications satellite business. It was going to be overseen by the governments and operated by the various telecommunication entities, and it had the only telecommunications satellites in those days. COMSAT was the American part of this and COMSAT was quasi-governmental, but really private. It had private investors. It had been set up, I think, in the fall of '62. One of the COMSAT vice presidents was the American representative on the board of governors of INTELSAT. One of the things our office did was to write a letter of instructions every month to this V.P. in COMSAT on how he was going to vote in the next INTELSAT board of governors meeting. That was part of my job.

Q: I mean who told you what to write?

SMITH: Oh, my bosses. The way it would work would be after every INTELSAT Board of Governors meeting we, from our office, would go to COMSAT's office, which was on one side of L'Enfant Plaza. The COMSAT V.P. who had been to the Board of Governors meeting, would debrief us on what had happened at the meeting and the agenda for the next meeting. We would go back and decide what we needed to instruct them to do at the next meeting. I did that for about a year. Of course, there were other things I was doing, but frankly, it wasn't a career enhancing position and fortunately for me they abolished my position. I begged the Deputy Assistant Secretary to let me get into the aviation office because I was always so interested in aviation. He had to tell me that there weren't any places, but there was a place in the Maritime Affairs office, which I thought was terrible. I went there and enjoyed it immensely and probably at that point in my career it was a big

help. Even today I think many people are enamored with airplanes. They all think they understand aviation because they've flown on one and nobody takes ships anywhere anymore. So, people don't have much of an appreciation for international shipping, which still carries the bulk of all of our trade.

Q: Well, we were also undergoing a real revolution at that time, wasn't it, I mean the roll on and roll off, the cargo, you know, the packing.

SMITH: You're talking about the containerization?

Q: Yes.

SMITH: By '74, containerization was accepted by everybody as the only reasonable way to send high-value cargo and the revolution had already happened. Roll-on and roll-off was supposed to be the wave of the future and it never turned out to be for various reasons. Straight containerization became the way that most high-value goods traveled. The ships don't even have their own cranes. They're just a big ship to carry lots of boxes and the ports have these big cranes. Once those ports were developed with these big cranes that can lift several containers up and put them on the ship, the revolution was over and was on its way. The question at that time really was, what was going to happen to the American merchant marine? We were in the middle of that. It was quite interesting. On the one side you had the people that wanted to continue the subsidies. On the other side you had the people who were saying we can't afford these subsidies. All they do is make our shipping more expensive and make us less competitive. It ignores the whole purpose of the ships, which is to carry the trade. The purpose of an airline isn't to have airplanes; the purpose of an airline is to carry people. The purpose of ships is to carry the trade which is really what's important and providing this service is important, but not the most important thing. That was what I was in the middle of when I went back to that office a second time in 1982. But, that was what I was also in the middle of there from '74 to '76.

Q: Did you run across Frances Wilson at some point?

SMITH: Yes, she was the executive director of EB and she was very powerful and was very much involved in the careers of all the economic officers.

Q: She really looked after her people I guess?

SMITH: Yes, she did.

Q: I'm told that you had to make sure you were on her right side first.

SMITH: That's correct and I managed to get on her right side. She really did look after people. I forget how many people there were in the bureau, but I think there's about two hundred and she made an effort to follow the careers of all of us.

Q: What I've heard is that probably the economic bureau has never been as well staffed and as competent, you know playing the role as during that time. In some ways here is this sort of personnel, civil servant type who had a real role in making sure that these standards were maintained and people in the economics bureau weren't bypassed.

SMITH: I think that it would be unfair to say that the bureau isn't as well staffed now as it was then, but it might not be unfair to say that she tried to make sure that the bureau wasn't bypassed.

It's always been difficult for various reasons for the economic function to maintain its position in the Department. I might get into more of that later, but one example is when, from my point of view, the Department ignored the commercial function so much that the Commerce Department started its own foreign commercial service and this of course happened in the late '70s and early '80s. Things like that continue to happen. In any case, from my worm's eye view the Maritime Affairs office was a lot of fun. I should backtrack. Needless to say, the maritime industry being an old industry, there were lots of laws on the books having to do with it. Some of these laws were laws that promoted it, including the various subsidies which I don't think we need to get into which we spoke about earlier and would become greater and greater and people were trying to find a way to end them. There's the Jones Act which is really I think a one sentence law which says that cargo between American ports will have to travel on American ships, which has been interpreted to mean not only American flag, but American built. Other parts of the law say there has to be an American crew. There were other parts of the law, which we use very effectively, which were designed to prevent foreign countries from discriminating against our shipping. The famous passage is section nineteen, I don't know of what act, I think it's the Merchant Marine Act of 1920. It gave the Federal Maritime Commission great freedom in doing things to the shipping of another country if that country were harming our shipping in its ports and its trades. It was so written and so powerful that we almost never had to do anything more than threaten it's use. So, if an American shipping line was getting treated badly in a foreign country's port, we had a process we started with - I won't call threats, but of explaining to the foreign government that what you're doing to our shipping lines is something we won't stand for. We have the means to do the same or worse to yours. Don't you think it would be a good idea if you stopped doing it? Every once in a while somebody would say, well, you never ever actually use Section Nineteen and we'd have to point out that we've never ever had to, because it was so powerful. That was useful and this was a case where the State Department could be seen to be using U.S. law to help American industry, in this case the shipping industry.

Q: Did you ever find yourself dealing with the shipping unions and the longshoreman and all that?

SMITH: Not so much the longshoreman, but the ship operating unions, yes. I definitely dealt with them.

Q: By this time the shipping, I mean the maritime establishment, I'm talking about the personnel, the sailors, I mean they'd been whittled away so that there was no longer a

very robust group, was it or not, or maybe I'm wrong?

SMITH: Well, at that time, because I wasn't dealing with the seamen. I never actually dealt with the seaman until I got to Amsterdam. I had to go down and take care of them in Rotterdam, but I didn't deal with the union people as much either. The unions were big, amongst the biggest contributors to the political campaigns. In those days they'd be amongst the top five contributors which is why we had such trouble on the hill trying to promote efficient shipping.

Q: During the time you were there, this was what '76, what were you doing?

SMITH: The summer of '74 to the summer of '76.

Q: Was there any sort of resolution of what to do about making our shipping industry more effective?

SMITH: There were various attempts and frankly I don't remember them all or how they all turned out, but we were trying to wean them off of the subsidies. It was during that period that something was proposed on the hill called the energy transportation security act of 197 something. I remember coming home from work one day and turning on the TV and it was obviously around December and what year would it have been, it was probably '75. If I thought about it, it's probably exactly '75 and seeing President Ford on the slopes in Aspen being interviewed asking what he'd done. He said, "Well, we vetoed a few bills today." The energy transportation security act of 1976 I think was what it was going to be, was simply an act to mandate that a certain percentage of our oil imports had to go on American flag ships. It was just absolute protectionism in a way that guaranteed jobs for the U.S. merchant marine. Thank God Ford vetoed it. This piece of legislation, which was just mainly aimed at providing jobs for the American merchant marine, was wrapped in the flag and called the energy transportation security act. It failed and most of our oil comes in on ships of non-American flags and it just keeps coming because the people who run those ships want to make money. The ships may very well be owned by American interests.

Q: In '76 whither?

SMITH: Excuse me?

Q: In 1976 you were, where did you go?

SMITH: I should say that almost immediately after I got out of the Econ course I started taking early morning French so that I would have some world language. I had the aim pretty soon to go to Madagascar and I was able to do that. I kept bugging my career counselor who happened to be a friend, saying, "Now am I going to be able to get this job in Madagascar?" The one Econ officer. That was the beauty of it. You know, run your own section. Remember I was still an FSO-5 and Ed said, "Don't worry, Sam, nobody else even wants to go." In the summer of 1976 I completed the early morning French and

I got a S3/R3 and we went to Madagascar. I forgot to say the most important thing here that in December of '70 our daughter was born in Nairobi. We just married her off this April(2001).

Q: What's her name?

SMITH: I think I will leave that private.

Q: Ok.

SMITH: So, she was born in the Nairobi hospital and the medical care was fine. So, now when we're on our way to Madagascar in '76, she was five years old and about to start the first grade. She had just completed Kindergarten. So, she started the first grade in Madagascar. So, off we go to Madagascar at the end of the summer of '76 to the capital, which was in the process of changing its name from Tananarive to Antananarivo. Of course the country had just changed its name from the Malagasy Republic back to Madagascar.

Q: You arrived in '76?

SMITH: Yes, either in August or September. The government wasn't in turmoil, but it had been in turmoil and the leader of the government was President Ratsiraka who I think was a lieutenant commander in the navy. He had been the foreign minister in the previous regime. We had a NASA tracking station there. The NASA tracking station employed a lot of Malagasy and it tracked satellites including the manned satellites. It was at the end of the Apollo era and Ratsiraka said that we owed them ten million dollars in back rent. He said that he wanted one million dollars a year in back rent for ten years. We said we're not going to give you ten million dollars. There was this negotiation back and forth and finally he thought he had the trump card. We were on the eve of the launch of the Apollo/SOYUS' mission where we were going to join up with the Soviet Union in space. It was a very important mission to us and the Soviet Union and Ratsiraka said, "Pay us the ten million dollars or I'm going to close the station." We didn't pay him the ten million and the station was closed. Out in the outskirts of Antananarivo, about thirty miles away was this big satellite dish and a lot of other equipment abandoned. When we arrived in 1976 there were still attempts to try to work something out, but nothing was being worked out. So, all of these Malagasy who had been employed out there were out of work and things were going from bad to worse. At the same time Ambassador Bob Keeley had been nominated to be ambassador to Madagascar and Ratsiraka and his government denied agrement because of Keeley's involvement in the fight against the communists in Cambodia. So, this shows the way Ratsiraka's government was going. He claimed he had a policy of "Tous Azimuth," all directions. But he leaned awful hard on the left side of the spectrum. He was cozying up to communists at every chance, but pretending to have good relations with everybody else. He certainly didn't improve his relations with the United States by refusing to take our ambassador. I think you would agree that's almost unheard of. I've never heard of it before, have you?

Q: No, how did this play out?

SMITH: It took a long time. Keeley had already picked Gil Sheinbaum to be his DCM. So, Gil was there and by this time as Chargé. Keeley never came; he eventually was nominated and accepted to Mauritius, a smaller island with a little bit better political leadership. Incidentally Madagascar is the fourth largest island in the world. It's a big island and it is relatively unpopulated, about eleven million people. It's off the southeast coast of the continent of Africa. I should say a little bit more about it. It's got an interesting ethnicity; the Malagasy language is shown to be most closely related to Indonesian. The people there are a mixture of some sort of Malayo-Polynesian and African. They don't call their ethnic groups "tribes" because they all speak Malagasy. They have distinct ethnic groups; the one farthest up the mountain is the Merina. The Malagasy tend to drop the last vowel, so that Merina is pronounced "Merin." It had been the dominant group and their kings had united the country under them a couple of centuries before and then had been overthrown by the French. The French and the British parceled things out and the British got Mauritius and the French got Madagascar, but then the French had to fight for it. So, around 1896 or '97 they marched across the island losing a lot of troops to malaria, but conquering the island. As I said, at the time I arrived there, things were not very good. The NCOIC, the head of our Marine Security Guard had been given thirty days to get out of the country for some reason I never discovered. Within thirty days another incident happened. Do we have time to talk about it today, yes?

Q: Okay, why don't we talk about that and then we'll?

SMITH: Okay. My wife, daughter and I arrived. Since we had no ambassador, we had an empty ambassador's residence and the admin officer put us into that residence in the backyard of which were about twenty old Dodge vans. These had been the motor pool to carry the Malagasy workers out to the satellite tracking station every day from the city. All those people had had these technical jobs where they were learning things that could have helped everybody, and the short-sightedness of Ratsiraka in closing the tracking station meant these people were all out of work. We had the vans and we used them ourselves. A lot of us who were waiting for our cars to arrive were driving these old vans around town. The admin officer was driving home from work one day for lunch and there was also a student strike and a shortage of buses. There were students standing along the road hitchhiking and he picked up two or three of them. He got to talking to them and invited them to lunch. I should preface this by saying in Madagascar, the students have a history of political activism and at the same time the Madagascar government was hosting an international conference on the teachings of Djuche which they spell with a "d" like Djibouti. Many people will know Djuche is the philosophy of Kim Il Sung's communism in North Korea, and Madagascar was hosting an international conference on North Korea's political philosophy. All these international leftists from all over the world, many of whom couldn't go home to their own country, were coming to Madagascar. In the middle of all this they had the student strike and the bus shortage. Our admin officer picked up these students and arranged to have them for lunch a day or two later. When the lunch is over, they left his house and the police arrested the students.

When the Chargé and I, who were having lunch together, came back to the embassy, there was a message for the Chargé to go to the foreign ministry. He went to the foreign ministry and was given a list of three people who were declared *persona non grata* by Madagascar and had to leave the country in either twenty-four or forty-eight hours. At the top of the list was the admin officer's name. Second on the list was the second man of the two-man defense attache's office, an army sergeant. The third person on the list was Charles Twining. So, Gil Sheinbaum, our Chargé, got this list over at the foreign ministry and said, "Well, I think I know why you want to *persona non grata* our admin officer, but I urge you to reconsider. He hasn't done anything wrong. I have no idea what you have against the sergeant, and I've never heard of Charles Twining. He's not in my embassy. I don't know who he is." He came back to the embassy and said, "Who is Charles Twining?" One of the local employees said, "Oh, he was the political officer here ten years ago." So, we sent a cable back to Washington saying you may want to inform Charles Twining that he has been declared *persona non grata* in Madagascar. When the diplomatic note came over, informing that these people were declared *persona non grata* for interfering in the internal affairs of Madagascar, they'd left Twining's name off. We figured they realized what fools they'd made of themselves and wouldn't put it in writing. The other two had to leave. Well, we weren't a big embassy to start with. We had the Chargé, me, a vice consul, the defense attache and his assistant, the admin officer and then there were a couple of people in USIS and the marine guards. A few days later Washington declared *persona non grata* the admin officer of the Madagascar Embassy in Washington, DC. A few days after that the Chargé was called over to the foreign ministry. We looked at each other before he left and said, "Who's next?." When he got over there they let it be known that there weren't going to be anymore *persona non gratas*. I've always said that what happened to them was that they realized that they were going to run out of English speakers to replace their staff before we ran out of French speakers to replace ours. That's the way my first four or five weeks in Madagascar began.

