

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

**WAYNE S. SMITH**

*Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy  
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*Q: Today is 18 March 2015 and this is an interview with your first name?*

SMITH: Wayne.

*Q: Any middle initial?*

SMITH: S. Wayne Sanford Smith.

*Q: Wayne Sanford Smith. This is being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training and I am Charles Stuart Kennedy.*

*Well to begin at the beginning, when and where were you born?*

SMITH: I was born in Seguin, Texas, August 16, 1932.

*Q: So let's talk about the Smith side of the family. Then we will go to your mother's side. What do you know about the Smith side? Where did they come from?*

SMITH: Well my father came from Texas too. He was born up in the pan handle of Texas. The family had lived in Missouri but anyway say we are Texans.

*Q: Do you know farther back where they came from?*

SMITH: Oh yeah, I have a family tree that goes back.

*Q: Give just a little bit.*

SMITH: Well on my mother's side is mostly Virginia. I have a great grandfather who fought with the Confederacy and have fore-bearers on my father's side who fought in the American Revolution. They also lived and were from Virginia. So we go all the way back.

*Q: Well your grandparents on your father's side, they were in Texas?*

SMITH: On my father's side, they were in Texas, but on all sides they had originally come from Virginia.

*Q: Where in Virginia?*

SMITH: Don't ask me.

*Q: When your family got to Texas, what were they up to?*

SMITH: My grandfather on my father's side was a farmer. So was my grandfather on my mother's side. They were in agriculture until my Grandfather Baldwin went into oil and became very wealthy. Then came the depression and he lost almost everything. He had kept one little farm. The plan was there would be oil on this farm and so forth. That is why he bought it. But the depression came so the whole family moved down there. I was born in Seguin not far away. They were out on the farm. It was a farm house that had no electricity, no running water. It had an outhouse rather than an indoor toilet. It was quite a place. Thank goodness the depression after awhile was over. Meanwhile my father had gotten a job with Humble Oil Company and so we started to move around the state with the oil company.

*Q: Did you have any brothers or sisters?*

SMITH: I have a sister but she was born as I left. As I turned 17 and was going into the Marine Corps, my sister was born. We never lived together.

*Q: Well as a kid before you got involved in the Marines where did you live?*

SMITH: My father was with an oil exploration crew. We sometimes moved every three months. So we lived all over Texas and Mississippi. After the war we lived briefly in Alabama and then I went away to Military school. But we moved constantly.

*Q: What kind of schooling did you get?*

SMITH: Regular school.

*Q: But if you are moving...*

SMITH: I got transferred.

*Q: How did that work for you?*

SMITH: Look, as long as you stayed in one state there was no problem because you moved from one school to the other but they all followed the same plan. Moving to another state was something else, but fortunately we moved in the summer so when I started school they were just beginning their program so I didn't have to move from one program to the other.

*Q: As a very young lad what sort of a kid's life did you have?*

SMITH: Well I will tell you I had a very good kid's life. First of all my parents were wonderful. Secondly there were some other kids on the crew who went with us. So when we went to a new school we were sort of a group you see. It worked fine.

*Q: Was your life when you weren't studying pretty much an outdoor life in Texas there or not?*

SMITH: I wouldn't say an outdoor life but I did go fishing often and so forth. I would say we had an average outdoor life.

*Q: What were your favorite subjects in let's say grammar school?*

SMITH: History. History was my favorite subject by far. And to some extent Geography. I was interested in knowing about the world around us