Q: Okay, well we'll pick this up again. We've talked about going to Madagascar and by the way you were in Madagascar from when to when?

SMITH: The summer of '76 to the summer of '78.

Q: You've talked about the PNG episode and so we'll pick it up with what else went on the next time around.

SMITH: Okay.

Q: Great.

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Today is August 17, 2001. Sam, then what happened?

SMITH: Well, as I said, all of that happened in the very first month we were there. It was quite an inauguration into Madagascar and eventually the admin officer was replaced and

also the number two in the DAO section, (number two of two) was replaced. He was replaced by a marine sergeant who was a native French speaker, which helped a lot. We went on. The relations between our two governments never got much better. I think you're interested in family life also.

Q: Yes, I am.

SMITH: As I've said, we had this one child, our daughter, who was born in Nairobi; we arrived in Madagascar when she was still not six. There was a school called the American School of Antananarivo. It had been a thriving concern when NASA had been there with the tracking station that Ratsiraka had closed down in the mistaken belief that they were going to be able to extract ten million dollars out of us. They had other options. So the school was in bad shape and I didn't fully realize this. You know, you look down these lists that you get from personnel and they say what schools are available at certain posts. Usually, in most places as you know there's some sort of school available for little kids. When they get bigger then it becomes a problem. The fairly young vice-consul had been dragooned into being a liaison between the embassy and the school board. He said, " You better get stuck into this, I don't have a kid, you do." In fact, I think it was normal for the Econ officer to have that job and he just had had it in-between. You probably know that one of the jobs of that officer is to liaise with the office of foreign schools in the State Department to get a subsidy if the school needs it. Well, it became evident real quick that the school needed it. We were down to about eight kids. Our daughter was the only embassy kid in the school. The school was in a pleasant little two-story house out in the residential district and at the time we had three American women school teachers. Two of them were married to Malagasy, and one of them was married to a Canadian aid worker. They were good teachers and they were willing to work for not much money because I was able to pay them in New York. We had a school board chairman who for some reason was a British lady who not only had become ill with a disease, that I've forgotten the name of for the moment. It's a common disease; you don't need to go to Madagascar to get it. It had weakened her. Also, she felt that it was ridiculous to try to run a school with only eight kids. So, I not only inherited the job of liaison with the embassy, I inherited the chairmanship of the school board. I spent a lot of evenings filling out papers and my main function was to get more money from the State Department, which was generous and kept the school going. They could make up the difference between the school fees that we charged every student and the money I had to pay out. We paid rent to the landlord, which wasn't much. Then we paid those two or three teachers. We were able to keep the school running for two more years, in the face of many people saying it was a lost cause. Members of my own embassy were sending their kids to French schools. That was their choice, but it certainly didn't help me. But, we survived it all. Our daughter got through the first and second grade and was ready to go to the next place, which we will learn about the next time.

As far as the normal work went, it was a real good job. It was probably even better than I expected and I expected it to be a good job. I was the one Econ officer in this small post in an interesting country and in addition to that the lack of an ambassador meant I was often in charge. In less than two years I drew five weeks of charge pay, which meant that

I was charge for more than ten weeks. They didn't let you draw chargé's pay until after you've had five weeks of doing it. Then the sixth week you could get it. There was a lot of trade promotion involved too, for whatever trade promotion there was, was mine to do. I did the CERP reports. In Nairobi, we'd always done the CERP report on communist country influences in Kenya, but I was just doing a tiny part of it. There in Madagascar I did almost all of it. We had no political section. We had a chargé, an admin officer, the vice consul, and me. So, I would do that every year and all the other CERP reports, and then answer all the requests to find out what the Malagasy were doing on this and that and whether they would support us in the UN on this or that.

One thing that was a interesting was that even though the government wasn't friendly, they wanted to show that they were interested, I guess. Of course, the government workers weren't unfriendly; in fact they probably didn't think much of their government. So, they were very open to the American Econ first secretary when he would call up and say I need an appointment with you to talk about whatever Washington has sent me to talk about. I could go see them. I used to say I had more access in Madagascar than my boss had with his government counterparts in Nairobi. That made it good. If you invited them to a dinner or a party, they'd come. The Kenyans were notorious for accepting and never showing up or not accepting and showing up. The Malagasy were a lot more careful about diplomatic courtesy. We bumbled along through what we call the fall '76. It became Christmas season. Gil Sheinbaum was married to a Danish lady and he and his family went to Denmark, leaving me in charge. The next thing that happened is that my local employee who was normally the Econ section head Foreign Service National, (but who was a lot better than that) dropped in after lunch and said, "Oh, Mr. Smith, did you know that there are riots in Majunga and that people are beating up and massacring the Comorans?" I said, "No, I didn't know that. Where did you hear that?" "Oh, I heard that on the radio." Well we had no political section, but we had a political section Foreign Service National, one of whose jobs was to listen to the radio and tell us what the heck was going on, as none of us were able to speak Malagasy. I called up Olga and I said, "Olga, by the way, have you heard about this?" "Oh, yes, I forgot to tell you." "Thanks a lot Olga!" The murderers were from a smaller ethnic group from the dry southern region of Madagascar-the region of Madagascar which was maybe in the southern temperate zone rather than in the tropics. It's a dry, poor area, so it produces a lot of migrant labor. They'd gone to Majunga, which is a fairly thriving port city on the northwestern coast of Madagascar on the Mozambique Channel. Out in the Mozambique channel are the four Comoro islands, three of which were an independent nation of the Cumores and one of which had chosen to stay part of France. This was also a poor place, a producer of migrant labor. So, here in Majunga you had one group of migrant laborers from across the water, the Comorans, who were all Islamic and then another group of migrant laborers from the south, probably none of whom were Islamic, some of whom could have been Christian. There had been an altercation between the two, I think involving an unfortunate act by an innocent child next to a mosque. It had developed into a massacre, with the rioters going into French peoples' homes and dragging out their Comoran servants and murdering them. Obviously, as the chargé, I had to report on this; tell Washington what's going on down there in the grand Isle. I needed more information. I wasn't going to get it out of the government. All they were going to say was what they

were saying on their local radio. They were putting it in their French broadcast. I went around to the other more or less friendly embassies, which were primarily the French, the Germans, and the Egyptians to see what was going on. The French embassy I could walk to.

I was walking back from the French embassy when, as I came up from behind our embassy, I could see there was a large group in front. I said to myself, *oh my God, now they're blaming us, they're attacking us with a demonstration and here I am in charge and can't even get back into my embassy*. I came around the corner and low and behold, all it was was my consular local leading his family band in Christmas carols. [He] was also the conductor of the national orchestra. That was a relief. I went back in and wrote a cable to Washington in which I made a prediction which came true. I never got any credit from anybody for doing this and I think it's primarily because nobody cared. I said there were 30,000 of these Comoras living in Majunga. I said, as strange as this may seem, I think what the Ratsiraka government will probably do is just deport all these people back to the Comores to solve the problem, and that's what they did.

Sometime around then, either just before the end of '76 or at the beginning of '77, Washington, in its wisdom, abolished the position of vice consul so he left and I became the consul. Well, when he left I inherited his main consular case. Since this is unclassified I have to be careful mainly to protect the privacy of the victim. An American citizen had lived in South Africa most of his life, but he was born in America and he was a bona fide American citizen and he was of, I'd say, late middle age. He was a passenger on a twin engine light airplane which had left Southern Africa on its way to either Reunion, a French territory or Mauritius, the independent country, both of them deep out into the Indian Ocean to the east of Madagascar. So, for a light airplane without tremendous range to get to them from South Africa, it had to cross Madagascar. For whatever reason the South African pilot chose to land in Madagascar to try to get fuel. The Malagasy said he didn't have permission to cross their country, let alone land there. Within a few hours he and another South African and my American passenger were all locked up and had been accused of things like entering the country illegally, etc. My job, amongst other things was to go and visit the American in prison. I don't think we're required to visit people more than about once a month. I made a point of visiting this poor guy once a week and talking to him and trying to keep his spirits up and taking him any mail he had and hearing what he had to say and reporting back to Washington what was going on. He spent a long time there. He was still there when I left. While he was there he petitioned for his wife and kids to immigrate and I took care of getting immigrant visas for his wife and kids back in South Africa. At one point they took him away from us. They took him out to Il Saint Marie, which is a tiny island off the east coast of Madagascar. After a few months they brought him back, and apparently none the worse for wear, but a little thinner. Eventually, long after I left, he was finally released.

Q: I mean, since he was a passenger, I would have thought that you know, he would have been let go way before, I mean you know, sort of an innocent caught up in something.

SMITH: So would I have thought. When they had his trial, my local employee, the band

leader, and I went to the trial and sat through the first half hour or so until we were evicted because it was going to be a trial having to do with the national security of Madagascar and therefore, a closed trial. I think, by their law, he entered the country illegally and this was his crime. That was his crime and this was his punishment.

Q: You were there when the Carter administration came in? Did that make any difference particularly in human rights, but any other way did you notice a change in what you were supposed to be doing?

SMITH: Right. I didn't notice any changes, or if I did I've forgotten about them. Frankly, I don't think Madagascar is very high on anybody's radar screen in Washington. It wasn't a big human rights violator at that time and I don't think the Carter administration had gotten fully into the human rights business. Even if they had, they would have gone off after more obvious targets. We didn't see that. One evidence of not much change is that most of the time I was there I was in the Carter administration. It had to have been from January of '77 until I left in the summer of '78 and we still didn't have an ambassador. I think it probably was the Carter administration that finally sent an ambassador.

Q: How well did you feel that Madagascar, was your impression of Madagascar fit into Africa very well or?

SMITH: Hard to say. I think they fit into it as well as anybody. I have to regress a little bit. While we were there they had a full-fledged formal election which made Ratsiraka president under I think a new constitution for seven years and then he was reelected for another seven years. Then he was voted out after a total of fourteen years and reluctantly left the presidential mansion. His replacement did so badly that within a few years he was back. The thing that was remarkable about his foreign policy was the way he would pick up these left-wing clauses. I described already his hosting the International Conference on Juche, the guiding principles of Kim Il Sung's North Korea. He made a lot of noise about supporting the Polisario front. That I think is an indication of him trying to show how forward-looking he was where I think most people anywhere didn't care too much about the fate of the Polisario front. He tried to get involved in mediating the new war between Somalia and Ethiopia that erupted at that time where they switched sides. Somalia had been sort of a Soviet friend at least and the Ethiopians had traditionally been our friends. As you know, Ethiopia really became communist and Somalia's Siad Barre became our friend until the whole country fell apart again about ten years ago. So Ratsiraka tried to mediate that conflict with no more success than anybody else.

Q: Did you find that I take it he wasn't much of a player, so I mean when you were reporting on Madagascar and whither Madagascar and all it really much of a play on the African scene.

SMITH: He's trying to be, definitely trying to be. While I had been charge for ten weeks out of the two years I didn't go out of my way to be the political officer. I figured the chargé s could handle that. While we were there Gil Sheinbaum was replaced by another officer named Robert South Barrett, IV and that was done to indicate to the Malagasy that

there wasn't going to be a U.S. ambassador anytime soon. That was definitely done by the Carter administration now that I think about it.

Q: I think in other words this was not just slippage, they really want, I mean there was a decision not to hurry this up?

SMITH: Yes. Throughout the time we were there, the biggest aid giver was still France. I would guess that an awful lot of that was because they had so many French aid people there taking salaries, which would count, but at the same time the Russians were big into giving or selling weapons. The Chinese were building, I forget now whether it was a road or a railroad up from the coast. I guess the road because the railroad ran that way. They were going to build it up from Tamatave which was the main port on the east coast and not very far from the capital of Antananarivo, which was up in the highlands. There was a little narrow gauge railroad that ran up, but there wasn't a good road. The only port that had a road that connected the capital was the one at Majunga that we spoke about, but that was a long way away. I think it's 600 kilometers over to that port. That port didn't, if I remember correctly, have any deep-water births. Everything had to be unloaded onto barges, up to the port, then put on a truck and then driven 600 kilometers down to the capital.

Aid was one of the things I would be reporting on in two different reports, one report on aid in general and another report on what the communists were doing. I went down to the port of Tamatave once on an official visit and was being shown around the port. Here was one warehouse just full of unhusked rice. It was a shipload of rice from Cambodia at the time of the Khmer Rouge. Madagascar's socialist policies had destroyed their rice growing efficiency, so they were having to import rice. They were always trying to outsmart world markets. Instead of buying rice on the open world market at the world price, they were going to help their fellow socialist state of Cambodia and buy it from them. This rice was grown, I think it's safe to say with the blood of Cambodian peasants. When it arrived there in Madagascar, it had to be declared unfit for human consumption because it hadn't even been husked. On the trip over it molded or whatever. What a sad tale. The Malagasy paid for this and they probably paid some price less than what decent rice from America or Thailand would have cost, but if they'd gotten it from us or the Thais, they could have eaten it.

Q: How about the French, did the French play a pro-counsel role or not?

SMITH: Well, they played a very important role. I wouldn't call it pro-counselor, but they were the biggest aid program. They were the biggest foreign presence and were the most important embassy in town. Certainly they had more foreign nationals than anybody else unless you wanted to count the Chinese or the Indians who'd been there a long, long time.

Q: Were the French, did you find that they were undercutting our commercial efforts or anything like that or was there any particular problem?

SMITH: I'd say rather than undercutting our commercial efforts, of what little effort there was, they had almost a monopoly on it, let's put it that way. I don't think American companies were trying that hard. A tiny market in the middle of nowhere with bad shipping.

Q: I would think that there would be a certain feeling of isolation and difficulty in sort of keeping the embassy happy. I mean keeping the people together there.

SMITH: I think there was. I don't think I felt it, but I had more work to do than I could easily accomplish by myself and I had one outlet because the embassy kept getting smaller and smaller and I kept getting more and more responsibilities. Every time there was a regional conference in Nairobi I was the one to go. If it was AID having the regional conference, well I was the AID Officer. If it was Commerce having the regional conference, well I was the Commercial Officer. If it was Consular Affairs having the regional conference, well I was the Consular Officer. I went to three of these. After I came back from the second, the admin officer, Mike Adams, who was doing his best to keep track of morale said, "Your wife didn't look like she handled this last week very well." He didn't say anything more. So, the next time I went to Nairobi I took her along. I think there was a morale problem.

The State Department and the USIS people got a paid R&R and we took it to Lyon, France where my wife's sister lived. That was in the middle of the summer of '77 and I turned that into a trip to the Paris Air Show. You could tell the poor defense attache was feeling really isolated because the dopey military didn't give them these interim R&Rs.

We spoke earlier about how dangerous the roads are to the Foreign Service. This defense attache, in late '78 was driving a Land Rover more or less in that region between the capital and Tamatave and much like what happened to Howard Funk in Kenya, he came around the corner and here was a big truck coming the other way. He was badly and permanently injured and my replacement, Jerry Cook, who was with him was killed. You did feel isolation there. When we went there we were told in the post report that the climate was described by the French as being agreeably unhealthy. The capital is at 4,000 feet so you have a climate not unlike Nairobi which is at 5,000 feet: brilliant sun, a dry season, a rainy season. You could almost do without taking your chloroquine, but you should it. It's certainly not a steamy tropical climate. If you got down to Tamatave when the door opened on the airplane it smelled like you had walked into your musty basement. It was known that there was a deficiency of calcium in the soil so everybody was supposed to take calcium pills. There is no way to get calcium from the local food if there isn't any in the soil because the cows can't produce it in the milk and the vegetables don't have it and so we took calcium pills. We were all sick a lot, not just me, the whole embassy. I've always thought, with no scientific basis, that there were probably some other trace minerals whose function in our body isn't too well known, but which weren't there also. It wasn't a very sanitary place.

We had something called the Thursday Luncheon Club which was a group of officers from different embassies who spoke English. We'd get together every month on a

Thursday at a restaurant for lunch. Interestingly, one of the English-speaking diplomats was the Cuban ambassador; another one was the Libyan chargé. I'm ashamed to say it was the third month in a row when I woke up with excruciating stomach pains that I finally put together that it was always happening on a Thursday night. We switched to the Hilton and not only the stomach pains didn't come back, but a lot of the former members showed up again saying, "Oh, didn't you know, that's why we quit. We were all getting sick at the Solima Motel." Solima was the nationalized oil company. When they nationalized all of the former private companies, including AGIP, they'd taken over the AGIP Motel and it became the Solima Motel. It had a nice restaurant except that it was obviously harboring some pretty nasty germs back in the kitchen. I've always said that we've always earned every nickel of hardship pay I was paid. My wife and daughter had horrible allergy problems. Because of the socialist economy, you couldn't get the medicines you needed. On Saturday mornings you'd find you and the other embassy officers going from pharmacy to pharmacy trying to find the medicines that the doctor had prescribed, but since that he was prescribing the same for everybody, the pharmacies didn't have it. It was depressing.

Q: Well, you left there in '78. I take it there was a certain amount of joy?

SMITH: Yes. I was glad to get out of there. Before we leave there, let's see if there's anything else I need to mention. All the other work stayed pretty much the same. I did one other immigrant visa. In the case of the prisoner, he was the petitioner, so all I had to do was sign as witness to the petition and send the documents off to South Africa where the embassy would issue the visas to his family. This was the other way around. At that time there was a missionary school at the south end of Madagascar where a lot of AID people from all over Africa sent their children and there was a young student down there who was not an American yet. His father was or his mother was, but he wasn't. The father and mother were over in Lusaka, I believe, and so I received their petition and I was supposed to issue the visa. I'd never issued an immigrant visa before on my own, so my assistant the bandleader and I worked on it. We got to the point where we had to figure out what number to issue. In the middle of all this, I had to call the young man at the school to arrange for him to come at an appointed time so we could issue the visa so I'd be there when he came. That was during another bit of unrest in the country, which we should mention. The big market day in Madagascar on Friday. One Friday afternoon in the market something happened, the police shot somebody. A lot more shots rang out. A lady at the French Embassy who just happened to be standing by a window was killed. Pretty soon the whole capital of Antananarivo was in chaos. The forces of order left and there was nobody controlling the city. The mobs were burning down police stations. This went on the whole weekend and then on Monday morning or Monday afternoon, loyal troops were flown in from the coast and stopped the rioting. We went back to work on Monday morning. I think once again, I was probably in charge, maybe not, that may not be fair. But, anyway, I came back Monday morning to work and outside my window as close as twenty feet away, I could see looters running down the street carrying television sets. In the middle of all this I had to call the kid at the southern end of the island. I called him up, and in the middle of our conversation, the operator came on the line and said, "Speak French or Malagasy." They didn't trust us and they wanted to be able understand

what we were saying. So, that was another occasion. The phones weren't very good. Finally we had everything together, but I still didn't know what number to put on the immigrant visa. I had to call the State Department. I sent a cable, which of course hadn't been answered, describing the situation, asking, what number do I put on the visa? Finally, the desk officer called me back on this scratchy line and we shouted back and forth. She said, "Have you issued any other immigrant visas this year?" I said, "No." She said, "It's number one." So, that's what happens when you ask an Econ officer to be a Consular officer. In the summer of '78, we left. Another important thing happened, I got promoted to FSO-4 while I was there, finally, and this was mainly on the strength of the good work I'd done in Maritime Affairs, plus I guess, showing that I could serve as a small section chief in the middle of nowhere.

Q: Where did you go then?

SMITH: We went, to everybody's surprise including me, to Amsterdam to be the Economic/Commercial officer at the American Consulate General. For those way on the outside, their map of the Netherlands will probably have the star for the capital city on Amsterdam. That's because that's where the palace on the dam is, next to the "new church" where the monarchs of the Netherlands become monarchs. They don't have a coronation; they call it something else. That palace on the dam is their old city hall and when Napoleon took over and sent his nephew there to become the king of the Netherlands, they had to provide him a palace and that's what they did. The government offices are not in the capital, they're down in The Hague and that's where the embassy is. We used to get some mail that didn't belong to us which we'd send to the embassy. So, Amsterdam had a consulate general.

Q: Who was the consul general?

SMITH: It started out with Henry A. Lagase and ended up with S. Morey Bell. There were four FSOs: the CG, and me and then two vice consuls and about nineteen FSNs. It was primarily a visa mill. This was in the days before the visa waiver program, so that little consulate was issuing 90,000 visas a year. I thought that was a lot until I got to Tokyo where they were issuing a million a year. We went there in the summer of '78 for a three-year post. We got our poor little daughter into a real school, the International School of Amsterdam that had about three-hundred kids in it, instead of eight, where she did the third, fourth and fifth grade.

The consulate was a big, old mansion built in 1913 on the Museum Plein, the main square for the museums. It was quite a location. At one end of Museum Plein was the Concertgebouw and at the other end was the National museum; across from us the state museum and to the right of it, the Van Gogh. Then right across from us, which will figure later in this discussion was a temporary building which was the downtown terminal for KLM. The Consulate General Building had a basement, three full floors, plus an attic floor, which still had a lot of room in it. The first floor was all for consular work and the third floor also did some of the consular work. The second floor was my commercial section and the consul general's office. I had a good staff. I had four FSNs and we did

trade promotion, but I think the bureaucratics are always interesting. My supervisor was the consul general, but my director for commercial work was the commercial counselor in The Hague. He didn't find that a very good system since the work I was doing was primarily for him, but the guy who wrote my efficiency report wasn't him. One other thing about that job, which I don't know, may sound like nothing to a reader who hasn't been in this, is the duty officer. To put it mildly, we in Amsterdam were getting cheated and this was how it worked. The embassy, which of course had all the staff, said, "We'll have two duty lists. We'll have the embassy duty list for political things, directives from Washington in the middle of the night, NIACT immediates, etc., and then we'll have a consular duty list for consular work." Well, anybody who has ever been a duty officer in an American embassy in a developed country knows that ninety percent of what the duty officer does is consular business. That may be a slight exaggeration.

Q: Well, pretty close though.

SMITH: The duty list then for consular work was at most seven people long because neither consul general would be thought to have to do this. There were four officers other than the consul general in Rotterdam and there were three other than the consul general in Amsterdam. Unfortunately, the duty list was run by Rotterdam who found a way to cheat us every way they could. So, at the very least I was duty officer every seventh week and sometimes more often. It got to be about as bad as being master on duty at Masaba Senior Secondary School in Uganda. You'd get all these crazy calls. They fell into mainly two categories: Americans who'd gotten in trouble, usually through every fault of their own, and Dutch who at 5:30 on Friday evening decided they needed to go to America that weekend and they needed a visa. For the latter, you would ascertain whether it really was an emergency and it had to be a real emergency. If it really was an emergency, we'd issue them a visa. Otherwise, we would just tell them to show up at the American consulate the first thing on Monday morning and we'll take care of you. For the first case it could be anything, people losing their passports in the red light district, or people who never should have been let out of the mental institution. There was one young woman who was stranded there in Amsterdam. She was on her way to be a disc jockey in Qatar. She was an American citizen of Arabic descent and some Arabs in L.A. had hired her to go to this hotel in Qatar to be a disc jockey at the disco. She showed up there and since she wasn't escorted by a male, she was turned around and sent back. She wouldn't call the consulate during working hours, she'd wait until about two-o-clock in the morning and I would get a call from the Marine in The Hague who would tell me about this problem. That went on for almost a whole week. We had a poor American army deserter who was killed in a car wreck on Christmas Eve. After I spent the whole four-day Christmas holiday weekend taking care of that, about three months later we were chastised by some Army command in Germany for not having let them do it. I sure would have liked to. This was a poor guy who had deserted during the Vietnam War, which was long over by this time and stayed in the Netherlands and was killed in a car wreck.

Q: Well, I would have thought that, I don't know, I mean things have changed, but particularly on the duty side. Amsterdam had both this very open red light district. I don't know if the drug culture was thriving at that time, but I would have thought this was sort

of a Mecca for young Americans who wanted to sin.

SMITH: Oh, it was.

Q: They had there, which means, you know, consular wise, it means trouble.

SMITH: Yes, we had a lot. We had very good Foreign Service Nationals and they could handle it very well during the week, but if it was on the weekend I would have to somehow glue it together until Monday morning. I would go every Friday night, when I was duty officer, to the senior FSN and say well, what to expect this weekend? One weekend, one Friday he said, "Probably nothing will happen on this case, but I need to tell you about it. There's been an American couple here looking for their granddaughter. Their American teenage granddaughter has disappeared from the school, the same school where my daughter was a fourth or fifth grader. The Dutch relatives she'd been living with don't know where she is. They've been to the police. The police have done everything they can. They (grandparents) have to go home. Their money, or their one-week excursion ticket or whatever has expired and the have to go back to the States. So, as a desperate last minute move, they've put an ad in the newspaper with her picture. So, maybe somebody will see her over the weekend and you'll get a call." Apparently as soon as that newspaper picture hit the streets, a large number of Amsterdamers recognized her and called the police and said, we know her, she's a stripper at this club. She was young, no more than sixteen. The next morning a Dutch policeman showed up at the consulate. He was going to escort her back to America and he wanted to make sure his visa was good. It was. He had a multiple entry visa so he could take her back. I didn't even have to issue a visa. It was really something. The newspaper probably hadn't been on the streets two hours before she was found and taken into custody and then deported back to the U.S.

Q: A lot of people knew her intimately as far as her description was concerned.

SMITH: I guess so.

Q: You were mentioning.

SMITH: I have to make sure we talk about the commercial work, which was the main thing I did.

Q: Well, on this theme, let's go through this for a bit before, then we'll move to the commercial side. You were mentioning this before we started this section of the interview about a mob that attacked the embassy, I mean attacked the consulate? Would you explain the genesis as to what happened?

SMITH: Yes. At that time in the Netherlands, because of the policies of the Dutch government and the Amsterdam government, you had a vast shortage of accommodation in Amsterdam. Most apartments were rent-controlled. The rent was low, but there was a waiting list which could amount to eight or ten years before you could get into one. At

the same time, there were many, many buildings which were empty. These were empty because no investor wanted to be forced to rent them out at rent-controlled prices. So, they were being held by speculators. There were large groups of people living in these buildings anyway, without the permission of the owners of the building. These were called squatters. The same thing happened in a lot of cities. It was particularly prevalent in Amsterdam. Occasionally things would get out of hand.

One weekend, the police were evicting squatters from a particular building and the squatters and their supporters rioted, put up barricades, and whole large areas of Amsterdam were not under the control of the police. Streetcars couldn't run. This was on a Friday evening. Monday morning I saw the Dutch army tanks going down in front of the Concertgebouw to tear up the barriers. These were engineer tanks with big bulldozer blades on the front. They had to use them because if someone had gone there with an ordinary front end loader the squatters on the roof would have killed him with bricks they threw down from the roof. The government of the Netherlands took back control of their capital after a weekend, just like the Malagasy had done with theirs a couple of years earlier. Later, and I forget the reason, we'd had trouble at our consulate and the police put up a permanent police post outside our consulate which made us feel a lot safer. The embassy in The Hague had a new building designed to be more secure and had marine guards. We had this old 1913 mansion with a low steel fence around it and one middle-aged Dutchman who was our security guard. He didn't have a weapon as far as I know. Around the corner from us, on the same block, another building was occupied by the Soviet travel agency, Intourist. They were on the bottom floor of this building and the top floor was vacant and squatters had gotten in and squatted the top floor of the Soviet government travel agency. The Soviets went to the police and the police didn't do anything. One of the things that happened was that under Dutch law it was hard for the police to evict the squatters if they didn't have their names. So, the Soviets had to have their embassy in The Hague go to the foreign ministry and say, "Look, under the conventions under which we have diplomatic and consular representation in your country, you're required to let us use this building the way we want and we don't want these squatters upstairs, so get them out." Very reluctantly, the Amsterdam police came to that building to evict those squatters and the squatters' supporters came with them. There was a big hullabaloo. In the end the squatters were evicted.

Then this mob of people started going around the city looking for other targets of opportunity. A mob came in front of our consulate. The police left and this mob started throwing bricks at the building. I can still hear them going thunk, thunk, thunk. I was on the second floor. The windows had something like Mylar put on them, so they weren't too bad. I got under my big old government desk and I called my boss in The Hague to tell him what was going on. By this time I was working for him instead of the Consul General which was after the inauguration of the Foreign Commercial Service. Also, I called the police. I was sure other people must have called the police, but I called the police and I said, "There are people throwing bricks at our building. The bricks are coming through the windows. We need help. Send the police." The young lady on the other end of the phone at the police station said, "You can't be the American Consulate, you don't speak Dutch." In retrospect, she probably thought we were hoaxers trying to

give them a hard time because there were more rioters than the police could handle. There really were only 1,500 policemen in all of Amsterdam and they were being run ragged by this. This went on for about half an hour and it was very frightening. I think because it was so sustained it was more frightening than anything else I'd ever been through in the Foreign Service including getting blown up and getting mortared in Vietnam. There was nothing to protect us. I think if the rioters had known how little there was to protect us, we would have been in real trouble. Who knows. But anyway, they threw all this stuff at us. A young lady worked for me back in another part of the commercial office. The next day when she turned on her IBM typewriter, it just spit broken window glass out at her.

Q: I can remember during the Vietnam War those of us in the Foreign Service did not have pleasant thoughts about the Dutch because there was almost a continuous demonstration in front of our consulate. I mean rather nasty demonstrations and the Dutch didn't do a damn thing, or very little. I mean, you know, maybe, it seemed like the Dutch in their sort of laissez-faire idea of shown in the red light district and in drug business and everything else, kind of let the kids run the, I mean the lunatics run the asylum. Did you get that feeling at the time or is that unfair?

SMITH: No, not exactly. I think it is unfair a little bit. The government wasn't particularly right wing. The government of Amsterdam was socialist, so there was sympathy amongst the government of Amsterdam and some people in the government of The Hague for the causes of the demonstrators. If it's true that they didn't provide adequate protection for our consulate, I think that is inexcusable and I have two things to add to that, three things. First, my boss in The Hague had been in my job in Amsterdam earlier and he told stories about literally having to push the door back against the bodies pushing against it during those Vietnam demonstrations. After I left, it had to have been the next year in '82, demonstrators were after us over El Salvador because some Dutch journalists had been killed by the Salvadorian forces or at least that was the allegation. The KLM building had been torn down. There was still rubble there and they planted crosses in the rubble. I didn't see all this, I read about it in cables, and the mobs got so bad that the consul general informed the embassy that he could no longer vouch for the safety of his staff and was closing the consulate. He did. Later when I was in Tokyo I was at a Japanese imperial function with a bunch of other diplomats. The ambassador of the EC was a former prime minister of the Netherlands, Van Agt. I went over to say hello to him and said I'd been in Amsterdam in those days. He immediately asked me to sit down and told me how sorry he was at how badly things had worked then. I think his view was that while he wanted to help us out he had the trouble of the Amsterdam government in-between.

Q: I was surprised that during the Vietnam thing we didn't close.

Let's turn to what you were really doing there.

SMITH: Right. I was 90% doing Commerce Department commercial work, and Amsterdam being an important commercial city in an important commercial nation, I had

a lot of work. This is the sort of stuff that is now done primarily by the Foreign Commercial Service. In fact, at this time I was on loan to the Commerce Department and I was on loan with the Foreign Commercial Service which I believe was inaugurated in 1980. There's a lot of routine things you do and if you have a good Foreign Service National staff as I did, they carry most of the load. The other thing you try to do is take part in or run trade shows. We had been doing something called catalog shows, which I'd done as a commercial officer in Nairobi and in Madagascar. In fact we ought to go back to Madagascar with one story.

Q: Oh sure.

SMITH: Let me describe a catalog show and then we'll talk about the Madagascar one. I don't know when the Commerce Department invented catalog shows, but they were doing them when I got to Nairobi in 1970. It was a way to get information from many American companies in front of foreign prospects without having to send the U.S. companies or their goods. So, you'd have catalogs from all these companies and you usually had a theme that might be business equipment or pharmaceuticals or computer equipment, anything like this. In Madagascar, somebody thought we would have a catalog show based on logging and timber and forestry because Madagascar had a lot of forests, a lot of them planted by the World Bank. So, fortunately I was familiar with these from Nairobi and USIS agreed to let us use their main exhibition hall for the catalogs. By this time, Commerce had realized that catalog shows were a lot more alive if they sent along an "industry expert" who could knowledgeably explain the catalogs. If the customer comes in and opens a catalog and has a question, he has an industry expert to ask. The industry expert that they sent to us in Madagascar was a man who was an editor of a forest industry trade journal. He knew his business. He was good, but he didn't speak French. Of course he didn't speak Malagasy. My economic local, who I said was so good, found a guy who was a forestry expert who happened to speak English. He was Malagasy and happened to speak English and he was going to be the interpreter for our industry expert. He worked for the Madagascar government's forestry department. The idea would be for him to take leave from them and come and work for us for the two days of the show. The day before he was to go to work for us he called us up in agitation and told us that he had <u>not</u> been told he couldn't help us out but he'd been sent to another city for that day so that he couldn't help us out. He regretted it. It was obvious that the Madagascar government was doing this just to prevent him from helping us out with the show. Very petty. We scurried around and we found at the paper mill there was a Belgian who spoke good English and perfect French who could do it because most of the Malagasy that he would be talking to spoke French anyway. He would do just as well as the Malagasy guy would have done. His boss, who ran the paper mill didn't tell him he couldn't do it. In fact, he was happy to cooperate. The evening before the show, I hosted a small dinner at our house for the participants plus people from the Madagascar government who we wanted to see our show. Everybody was arriving and since this is in the tropics, it's dark very early. About seven-o-clock a knock on the door and here is the Malagasy guy who was supposed to be our interpreter and had been sent away. He wasn't leaving until the next morning. He had drawn up his courage and damned if he was going to miss a chance to go to a foreign diplomat's for dinner and he showed up. Very brave

on his part.

In the Netherlands, there's lots of trade shows. They have something that I don't think we used to have so much here, but we do now. They have these big buildings which were used for nothing but trade shows.

Q: They're called trade centers.

SMITH: Yes, but they're huge. The one in Amsterdam had seven buildings. It was called the RAI, which was a Dutch abbreviation of their bicycle industry association dating from the time they made bicycles. It had been there a long time. There was another one in Utrecht called *Jaarbeurs* which just meant "annual shows." If there was a business equipment show at the RAI we would show up with a little booth of catalogs of American business equipment. The same for electronic equipment and so forth. The trouble was that when a real trade show was organized by Commerce, with a trade mission, say with lots of samples, they rarely came to Amsterdam because we were a small country. They'd go to Frankfurt or Munich. My leader in The Hague was always unhappy that Commerce wouldn't send him a real trade show. I had two senior local employees and one worked on consumer goods and he and I put together a proposal for a clothing show. There was a trade mission already traveling around Europe with clothing and textiles and we tagged onto it. That was fairly successful. The big success was in computer software. Now, we're talking about 1981 which probably to the young people would sound like the dark ages of computers and it is true that at that time computer software was just beginning to become really, really important. Commerce was going to send us a seminar mission, five computer software experts would come to three or four or five cities in Europe, under Commerce Department auspices. At each stop they'd have a seminar on software and then afterwards they'd have individual appointments, which we were supposed to arrange for these five experts to sell their goods to individual Dutch people. Either sell them or get agency agreements. They were going to go to at least Paris, Brussels and Amsterdam and maybe another place. My other senior FSN was working real hard to get people to come to our seminar and she'd gotten a lot of cooperation from Dutch trade journals, a lot of publicity. We were going to have a real success. We reserved a hotel, the rooms for the people to stay in, rooms for the seminar, rooms for the individual meetings. We were all ready to go and about a week before these guys were supposed to get on the plane, Commerce canceled the mission and supposedly the reason was they hadn't been able to find five American software companies who wanted to do this. Fortunately, we were the last on the road so we could cancel hotel reservations without losing the government's shirt. I don't know what Paris and Brussels did.

Well, this was probably in 1980 and the young woman who was working for me was very distraught because she had put so much work into it. It did mean, however, that she had a ready-made list made of Dutch prospects who were interested in American software. She said, "Look, something new is happening. The Jaarbeurs, the people in Utrecht, were going to have the first ever computer software trade exposition in the Netherlands. Why don't we see if we can put our own exhibit there?" We asked Commerce and Commerce said yes we could do it, but we won't give you any help. We can't help you fund it. So,

we asked them to send us the names of some American companies who we could contact to see if they want to join this mission. They sent us thirty names. We found the guy at our trade mission in Turin. He sent us a slightly out-of-date book with a list of all the American companies doing software. I should tell people reading this, this was long before the Internet had ever been heard of. It all had to be done with paper. We sent a letter to 1,000 of these companies saying we will sell you a booth at this first ever Dutch software trade show, for I forget how much, maybe $1,000, and told them all the things we would do for them. This was fairly risky because there was no government money behind it. We had to make it all pay out of its own budget. I don't think you could do it today, but we got an agreement from Commerce to let us do it. The embassy agreed that they would establish a separate fund and all the checks would be sent to me, but they'd be made out to the U.S. Embassy, The Hague and we deposited the money there. We got a good response. We got about a four percent response. People will tell you that if you're doing a sort of a blind mailing even if it is directed to people that should be interested, four percent is a wonderful response rate. Four percent of 1,000 is forty booths. Well, that's a sizable chunk of this trade show. We had just a marvelous success. Everybody came out of this smelling wonderful. My boss in The Hague was finally calmed down because I was working for him and I was doing great things. It probably had a lot to do with my being promoted to FS-1 the next fall, the fall of '81.

Q: When the commercial service took over the commercial function were you approached, tempted, how did you feel about joining the commercial service as opposed to State, the Department of State?

SMITH: A very good question. As a matter of fact, I was never approached officially on whether I wanted to join the Foreign Commercial Service, but just before I left some guy came by from Commerce and said, "How come you haven't joined the FCS?" I said, "Well, amongst other reasons, I haven't been asked." He said, "Well, okay, we'll ask you." But I didn't and the reason I didn't was several fold. I thought that the State Department has one real purpose and that's to keep embassies running all over the world so that the Foreign Service is the single most important chunk of the State Department. It's the reason for the State Department's existence. Commerce, I knew, was a huge organization. They were only going to have a couple of hundred Foreign Commercial Service officers and I thought we'd get lost in the bureaucracy. Furthermore, I, whether fairly or not, had not been very well impressed with the long-time political appointee big shots I'd run into in Commerce. Things like what I described, where we had a good idea for a trade event and they could only find thirty names for us. At that time anyway, it was a cumbersome organization. I liked doing foreign commercial work. To be honest, there's probably an element in there that I didn't want to leave the State Department. I liked the idea of the State Department and I didn't want to do just commercial work for the rest of my career.

Q: Commerce, you mentioned, too that Commerce had and really still has the reputation of being sort of at the end of the political patronage food chain?

SMITH: Oh, I wouldn't say that.

Q: Well, I would, I mean the people I've talked to, the political appointees who go there often these are the ones that don't stay very long and probably it's sort of the end of the line, you know.

SMITH: Well, the ones I saw were the ones that had been there for a long time and had their little fiefdoms and didn't impress me. That may be unfair, but they were cumbersome and remember the case of having us all get ready for a trade mission and canceling it one week before it was to start.

Q: Yes, and not having your people in order at all.

SMITH: One of the things they were cumbersome about was the long lead-time to run one of these things. It was more than a year in advance that you would propose all of the trade events. This mission had been on the books for a year, at least, and it had been canceled in the last week.

Q: Is there anything else we should cover in this Amsterdam period before we move on?

SMITH: Yes, I think so. Housing. Having served in two African posts, Nairobi and Madagascar, I was used to embassy-provided housing. In most of Europe you got a housing allowance instead and you had to rent a house. I rented a house in Amsterdam where my predecessor had been. This was at a time when the dollar was plummeting. Also, it was at a time when I was still just an FSO-4, not making much money and the housing allowance that the administrative section in The Hague had calculated was below what the rent was. Now, it was a housing allowance, which was either stated in gilders or was indexed so I didn't lose anymore gilders as the dollar went down but that difference between the rent and the allowance became bigger. That difference in gilders became more dollars as the dollar plummeted. There were only three officers there. The consul general had his own house. The two vice consuls and I had to, as the military say, "live on the economy." We later learned that there was a fourth person in their calculations. There was some military officer assigned to the F-16 program at Schipol Airport. He lived in the outskirts out near the factory at Schipol Airport and had a lower rent. Based on these other rents, I wasn't getting enough. This was never fixed all the time we were there. I know other posts in Europe, where the embassy went out and leased houses or they helped the officers find leases they could afford, but the embassy in The Hague treated Amsterdam the way constituent posts are often treated. There was nothing I could do about it.

Q: Did you get any feel as an economic commercial officer for the big guns, the Netherlands may be a small country, but you know, they've got some major, major international firms, Philips and on and on and on. Did you get any, did you have much to do with them or?

SMITH: No, The Hague made sure that if anything was to be done with the big companies that they took care of it. We had very little to do with that. However, when I

did that trade show for the computer software I ended up very much on the good side of EDS, which was still run by Ross Perot then. Suddenly I was basking in the reflected glory of big American business.

Q: Well, then in '81 you left, whither?

SMITH: We came back to Washington. By this time the new Foreign Service Act had come into effect, so I was no longer a FS-4, I was a FS-2. You probably know that meant more than just a jigger in the numbers, we actually got more money. The story is that the State Department was prevented from going to the hill to ask that our salaries be raised, but AFSA wasn't prevented. AFSA got up to the hill and found some sympathetic ears so that with the new Foreign Service Act there was an increase in a lot of the salaries, too.

I came back to EB again and I was in the Office of Development Finance, which is the part of EB that works mainly with the development banks- the World Bank and the regional development bank, the Asian Development Bank and the African Development Bank and Fund, etc. The bank I was supposed to follow was the African Development Bank and Fund, but probably my main job was handling UNCTAD, the UN Conference on Trade and Development. Since we were called the Office of Development Finance, we were the State Department office that was interested in UNCTAD, which is a branch of the UN General Assembly. It has never been made, as far as I know, a specialized agency. It has semi-annual Trade and Development Board (TDB) meetings in Geneva and conferences every three or four years. That's why it's called the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. That was useful preparation for the next job I had which we will get to eventually, but I went to two of the TDBs in Geneva and in those days, twenty years ago, this was 1981, it was very much still a Cold War setup. UNCTAD arrived at all decisions by consensus. You rarely had a vote and you had the group system. Let's say you had Group B which in the General Assembly is called the WEOG-Western Europe and Others Group. That's the developed countries. So, Group B was the developed countries, in other words the Europeans, Canada, Japan, Australia, New Zealand and the U.S. Then you had the G-77, which was the so-called developing countries. Group D which was the Soviet Union and its satellites, (except I think Cuba was part of the Group 77) and then there was Group China which was by itself.

Q: China, was that Mainland China?

SMITH: Oh, absolutely. The Group 77 was trying to somehow wheedle concessions out of the developed, industrialized countries on various economic and trade matters. It was usually stuff that was economically unsound and we spent our time fighting it back. Just reams of paper were produced. It's a sad aspect of the UN, and that's one reason people don't like the UN. It produces these resolutions which are printed on paper with UN letterhead at the top and they look official and they look important and they may be just absolute garbage. They may be good, they may do some good, but in the case of UNCTAD, they probably couldn't. Our purpose there was mainly just to try to cut our losses to make the resolutions the least damaging as possible. Something that I wouldn't want to do very long.

Q: Who was, when you were there, who, this committee of 77.

SMITH: Group of 77.

Q: Group of 77. Who was sort of calling the shots?

SMITH: That's a good question. I don't really think I can say. The Algerians were very important. Mexico was very important.

Q: I mean in a way did it make a hell of a lot of difference to us, did it mean we did anything?

SMITH: No. There was one thing UNCTAD did that was very good, but I'll get to in a minute. Most of the other things it did were a waste of time and all we were trying to do was keep the resolutions from being any more harmful than they were.

Q: I mean, did we see the resolutions as being harmful in that as far as the American public was concerned, you know, you have a resolution calling for this and that. It would just enrage people or tell people that you know this is either a radical organization or not a serious organization. Was that our concern?

SMITH: Maybe, I didn't think of it that way. I thought of it as these things were harmful and that they could cause things to happen or they could cause people to think a bad idea was a good idea.

Q: Well, who would act on it?

SMITH: Usually, we could write the resolution so nobody would be harmed.

Q: I mean would you sit together with your compatriots of sort of Western Europe, Canada and all that and say, okay, here's another one of these crazy ideas, let's draw its fangs?

SMITH: Yes, that's what would happen. That would be Group B and that's why the meetings within Group B would be far more important than anything else. So, what you needed was Group B unity and that was not always easy because you had countries, I won't mention any, but you could imagine who they were, who were socialist or soft on socialists or wanted to show their former colonies that they were still good buddies. If it didn't cost them anything they would sign on to these ridiculous resolutions. The one thing that UNCTAD did that I know of which was good, and fortunately we signed onto it, was the Generalized System of Preferences, which is known as GSP. I don't know when UNCTAD came up with it, but I think it was about '74 and the idea was that the developing countries' goods would enter developed countries' markets duty free or largely duty free. Every developed country came up with its own way of handling it. We had one of the best. We essentially said that everything was going to come in duty free

except certain items, which would be low duty-as long as no one item gets above a certain amount. So the worst example is when Haiti started making baseballs and they produced such a large percentage of the baseballs that suddenly they lost their GSP. GSP was a good program because it meant that developing countries, if they had industry of any kind, would be able to sell their goods throughout Europe and North America without having to pay a duty. That is something that UNCTAD came up with that was a good idea.

Q: Other than UNCTAD, what else were you dealing with?

SMITH: That was about it. You'd be getting ready for these TDB meetings twice a year. Each meeting would produce a bunch of documents. Many times there wouldn't be a resolution, there would be a status report for the next meeting. Then my job was to coordinate the position papers for the U.S. delegation at the next meeting. Frankly an awful lot of what I was doing was just bureaucratic turf fighting. Because we were EB; we had the functional interest. IO had an office, which was a mirror image of ours. They were the International Organization Bureau, which had an economic office. There was always a tug of war between them. Who is going to lead the delegation? Then there is USTR, the United States Trade Representative. Are they going to take charge because the 'T' in UNCTAD stands for trade? It was frankly a big turf battle and probably a lot of useless wheel spinning. One reason I don't have a whole lot to say about this was almost as soon as I got back to Washington, as soon as I started this new job I got promoted to FSO-1, mainly on the basis of what I had done in Amsterdam. Therefore, I was now at a higher grade than the job I was in and a higher grade than my supervisor, the deputy office director. At the same time the deputy office directorship opened up in the Office of Maritime Affairs, which I'd just left six years before. After one year in this one job I moved within EB to Maritime Affairs where I became the Deputy Office Director.

Q: This was then you were the trade conferencing from '81 to '82?

SMITH: That's right, just one year.

Q: Then you moved to Maritime Affairs it would be '82 to when?

SMITH: '85.

Q: '85.

SMITH: And became the Deputy Office Director and I was almost a shoo-in because 1) I had been there before for two years, 2) nobody else wanted it and 3) I had a good record and I was at the grade. I was sort of unstoppable. Maybe or maybe not it was a good career move, but I certainly had a good time.

Q: How had things changed?

SMITH: Since I'd left?

Q: Yes.

SMITH: That's a good question. The biggest single change was that it was no longer run by Richard K. Bank, a young man, a year younger than me who had started at the bottom of that office as a Foreign Service Reserve Officer. He was an attorney who had made the office and put it on the map as something to contend with. The idea that the State Department had anything to say about maritime affairs was, I think, strange to a lot of people and he made that unstrange. He made our office important such that I think after he left, Foreign Service officers didn't mind so much being the office director. He had just left. I forget how long before, but not long before. That was one major change. We still had a fairly large merchant fleet carrying containers. I don't know if when we talked about this before; I should have mentioned it, but major ocean shipping is broken up into two groups. The so-called liners which are these ships that travel on the specified routes, with a more or less specified schedule and carry high valued goods in containers. Then you have the bulk vessels which are usually bigger and carry things like grain and ore and oil and tend not to be registered in the United States, whereas a lot of the shipping lines were still U.S. owned and U.S. operated, and had U.S. flag vessels. Although if they were trading between U.S. ports and foreign ports they didn't need to be U.S. built. Whereas the bulk vessels, the ones that carry the oil and the grain and the ore, often were not U.S. flagged.

Q: Liberian, Panamanian, Cyprus? That type of thing.

SMITH: Yes. The two good flags, both big ones were Liberia and Panama. Most of their vessels were okay. The Liberian registry was run out of an office in Reston and they were a large and well-thought-of register.

Q: Well, they've been doing it for a long, long time.

SMITH: Right. It'd been how long since I'd been there? Six years. Yes, I left in '76 and came back in '82. Frankly from this vantage point I can't think of any other changes.

Q: What sort of issues were you dealing with?

SMITH: There were the issues that I'd mentioned before where we were trying to stick up for the rights of U.S. flag vessels in foreign ports. The other issue was something I mentioned earlier which had gotten tougher. This was to what extent we were going to continue trying to use taxpayers' money to prop up the shipping lines. That occupied a lot of our time.

Q: How did it occupy it, I mean, we're talking about something that was, we're costing ourselves out of the market?

SMITH: That's what the subsidies did. There were operating subsidies and building subsidies. The building subsidies were to make it possible for a U.S. company to have its

ships built in the U.S. The operating subsidy was to make it possible for a U.S. ship with U.S. flag and U.S. sailors to compete against almost anybody else's ship with more economical staffing and a less costly crew.

Q: Were we I mean did you feel this was something you could see at this point was basically a losing battle?

SMITH: I wouldn't say that, no. We thought that if you got rid of the subsidies the operators would become more efficient. If they became more efficient they could still compete. That's what we thought. So, what this meant was you'd have interagency meetings with Transportation and Commerce and USTR deciding what legislation we would want to propose to the hill. DOT had a Maritime Administration whose job was to promote the U.S. fleet and then it had other people within DOT whose job was to make sure that what we did was economically sound. Those were two missions that sometimes clashed.

Q: I think Admiral Sharp was there, wasn't he?

SMITH: Not at that time. Not at the time I was there. I can't remember the name of the admiral. What I started sliding into and what became the most important or most interesting work I did was international meetings on these subjects. OECD in Paris had a Maritime Transport Committee. Then UNCTAD had a shipping committee. UNCTAD had pushed through, against our wishes, the Conference on the Code of Conduct for Liner Conferences. International shipping lines are arranged into cartels which are called liner conferences and they set the rates.

Q: Let me just stop here. Okay.

SMITH: So, international shipping lines are arranged in these geographical conferences - in the North Atlantic Conference and the South Atlantic Conference, the North Pacific, etc. All the shipping lines get together and they, as a cartel, set the rates. This is something of course our authorities didn't think much of anyway, but it was permitted by law. UNCTAD, being run primarily by the G-77, came up with the idea of a code of conduct which they thought would promote their developing country shipping lines because, traditionally of course, their trade was carried on the vessels of the developed countries. Former colonial powers, and to a small extent us. The developing countries have a pattern; a similar pattern of trade so that they would export raw materials and import manufactured goods. They thought it would be a great idea if they could work out a way to force these goods to at least be carried on their ships because then they could build up a shipping line. They came up with a 40/40/20 idea. That is forty percent of the trade should be carried on ships of one country, one end of the trade, forty percent the other country, therefore them, and twenty percent to be carried by everybody else. A very uneconomic system. We'd fought it, but we'd lost. It went into effect. The Europeans essentially rolled over for whatever reason. I think what happened was the developing countries couldn't produce a fleet big enough to carry their forty percent anyway, so they let other people carry it. But it was an annoyance. Having done that, they then wanted to

return to the bulk trades that I was just describing, the larger vessels carrying the oil from mostly developing countries, such as Venezuela, Algeria and so forth to the developed countries. What stood in the way of that was the fact that almost all of these bulk carriers were under the flags of convenience that we described a few moments ago: Liberia and Panama and others including, as you say, Cyprus. They thought it would be a grand idea to have a conference on the condition of registry of ships. This conference on the condition of registry of ships was armed to eventually outlaw flags of convenience. There were roughly four of these conferences in a row to come up with a treaty. Unexpectedly, just before the second conference was to start, my boss, the office director, became ill and I had to go in his place. That was fascinating. I led a U.S. delegation of eight people to Geneva for three weeks for the second conference on the condition of registry of ships early in 1985. Then, at the end of my tour there in July of '85, I led a twelve-person delegation to a two-week third conference. We can go into whatever you want to about what happened there, but for all of these meetings, we'd have pre-meetings of Group B in the OECD in Paris. During that spring of '85 I was going to Paris or Geneva at least once a month to do these things.

Q: It might be worth it to sort of finish up this section by saying what was the outcome of it?

SMITH: Of course I missed the fourth conference because by that time I had gone off to Tokyo. What I found myself doing in that second conference in the winter of '84-'85 was keeping Group B glued together because as long as we hung together, the Group of 77 couldn't push us. What we did at this conference was we made sure, the UNCTAD people could do anything they wanted, as long as it didn't impinge on our already existing rules for flagging our vessels. We didn't want them to outlaw the flags of convenience because a lot of these vessels were owned by American interests. Oil companies owned these vessels, carried our oil, but they flagged somewhere else. We also didn't want them outlawing the flags of convenience because we didn't want to get into a code of conduct for bulk trade which would have been as bad as a code of conduct for the liner companies, because that was clearly the next step. We would work within Group B to make sure that no Group B countries' rules for flagging its vessels would have to be changed to accommodate UNCTAD. Under all of this was the understanding that most of us didn't want to outlaw flags of convenience either.

After the first week of the second conference, the Greek delegation found out that they had let something escape them. There was something that had now been decided, at least on a committee level, that they couldn't accept. Well, you know the Greek shipping industry is a very important industry to Greece and they were in trouble. They couldn't get their own EC subgroup to support them. This all happened on a Friday and so over the next dreary winter weekend in Geneva, I thought it out and realized that I had to go to bat for the Greeks. The next Monday, in Group B, I rose to the bait if not the occasion and started agitating for us to make sure that we didn't sell the Greeks down the river. Finally, we got Group B to accept this and then the final point didn't come to the fourth session by which time I was in Tokyo where I got a telegram from the Greek delegation in Athens telling me that their law had been saved and how happy they were to let me

know this and thanks for all the help. Whether anybody else would have done this or not I don't know, but I was the one who did it. I felt that I had kept Group B together, because we would have fallen apart otherwise.

Q: Maybe it's a good place to stop, don't you think?

SMITH: Yes.

Q: Then we'll pick this up in 1985 when you're off to Tokyo?

SMITH: Unless we think of some other things that happened in the maritime affairs.

Q: If you want to make notes to yourself we can pick those up.

SMITH: Yes. Let's make a verbal note now to talk about the telegram from Washington to me. Let's talk about that.

Q: Okay, all right. Great.

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This is August 24, 2001. You wanted to add a little something?

SMITH: Right. I thought of something else to add in earlier. For this period I had spoken about the two sessions of the UNCTAD sponsored conference on conditions for the registration of ships. At the second session of the conference which was in January or February of 1985 I got a telegram saying that you, Mr. Smith, have been chosen for senior training. Since you're there in Geneva for three weeks we're letting you know by telegram. We want you to give us your preferences of which training you want to go to, which put me in sort of a pickle because I'd been asking for senior training for a long time. By this stage I was in the usually enviable position of having for the summer of '85 two very attractive jobs which were mine for the asking. All I had to do was choose between them. One of them was deputy Econ section chief in Tokyo and the other one was the civil air attaché in Paris. The jobs were both attractive. The places were attractive to both me and my family because our daughter was just finishing her first year of high school. These were three-year tours so she could go to a good high school for the last three years and graduate there and have some modicum of stability. So, I didn't want senior training. I forget exactly how I did it, but I think I sent a telegram back saying I'm in the middle of all this, can you wait two weeks until I get back for my decision? There went the telegram. That all happened more or less over the first weekend. That was also the weekend were I resolved that I was going to have to come back the Monday of the second week and defend the Greeks. It was a fairly trying time.

Q: Defend the Greeks on what, I can't remember?

SMITH: The Greeks had made the mistake in Group B, the developed countries, they'd

made the mistake of overlooking that one of the things everybody else was agreeing to was something that their registry laws couldn't accept. Essentially, every time we looked at a proposal for changing the registry laws, we'd look to see if it was something we could accept and if it would it get in the way of our laws, because we certainly weren't going to change the laws of the United States to accommodate UNCTAD. Neither did anybody else that already had a going fleet. Of course the Greeks had a huge fleet. They were in trouble and the nine other delegations in the EC didn't want to help them out much. I had to go to bat for them in the Group B. Anyway, this was all coming to a head and that second week I was in a meeting. It was this registry for ships business and it was a meeting of about forty people in which I had been nominated the leader of Group B and I had to lead this group of developed countries. In the middle of all of this comes scurrying in a guy from the embassy with a note for me. Everybody assumes it's a note on policy for the leader in Group B. I opened the note and it said: you don't have to answer personnel until you get home which I thought was amusing. When I got home I had to go hat-in-hand to see the deputy director general who was at that time Hank Cohen and said, "Please may I beg off." I gave him a memorandum to this effect. He said, "If you beg off and don't take senior training you'll probably never get it offered again." I said, "I realize that." That I think was a critical decision I had to make and I think in retrospect that it was the right one and I made it primarily for my family which had suffered quite a bit up until then.

Q: Well, fair enough.

SMITH: I see you're opening another tape. There's something else I wanted to backtrack on.

Q: Oh, no, no, we've got plenty of time. I just do this ahead of time.

SMITH: The other backtrack is, I should have mentioned way back there in Kenya in the spring of '72 probably early in March: I got a phone call from my father which was easier said than done, saying that my mother was very ill. The doctor said she didn't have much longer to live and I'd better get home. So, fortunately I guess this happened one night and during the next day I made arrangements and there was a Pan Am flight back to new York. So, I made all the arrangements, worked out that somebody would take care of my work and got the three tickets. This was under a situation where if your mother was very ill, but didn't die, you paid the whole airfare. It's gotten better since then. If she died, then you paid all but $200. So I paid for three fares. I guess one wasn't full because our daughter wasn't two yet. The three of us went back. My parents were living in Washington State. This entailed traveling all day on this Pan Am flight that you may remember stopped everywhere. We got into New York in the middle of the night and stayed in a hotel and the next day traveled across the country. We got there just before she slipped into her last coma and so she never really got to see our daughter at all. She never got to see her only grandchild, which is one of the things that happens in the Foreign Service, but it is important for people to realize what it means.

Now I can remember something more about Maritime Affairs. That spring of '85 I kept

going to all of these meetings and some were of course to prepare for the third session of this conference. These were meetings in Paris of the OECD. In other words, these were Group B meetings preparatory to the conference. Also, there would be the regular OECD maritime transport committee meetings where the name of the game was for the Europeans to try to drag us into agreeing to liberalizing our shipping laws to give them more of our business. I would have to sit there and say, "no, no, no, no, no." It was really an empty exercise, but I guess they kept thinking if they harassed me enough I might be silly enough not to follow my instructions or something. I remember distinctly, probably the last one of those meetings I was leaving Charles DeGaulle on the left hand side of the airplane flying west to here and looking out the window at the Eiffel Tower and saying, "Gee, maybe I should have chosen Paris instead of Tokyo." I'm glad I chose Tokyo.

Q: Well, then, let's put it, you went to Tokyo in 1985?

SMITH: Right.

Q: You were there until when?

SMITH: '88. For three years.

Q: Okay. First, what was, how would you say, particularly economically, what was the state of relations between the United States and Japan when you got out there in 1985?

SMITH: I'd like to say a little more about the way I felt. By this time I was a true believer in the magic of the marketplace and also I had seen that Japan was very successful at exporting manufactured goods to the United States. Especially in those days they were very good and often inexpensive. Also, I was well disposed towards Japan for many reasons. One, having lived there as a little kid, and two, I had been in Geneva for a total of five weeks at the conference. The Japanese delegation, had been very supportive. When push came to shove the people that I depended on to support me when I was almost isolated would be the Japanese and the Danes. So, I was well disposed towards Japan for many reasons. What I found when I got there was that the frustration was very high on both sides, as the new economic minister counselor perceived when he got there about the same time I did.

Q: Who was that?

SMITH: Mike Ely. He said that we just keep talking to each other and we just keep saying, "open your markets, open your markets, open your markets." The Japanese keep saying, "try harder, try harder, try harder." Now, I may be unfair in my paraphrase of what he said, but that was about it because there was a lot of talk and not a whole lot of movement. What movement that occurred was very difficult. The Japanese market in many different ways was closed to our exports. Some of its was government action, some of it was actual laws. Some of it was just their distribution system. Some of it was cultural. It was very difficult for American products to get sold in Japan, while our market was essentially open. Most of the economic section, which was a large section, of

about ten people spent most of its time working on this. Delegations would come from Washington: ad hoc ones, and regularly scheduled ones. There would be meetings and things were accomplished in some narrow areas. From my point of view, not enough. It wasn't long before I was not nearly as well disposed towards Japan as I had been before I got there, because I felt that they were treating our traders unfairly. My job was I'd say three-fold. I was the deputy section chief. When the economic counselor would be away I would be in charge of the section, but there would still be an economic minister-counselor above me. I also supervised two junior officers. One who handled the macro-economic reporting and the other hand who handled mainly Japanese, economic relations with developing countries reporting on their aid programs. Then my other job was my job title, which was 'regional resources officer,' which meant natural resources. That was primarily energy, which meant trying to get the Japanese to buy our coal and our natural gas, explaining to them why they couldn't have our Alaska north slope oil because that was against the law, and talking to them about who they were buying their oil from, that sort of thing.

Q: Well, now just on the side, but why was the Alaskan oil forbidden to Japan?

SMITH: As you know today there's much controversy about whether additional places on the north slope (the Arctic Ocean coast of Alaska) should be drilled because it might harm this caribou preserve. In those days when this was opened I guess in the 1970s, a deal was worked out in Congress to permit this oil to be developed and the pipeline to be built all the way across the wilderness from the Arctic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean. The deal was worked out that this oil was needed for our energy security. Therefore the only people that could use that oil would be us even though oil is fairly fungible. Why couldn't we sell it to somebody else and get somebody else's oil? Frankly, much of the reason was that if that oil were going to the United States it then would come under the Jones Act which we talked about in the context of maritime affairs. That meant that all of it would travel from the south coast of Alaska to probably the west coast of the United States or somewhere else in the United States on U.S. ships, U.S. built, U.S. flagged, and U.S. manned ships. United States ships that trade internationally don't have to be built in the U.S., but if they trade between two U.S. ports then they have to be built in the U.S. So, this was a deal worked out with the environmentalists and the shipbuilders and the ship operators and the labor unions. That's why the Japanese couldn't have north slope oil.

Q: I thought Japan had a lot of coal?

SMITH: They did, but it was not easy to get to. It was more expensive than buying it from us or Australia and more dangerous because it was in very inaccessible places. They of course mined a lot of it for years, but they'd mined so much that what was left was hard to get to. Some of the biggest coal mines were under the ocean, off of little islands near Kyushu and the miners would go down this shaft and then go out under the ocean to get the coal. So, it was expensive in addition to dangerous.

Q: Well, let's look at the embassy. Who was the ambassador and DCM and the top

economic person?

SMITH: The ambassador was Mike Mansfield. He'd been there for a long time because he was a Carter appointee and this was the Reagan administration by this time. The DCM was Desaix Anderson and the top Econ officer for two years was Mike Ely, Michael E.C. Ely. He was replaced later as minister counselor by a lady, Aurelia (Rea) Brazeal and then under them was the economic counselor, who when I got there was Marilyn Meyers. She was replaced by David Brown.

Q: Did you have much to do with the Japanese economic establishment?

SMITH: My main interaction was with the ministry of foreign affairs and MITI, the ministry of international trade and industry. In MITI, it was almost entirely with the energy office.

Q: How did you find dealing with them?

SMITH: At that time it was very easy, cordial. I heard that later it got more difficult, but at that time it was a pleasure. Probably easier than any other place I had served. I had access to the people I needed to talk to. I could almost always get an appointment, just call them up and say I need to talk to you about this and so we'd set a time and I'd come over.

Q: Well, I mean, there are two things, there is access and then there is dealing. Were you doing the equivalent of negotiating and trying to open up things or was that done by a different team?

SMITH: Well, I wasn't negotiating the trade agreements. I would sometimes make a pitch for this, that or the other. Often what we went to see the foreign ministry about was on some multilateral issue where we wanted their thoughts on a particular conference and gave our views on how we wished they would vote. So, there was a lot of that.

Q: You say you became disenchanted with, what disenchanted you, here you had good access and?

SMITH: For my personal work I don't think I ever became disenchanted, but the major work of the economic section, trying to open the Japanese market to American products: I saw what was going on there and that's when I became disenchanted.

Q: Did you feel that you know, that others that you had been talking to were dealing with this, was this a vast Japan incorporated conspiracy or was it just how the system was put together?

SMITH: It was not so much the way it was put together, but the way it worked. I wouldn't call it a conspiracy at all. I don't think anybody on their side really felt that they really needed to do anything more to open their markets. Some of them probably thought

their markets were opened adequately, but they weren't. To get them to do anything was very difficult. I'm glad in many ways I wasn't involved in that. That was where the action was, but I think I'm glad that I wasn't getting my nose bloody trying to do it.

Q: What sort of things were you trying to get? Was it mainly information that you were getting?

SMITH: What I was doing?

Q: Yes.

SMITH: Some of it was gathering information, some of it was setting up meetings, a lot of it was instructions from Washington on what do the Japanese think we should do at the next conference of this, that or the other. They were usually pretty good, they were very good, they were very well organized.

A couple of vignettes might be interesting. In the foreign ministry most of the officers spoke good English. At the Ministry of International Trade and Industry this was not as true and so in every office, the office director and his deputy director would be able to speak English, but the others might not be able to. My main counterpart was a deputy office director in an office in the Ministry of International Trade and Industry, which dealt with international energy matters. I frankly can't remember the exact name of the office. I remember his name, but I won't give it. He was a bright, young man who had studied in America. His English wasn't terrific, but it was good. I would probably call it S-3+ or an S-4-, something like that. This meant that he frequently had to be fairly blunt in what he said because he didn't have the nuances he would have had if his English were better. One time in order, just to get some information, I had talked to somebody else in another office who he had introduced me to earlier and that guy had been brought in as the expert on coal. When I got through with speaking with the coal expert a second time, a little bit later I got a phone call from the deputy director of the energy office. He said, "Mr. Smith, you shouldn't be calling the coal expert. You should always come through me and if you don't come through me you won't be able to talk to any of these people." That was pretty direct.

That reminds me of another thing that occurred in that office. I can't remember the exact period, but it was fairly early on. I think it was late '85 or early '86. You may not remember, but the price of oil plummeted to about $10 a barrel and this was amazing because the Iran-Iraq War was still going on and the price of oil was down around $10 a barrel. The director of that office was constantly bemoaning the low price of oil. Well, here is the industrial power of the world that has to import the highest percentage of its oil and he's worried that the price is too low. Finally, one day I think he was just sort of overwhelmed, and I said, "Why are you worried about the price being so low when you should be benefitting from this?" He said, "We have all these government programs that we're responsible for on renewable energy and other things which are funded by an extra import duty on the oil. It's a percentage duty so when the price of oil falls in half we get half as much money for our budget." Their budgets are probably more of a problem even

than our budget. This was what was bothering him, but it took a long time for that to come out. Another vignette, which I think was interesting: twice a year we had a set of meetings on energy. They were called the "energy working group and the energy experts group." I don't know which one it was, whether the energy experts or energy working group, but people from State, the Department of Energy, and the Department of Commerce would come from Washington and we'd have these meetings with their counterparts in Tokyo. One day we were sitting in this meeting in MITI and the American side asked the Japanese side about a particular issue. This is all being done through interpreters. The director from MITI gave his answer. When he was done the director from the ministry of foreign affairs stuck up his hand and said, "I think what Mr. so and so meant to say was such and such." The first MITI official, dropping interpretation, said, "I don't need the ministry of foreign affairs to interpret what I meant to say. What I meant to say was what I said." That opened a lot of eyes.

I want to mention that because I was nominally the regional resources officer, I was sent to China to talk to the Chinese, mostly about coal and oil. I didn't really want to go, but after I went and came back I was pleased that I had gone. So I went to Beijing, helped out by the embassy and then took a forty-hour train ride north to Daqing which is in the middle of what used to be Manchuria. It's very far inland. It's their biggest oil field, but it's an old oil field. Even in '86 it was an old oil field. It's about halfway from Harbin to Qiqihar. It was a new, manufactured city because that's where the oil was. I think the most interesting thing I saw was that a lot of the oil pumps weren't working. Then we visited a museum of petroleum and you couldn't see anything there because there were no lights. Here in the center of their oil production area they didn't have enough electricity. Behind the sort of motel hotel where they billeted me was an oil rig, which ran on electricity, too. They were drilling for oil. In the middle of the night the electricity came back on and the rig came back on and it ran all night. This was, I think, a commentary on a lot of things-how communism had run an oil field. The biggest single oil field and there wasn't enough electricity to run it.

Q: While we're still in Tokyo, how did your family find it? Did it work out pretty well?

SMITH: Oh, very well. The school worked out well for our daughter. This was ASIJ, the American School in Japan, founded in 1902. The most famous graduate was Reischauer, JFK's future ambassador. It was a good school; it profited my daughter a lot. The Japanese she learned there permitted her to go to Hawaii and enter Japanese studies and skip the first year of Japanese. My wife loved it. She still is pining to go back.

Q: How did sort of the Vietnamese/Japanese thing work out?

SMITH: Well, most of the time, fine. The cultures aren't the same by any means, but then they're more similar to each other than the European culture or American culture is to Vietnam. I think one of the things my wife liked the most is that you can get around Tokyo so easily by public transport and it was so safe. She had more freedom there than she probably had ever had anywhere, perhaps even more than here. It was about a ten-minute walk from our housing compound to either of two subway stations. She could go

anywhere in Tokyo and its vast suburbs by subway, bus, and train. She had a good time. She took art lessons. She took Koto lessons, which is a musical instrument. She really loved it. As I said, she still to this day wishes we could go back.

Q: How did you find expenses there?

SMITH: In those days it wasn't anything like it is now. It wasn't that bad, primarily because we had good access to U.S. commissaries. So, for necessities you didn't have to worry about the exchange rate. And a good cost of living allowance had been worked out by the embassy and Washington. It didn't hurt us. I always said it was the best of both worlds. We had this large apartment centrally located and we could live there like Americans and then go out and enjoy the Japanese ambience and then come back to our large apartment.

Q: In '88 you left there?

SMITH: Right.

Q: Is there anything else you should cover do you think?

SMITH: Well, maybe a few things. This was a period when the Japanese seemed to be able economically to do nothing wrong and we seemed to be having our troubles. The Japanese didn't mind tweaking us about that. A lot of Americans who should have known better were thinking maybe the Japanese had the right idea of how to run an economy. It was thought that one of the impediments to our entering the Japanese market was the weak yen. While we were there the yen started strengthening and the dollar started weakening.

One of the things I did in my job was keep a monthly record of the trade deficit and the exchange rate. It turned out that no matter how strong the yen became in those days, the deficit stayed at $5 billion a month or $60 billion every year. Well, they said this was the "j" effect. We'll finally get over it, eventually this will take effect, it didn't. It was shown by some studies done, I think by economic journalists here in this country, that when the yen got stronger against the dollar, it didn't make any difference in the price of Toyotas here or American products there, where in Europe it did. The price of BMWs would go up and down with the Deutschmark exchange rate, but not the price of Japanese cars. This was of course the time that the Japanese started taking care of this anyway by building car plants here. The other thing is that I don't believe anyone realized that this period, the late '80s, was the last period in which the Japanese would have a growing economy. For the last eleven years it has been stagnating. As you can see, the series of Japanese prime ministers and Japanese governments since 1990 have been unable to solve the problem. So, the second largest economy in the world is stagnating and it always seems to be left to us to pull the world along behind us and now our economy finally is beginning to stagnate.

Q: You know, one of the things that is interesting is as one examines this thing, American

foreign relations and all, how often accepted trues or at least in two major, major examples. One being the Soviet Union, the Soviet Union is you know, ten feet tall and it couldn't break up and it would keep going and all and yet, by '89 it began to collapse. The other one was and you know we weren't, at least no significant part of our intelligence or analytical side of the government was really willing to accept or was predicting this. Here we have something far more open, but the Japanese problems I guess you might explain them I mean why were they looking so good and weren't so good? I mean were there indicators there? Had we become sort of prisoners to the same thinking of conventional wisdom or something you think or what?

SMITH: Obviously not. I think the one thing that people might have noticed more was that the inflated value of real estate property in Tokyo had gotten just out of this world. That turned out later to be one basis for the beginning of this eleven-year slump; it's when the bubble burst in land values in Tokyo. A lot of wealth was tied up in that and a lot of banks had loaned money on the basis of property being worth "x" when it was only worth half "x." That's been part of the problem, and as you know, even today they are still working on how they are going to have their banks write off their bad debts.

Q: Were we looking at the Japanese on the economic side of the inability... Did you see rigidness of inability to look at a situation and respond to it? There are certain rules like the bank should start taking care of matters or something or not being able to lay off people.

SMITH: At that time, since their economy was doing well, nobody would think to criticize them for anything except that they weren't importing more. A few of us pointed out that their rice policy meant that a lot of land that was devoted to growing high priced rice could have been used for something else, maybe building houses so that the people could live better. In fact, one high U.S. government official did make that point. It obviously fell on deaf ears. This was a time when the world market price for rice was about $400 a ton and the internal price in Japan was $1,400 a ton. I was able, at a small meeting to reveal something to James Fallows, the journalist and author. He was living there in Tokyo or about to. It's what I always call the "cow story." The Japanese had beef import quotas to protect their highly inefficient beef industry where one farmer might have one, or at most two cows which he lovingly cared for and then produced wonderful beef at a terrific price.

Q: Kneaded them and all that?

SMITH: Yes. Massaged them.

Q: Massaged them.

SMITH: So, what had happened was the price had gotten so high that other Japanese, who obviously weren't in the agricultural side of the economy but were in the distribution side of the economy were going to the United States and buying up herds of cows in the middle West, fattening them to Japanese tastes, and putting them on airplanes and flying

them to Japan where they then were quarantined for five days and then slaughtered. Even after you slaughtered them and throw away the bones, the resulting beef was still cheaper than the price in Japan, even including the airfare. This could be done because there was no quota on live cattle. Somebody saw this loophole and the local price was so high that it paid to fly the animals in live. Fly them in, not on cattle boats. They made the trip from Kansas to Tokyo in less than twenty-four hours. This is symptomatic of the sort of things they did. They were growing rice for three times the world price because the farmers and their political friends had been able to convince themselves and the populace that after the starvation of World War II they needed to be self-sufficient. Well, they were self-sufficient in rice, but only because they were importing the fertilizers and other chemicals to grow rice with. But they weren't self-sufficient in anything else. You can't eat just rice. It was all the politics of the rural vote, which is much stronger in relation to the urban vote than the population numbers would seem to indicate. This is the problem that now, just now, finally they are facing and this is one reason that the LDP has been in trouble recently.

Q: The Liberal Democratic Party.

SMITH: Right. They've been in trouble because the city dwellers are finally getting tired of being taken advantage of.

Q: You look at Japan and it's sort of a unique society. Was it of interest, I mean, was somebody in the economic section, maybe this would be CIA or INR, but looking at the population, the work force, I mean it's becoming apparent now some 12 years after you left. The Japanese have another big problem in that they do not accept foreigners in there willingly to work. Their work force is aging, or is this a problem?

SMITH: Well, they were facing that eleven years ago. Even eleven years ago they were very concerned about their aging society and how they were going to support them. So, they were facing that. At that time the way they got around the work force problem was they were importing workers from other Asian countries-Bangladeshis and Filipinos.

Q: Well, then you left there in '88?

SMITH: Right.

Q: Whither?

SMITH: Back here to Washington. My mother had died in '72 and this was '88. My father was getting frail and I had to make a couple of trips across the Pacific to take care of him. I was his only child and his only living relative other than our daughter. Fortunately, in this case, all I had to do was cross the Pacific Ocean. It was better than being on the other side of two continents and the Atlantic Ocean when in East Africa. So, I wanted a tour in the United States so I could take care of my father and it turned out that after we got back from home leave at his house in Washington state, that we all agreed, including him, that he would come and live with us. I thought I was coming back to a job

in the African Bureau, but while on home leave I was notified by personnel that the job had been abolished. I was offered the office director of one of the two offices in the Human Rights Bureau, which was something completely different. I was happy to take it. That was an eye-opening experience. So, we can get into the details of that job, but I did that from the summer of '88 for three years until the summer of '91. I was the Director of the Office of Multilateral Affairs in the Bureau of Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs. Now it has a new name. It's called Democracy, Human Rights and Labor. As Office Director, the first thing I had to do was populate the office. It turned out that there weren't very many people in it, so I spent a lot of time recruiting new people which is something I had never really done before. The work of the office really revolved around two issues. One was our participation in United Nations human rights meetings mostly in Geneva, and when human rights issues were taken up by the General Assembly in New York. The other issue was how our executive directors in the World Bank and the regional development banks voted on development projects around the world in countries which might not be respecting the human rights of their populace. Frankly the work on the UN side turned out to be another one of these turf battles between our office and the human rights office in IO, the Bureau of International Organizations Affairs. That was not a happy situation. It was worse than when I had been in the Economic Bureau working with the economic office in IO. That was wonderful compared to what this was. This was not good.

Q: Were the personalities the problem or did the issues sort of lend themselves to this problem?

SMITH: Well, that's the problem, there wasn't much disagreement on the issues. It was other things and since some of the people, all of the main people involved are still around, I don't want to get into much more detail about it, but it was not a happy situation. The other issue was considerably more manageable, but not always fruitful. That was trying to follow U.S. law when development projects were being proposed for countries like Sudan, or China after Tiananmen Square. The law is very clear that we are supposed to oppose loans or grants to countries who engage in a pattern of human rights violations. It turned out, however, and this I think was the cause for cynicism on many sides, it turned out that the legislative record showed that to "oppose" one of these loans, it was sufficient to abstain in the vote. That had been somehow shoehorned into the legislative record. Therefore, even if the U.S. Treasury was convinced that we had to oppose a loan, it would rarely do more than abstain. Now, in many cases, loans were pulled off the table when the rest of the World Bank realized the U.S. wasn't in favor of it. It carried some weight. Once again, the law also goes on to say we have to oppose the loan except in cases where the project would provide "basic human needs." Somewhere else I believe there was legislative history on what "basic human needs" were. I can't remember what they all were, but obviously they would include health, food and housing. That was something we sometimes used. If the country was one with a horrible human rights record, but the project was one that would help the people, we would not oppose the loan.

Q: Did we have, can you give me a list of the ten most horrible countries at your time?

SMITH: No, no I can't. I did a research project on "basic human needs." My leader was Assistant Secretary Richard Schifter, who was a real human rights expert. After Tiananmen Square he asked me to do research on how we voted in the past on loans to countries who at the time were human rights violators and to discern whether you could see which loans we approved perhaps because they did provide basic human needs. China was the big issue. That horrible massacre happened in June of '89.

Q: Tiananmen Square?

SMITH: Right. Then there was a period where we didn't entertain any loans for China and then we started entertaining them again. At that point it became important whether the loan was for basic human needs or not. I should say that we also looked at loans to other countries from U.S. federal agencies, like the commodity credit corporation.

Q: In this period, I mean, were you looking at Central America? Was it playing much of a role then? Things were beginning to settle down in El Salvador then.

SMITH: Yes, it was pretty much over. I don't remember that becoming an issue.

Q: Were matters regarding human rights off the table as far as Israel was concerned?

SMITH: No, but this was one of Ambassador Schifter's most important issues, something he followed very closely. Of course we didn't have development loans there. We didn't have multilateral development loans because it's not an underdeveloped country. Another part of the office produced a human rights report, which I highly recommend. One of the key things every year was what the human rights report said about Israel-something Ambassador Schifter paid very close attention to. Although I had nothing to do with producing the human rights report I was a user of it. It's really a marvelous piece of work that the government does every year and the embassies contribute to it. I think it does exactly what the Congress intended when they asked us to do it; that is it causes our embassies overseas to look critically at the host government's policies and report what's there, whether it's nice or not.

Q: Well, it also puts it on the table in the world. You know, a lot of people complain about you, you know, what are you doing interfering? But it has now become part of the sort of the world vocabulary or something. I mean people have to pay attention. I mean, it's not just us, but others who are looking at it. What about, you know, looking around, how about Indonesia was this, East Timor and all that sort of thing?

SMITH: It hadn't popped up yet. It wasn't on the radar screen.

Q: Africa and I suppose of course, '88, '91, did, well Iraq I guess never had been on it. They had money themselves before they.

SMITH: Yes, but we had food programs, agricultural programs. That was an issue.

Q: Afghanistan, was that? I'm just sort of fishing around here.

SMITH: No, I don't think anything was going on there in the development field. I think the Russians had just left or were about to leave.

Q: Yes, it was just about that time, yes. Well, you did this until '91?

SMITH: Yes.

Q: How did you find human rights, you said you had problems with IO. How did the Human Rights Bureau fit into the rest of the Department? When it was first really started under Patt Derian it had been a, this was during the, it was during the Carter administration, it seemed to be sort of a nagger and it wasn't a very happy marriage with the rest of the Department. It was resented. Had you found that, was it more sophisticated, people learned to live with each other in the bureaus?

SMITH: Frankly, it pains me to say this for the record, but my feeling was that we were still resented as an impediment to the regional bureaus' doing what needed to be done. Here's these human rights people getting in the way. Our point of view was, well this is the law. The law says we have to do this. They wished that they could ignore that and it's sort of sad. I remember there were officers and now that I think about it, it was Central America. I can't remember what the issue was, but I tried to work with this particular office, a Central American Office, in ARA and they wouldn't return my phone calls. I moved to EB, and for a year or two until we had a disaster, these same people were practically saying to all our cables, "fine I don't need to see it," they were so relaxed. But on human rights issues they wouldn't even talk to us sometimes. It was difficult. I don't know if it has gotten any better in the last ten years, but again, it pains me to say this, but I think I should. It was evident to me that we were foisted on to the rest of the State Department. They really didn't want us.

Q: Well, you left there in '91 and went to where, EB?

SMITH: I went to the Aviation Negotiations Office in EB. So, after twenty years of trying, I was finally going to get into aviation and I was the Deputy Director for the Office of Aviation Negotiations. There I had two main jobs. I supervised the three or four other officers who worked there and I also led the negotiations with all the Latin American countries except Mexico. I was really happy to go there. I thought this was going to be great. It turned out that I worked myself very hard. We were one officer shy, so we all had to work harder. Even though I was the Deputy Office Director and the negotiator, I had to be my own support and it was hard work.

Q: Well, you did this from '91 to when?

SMITH: '93. The negotiations were difficult because, as you may remember, we had a recession then-especially in the aviation industry. Aside from the economic factors, the

Gulf War hadn't helped anything, and the blowing up of the Pan Am airliner over Scotland hadn't helped anything. The airlines were in a terrible recession, and so worldwide nobody wanted to negotiate much. The Latin Americans especially were afraid of the giant American airlines, primarily American and United.

Q: Pan Am. Another one major flagship airlines had gone down the tubes.

SMITH: Well, Pan Am went down the tubes while I was there. Their demise I think was the 5th of December of '91. I ended up having to send the cables down south saying Pan Am's gone, United is replacing them. Some countries didn't want to do that, some countries wanted to hold us hostage to Pan Am's debts and so forth.

Q: I take it that didn't fly?

SMITH: No, it wasn't easy. In two countries it entailed the ambassador having to go to the president to get him to overrule either the courts or the lower officials.

Q: What, you say you were doing aviation negotiations in Latin America except for Mexico. What type of negotiations were these?

SMITH: Usually we were trying to open up the market so that we could serve the Latin American destination with more frequencies. We were trying to get these countries to accept an "open skies" arrangement where they could send as many flights a week to the U.S. as they wanted, to as many places as they wanted with whatever fare they wanted to. We could send as many flights to their country as we wanted to as many cities as we wanted with whatever fare we wanted. I should have mentioned the onward rights so that if we had a flight going from here to say Santiago it could continue to Buenos Aires and carry passengers from Santiago to Buenos Aires and get the Chileans to agree to this and to get the Argentineans to agree with this. Some of the countries were amenable to this and others weren't. The others still had very constricted arrangements. This was all done by bilateral agreement. They'd have a very constricted arrangement where each, (they would even mention the airline) each airline that was designated to that country could only fly so many flights a week of what size airplane and the fares had to be agreed by both governments. So, as economies got bigger and more people were traveling we were trying to at least expand those numbers. We could sometimes get an agreement to expand a few numbers, and sometimes add another airline, but it was like pulling teeth, especially during this recession where the Latinos were deathly afraid that the big American airlines would just smother them. Their attitude was, we need to protect our airlines. The way we protect them is to limit competition and keep the fares up.

Q: How was this argument? We've used this argument on ourselves many times in other cases, you know in keeping, well, we've had quite a record of trying to keep other airlines from coming to the United States.

SMITH: Well, not anymore.

Q: No, but I mean we in past years we have.

SMITH: I don't know if even that is true. I don't think that's true. One thing is very true- we don't let other countries' airlines carry passengers between American cities. I think we've always been interested in other airlines coming to this country as long as we got reciprocal rights, and the way our traditional bilateral agreements worked was on the basis of some sort of reciprocity. You give us something, we'll give you something. That was traditional, but I don't believe it's correct to say that we've ever wanted to restrict other airlines coming here as long as we could send our airlines to them.

Q: Running a flight going to, hitting three or four countries in Latin America which I assume we would have to do to make it pay, was this I mean were we big enough, efficient enough so that we would probably undercut the host country's airlines?

SMITH: Could be in some cases, yes. Then in some countries they were enlightened enough to realize that their economy depended more on tourism than on their airline. Some of them were willing to tell the airline to either become efficient or we'll let you die. We've always had this problem especially with poorer countries who needed tourism, but wanted to have their own airline. They would protect their airline sometimes at the expense of the tourism.

Q: How did you find negotiating these things? Was there a different game than when you used to before?

SMITH: Yes, it was interesting. As I said, it was very constrained by the times. The officers that came before me and the ones that came after me were able to do a lot more because they weren't dealing with an airline recession. It probably sounds like an excuse, but it's true. I wasn't able to accomplish a whole lot because of the economic conditions at the time.

Q: What was the role of the Department of Commerce in what you were doing?

SMITH: Practically nil.

Q: Were we, the State Department calling the shots pretty much?

SMITH: It was us and the Transportation Department.

Q: Department of Transportation.

SMITH: So, any negotiation would usually be led by a State Department negotiator and his number two would be a Transportation Department person. We worked out our negotiating positions beforehand between those two departments.

Q: Did you find, was this a problem or were you pretty much, it was pretty easy to reach agreement?

SMITH: At my level it was easy to reach agreement. It was difficult for my leaders who were negotiating the other agreements with European countries and with Asian countries. They sometimes ran into difficulties in cooperating with DOT.

Q: Did you have a problem that if we made such and such agreement with such and such a Latin American country, this might screw us up in Europe or something like that?

SMITH: No, no. Although we looked at it, I mean the only way that can happen is if we had one policy for something like open skies in Europe and we took a different tack somewhere, but that never really happened. In many areas we already had some sort of "open skies" agreement and in other areas we didn't, but we wanted them to be more open. The policy of the government has evolved since then to be even more in favor of open skies agreements.

Q: Well, you were doing this until '93?

SMITH: Right.

Q: Then whither?

SMITH: Wellington, New Zealand to be the Economic Counselor and, as I soon discovered, also the economic section.

Q: Did sheep play a certain role in your portfolio?

SMITH: Marginally. It was there.

Q: Butter?

SMITH: Yes, not that much. It was worked out in different places.

Q: You were in Wellington from '93 to when?

SMITH: '95.

Q: Who was the ambassador while you were there?

SMITH: Well, for the first eight months or so we didn't have one. President Clinton was elected in '92 and became president in '93 and I got there in '93 and I think one of his original choices to be ambassador to Wellington had fallen through for some reason. By the time I got there the Kiwis were beginning to get unhappy that they didn't have an American ambassador. They got more and more unhappy as time went on, but finally in the spring of '94 Ambassador Josiah H. Beeman came. He was a Democratic Party activist both from California and from Washington, DC. The Kiwis were very happy when he finally arrived. Most of what I did was economic reporting. We had a separate

commercial officer up in Auckland and he had an office in our embassy, too. I cooperated with him because I'd been a commercial officer before and I didn't see any reason for there to be any competition. So I tried to stay out of their way or help them if I could. The officer up in Auckland was a local hire. The Commerce Department had had one of their FCS people there and then to replace that person they hired locally this man who was the husband of an American college professor in Auckland. He was very good. He did a good job. They eventually sort of semi-regularized his status. He did such a good job that a year or two ago they changed their mind again and sent a career FCS person there and he was out of a job. Not fair, but that's the way the world runs. I was doing economic reporting, the monthly report on the statistics of the economy in New Zealand and then a commentary on it. While that was an important part of my job, the main part of my job was the daily representation to the New Zealand government on whatever issue the telegram of the morning requested we make representations to them on. That was one of the reasons it got to be such a big job for just one person to carry out because it's very easy for some officer to sit in EUR and write a cable which instructs, "all OECD posts." They get a clearance in the regional office in the East Asian Bureau, and Tokyo and Canberra and Wellington also get the cable. Or, "all APEC," Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) was becoming very popular then and that would be my job, too. In fact this meant that in November of '93 I was sent back to Seattle to be liaison between the New Zealand delegation and our hosts for the APEC conference in Seattle which was the first one to have a leaders meeting also. That was very interesting and a lot of hard work.

Q: How did you find the APEC work? I mean, what were you doing in that?

SMITH: It was much like all the other places. It was going to the New Zealand foreign ministry and saying, this is what we are thinking about this. It could be the issue of whether we are going to have new members, how many new members, and which new members, or it could be what we should do on this issue or that issue.

Q: What type of government was there in New Zealand when you were there?

SMITH: That's a good question. When I was there it was a conservative government. That party is called the National Party. They had come into power in 1990, if I'm not mistaken, and right after I arrived in '93 they had the next big election. It was a very close election and it wasn't decided immediately, much like our election this last fall of the year 2000. Their election wasn't decided for several days after the election day, as they recounted ballots in some of the closer constituencies. So much so that when I left for Seattle to help host the New Zealand delegation to APEC, it wasn't certain who would lead that delegation. This was only decided after I got to Seattle. It was a close election, but in the end P.M. Bolger became the Prime Minister once again. Something else happened in that election that at least for the close foreseeable future will much affect the politics of New Zealand. They chose a new election system. Up until and through the election of 1993 they had a system, I think, just like the one in Britain. They had, I believe, 99 constituencies. Whoever got the most votes in any one of those constituencies was elected to parliament, even if they didn't get a majority. So, if there

were 10,000 votes and the candidate from the National Party got 4,500 and the candidate from the Labor party got 4,000 and the other 1,500 were split amongst somebody else, the candidate from the National Party was that member. Just as in England, and even here sometimes, the third parties complain that this isn't fair because it means that they rarely or never get into the parliament. This was happening in New Zealand and I think this had a resonance in New Zealand because New Zealanders are a fair people and they wanted to be fair. I think this prevented the two major parties from forthrightly saying, "wait a minute, this is crazy, we don't want to be like the Netherlands and Germany with lots of little parties. We'd like to keep the two party system." So, they didn't oppose the idea, especially when somebody came up with a proposal they called "mixed member proportional." It expanded the parliament to one hundred-twenty seats, reduced the number of constituencies from ninety-nine to sixty, and said the other sixty seats will be based on proportional representation. What wasn't clear, I think to many people, was that really the whole makeup, the whole one hundred-twenty is based on proportional votes. In a second ballot, if you have a constituency where let's say there's 20,000 votes- the National Party gets 9,000 and the Labor party gets 8,000 then from that constituency, the National Party candidate goes to the parliament. So, he's got a seat in the parliament, that's the only thing that's sure. When it's all over for the whole country, they count up the number of votes for each party in the second ballot and if in the whole country the National Party got forty-five percent of that vote, they're going to get forty-five percent of the parliament. That candidate that's already been chosen will be part of the forty-five percent and a lot of people didn't realize this. When they go into the voting booth they get two votes. One vote is for the candidate from their district; the other vote is for their party preference. The party preference vote is the one that determines the party makeup of the parliament and includes the candidate they just voted for. So, if that guy that they voted for wins in their district he's in, but that doesn't increase his party's standing in the parliament. It's very much like the Dutch system. The way it works is each party has a list of one hundred-twenty candidates. The top candidate on the list is a shoo-in unless his party gets no votes at all, and the bottom candidate on the list will never make it. The only difference is that because they have a mixed member proportional system, the mixed means that they do have these constituencies where the candidate who wins the vote gets in. At least you have a M.P. you can write a letter to and say, you're my member of parliament from 'X', and I want you to vote this way. I used to ask the Dutch about this and they didn't even know who their member of parliament was because theirs was done completely on the list. They had a list of one hundred-fifty for each party. The top candidates on the list always got in, the bottom candidates never did.

Q: So, they had no particular ties to America?

SMITH: Yes. This meant that when the next election occurred in '96 no party got a majority and so coalitions were formed and for a while Prime Minister Bolger was able to have a right-wing coalition, which he led. Then his own party sent him here as ambassador and then that coalition fell apart and now there's a Labor Party coalition.

Q: Did this have any particular influence on New Zealand American relations?

SMITH: Yes, but it all happened after I left. The election that chose this new system was in '93, but the first election to use the new system wasn't until '96 and I left in '95. The only effect I could say it had while I was there was that since the party in power was in power only by a fingernail, they were only holding on to a small majority, they couldn't make any great political moves away from what you might call consensus.

Q: How did you view the New Zealand economy at the time you were there?

SMITH: When I was there it was very exciting. This National Party which had come in, as I said, at least in 1990, it may be before, was introducing all sorts of reforms into the economy to make it a market economy and having some success. As I was leaving there they were really doing well. The unemployment rate was dropping and economic growth was increasing and budget deficits were being paid off and it was really looking good and I was very happy for them.

Q: Did we have any issues between ourselves, major issues?

SMITH: The major issue was the political issue that to my knowledge still exists although my knowledge isn't that great anymore having left there six years ago. That is the issue of .nuclear- powered and nuclear-armed U.S. navy vessels. Previously there had been the ANZUS treaty - Australia, New Zealand and the United States-a three-part defense treaty where any one of the three was sworn to help the others if they were attacked. It was an old and valued treaty. Finally, I believe it was during the presidency of George Herbert Walker Bush, we had had to tell the New Zealanders that we no longer could feel bound by that treaty because they wouldn't let our nuclear-powered or nuclear-armed vessels come in to New Zealand ports. By this time President Bush had removed tactical nuclear weapons from all of our navy surface ships. The only navy ships that had nuclear weapons were the ballistic missile submarines. As you know, most of our big aircraft carriers are nuclear-powered, but the New Zealanders wouldn't let these nuclear-powered ships come to New Zealand. We had to tell the New Zealanders that we weren't willing to have two different navies, one for them and one for the rest of the world. This was troublesome to us and very troublesome to the New Zealanders. They wanted some way to get around it and I know Ambassador Beeman and his political officer were working very hard to try to find some solution, as many people were. Admiral Larsen who was the commander in chief for all U.S. forces in the Pacific came down and talked with the New Zealanders and was open to new ideas, but nothing came of that, as far as I know. Although there was a lot of hard work put into it, and for all I know we might have come close, but we didn't succeed. That was the main political issue.

Prime Minister Bolger very much wanted to have an official visit to Washington and after Ambassador Beeman arrived that was finally worked out and he did have an official visit to Washington to meet President Clinton. That improved relations a lot. Following on from that it was hoped that something could be done about the ships, but it was not possible.

Q: How did you see the New Zealand economy as it was poised to enter the next phase of

world economy because it was much more vulnerable?

SMITH: They very much were looking toward Asia as a market. Their traditional market of course had always been Europe and they were trying to make Asia another important market. We are an important market for their goods. At that point, in the early 1990's, many Asian economies were expanding rapidly. Even economies that were still considered developing countries had developing middle classes who were even tourists. There were Malaysian and Korean tourists and other Asian tourists coming to New Zealand. I think, as a wide-open, empty, beautiful country-entirely different from their crowded existence in their cities back in Asia. It was an attractive destination. They were happy to visit this place, and it was inexpensive.

Q: How did you find living there?

SMITH: It was good. The climate in Wellington isn't very good. It's rainy and windy most of the time, but it was good.

Q: It was something these people used to talk about I think in earlier days about the long, long, long weekends there. Everything would shut down on the weekends.

SMITH: It wasn't as bad as Amsterdam was in the early 1980s. It never seemed to bother me. I think probably part of this economic restructuring had caused these things to be open when they probably had been closed before. That's probably the difference.

Q: That's probably it.

SMITH: I mean there's one thing people used to tell me. New Zealanders, when I got there, said, "remember, this is a country where eight years ago (so that would have been 1983), you couldn't buy margarine without a doctor's prescription." The Dairy Board was the most important commercial entity in New Zealand and they had worked the law so that margarine was a controlled product.

Q: Well, I'm old enough to remember after World War II.

SMITH: Me, too.

Q: When you used to get margarine in a plastic thing with a little capsule you'd break to color it because Senator Humphrey and other people from Minnesota and Wisconsin and all made sure that they made it as difficult as possible to buy margarine.

SMITH: Yes, I remember my mother coloring the margarine. I always thought that was a state law though.

Q: It was doing that in Maryland.

SMITH: Maryland had a dairy industry, didn't it?

Q: Yes, maybe, maybe it was a state law.

SMITH: I was living in a dairy state, Washington State at the time. That's true, but in New Zealand it was more than that. You couldn't even buy it without a doctor's prescription. These things had all changed. There had been vast changes and that's why it was so exciting economically. It was a country that was doing very well by adopting good economic principles.

Q: When they do it, the Australians of course had broken open and were accepting immigrants. What about New Zealanders?

SMITH: My impression was they were accepting immigrants, but except for refugees, they were only accepting immigrants that could benefit the economy. I don't know how many other countries do this, but their immigration department was part of the labor department. That's the way it was looked at.

Q: Well, then in '95 you left there and whither?

SMITH: Back here to retire.

Q: You retired when, in '95?

SMITH: In '95, the summer of '95. Officially at the end of September.

Q: What have you done since?

SMITH: I almost immediately started working as a volunteer at the Air and Space Museum, not as a docent, but what is called a "behind the scenes volunteer" working for one of the curators. My original idea was to use that to get Air Museum experience so that I could work for money at an air museum. I wrote a few book reviews, enough to make some money, but not enough to live on. I was glad I had a retirement.

Q: Well, did you, looking back on it, what was the most, sort of the point that you really enjoyed the most?

SMITH: Well, that's a good question. The place or the point or what? Anything?

Q: Anything.

SMITH: Anything? I think the place I enjoyed living in the most was Nairobi, Kenya. I've always called that our two-and-a-half-year all expense paid honeymoon. The work I think I enjoyed most was both the negotiations I described when I was in Maritime Affairs going to these meetings in Paris and Geneva and then when overseas especially in places like Madagascar and New Zealand where I was the only officer who was responsible for all the economic work. If an economic demarche were made, I'd make it

and go to the New Zealand government, make our points, get their answers, try to convince them of our position, and come back and report back to Washington what they said.

Q: Okay, well, I guess that ends it then.

SMITH: I guess so.

Q: Great. Thank you, Sam.

End of interview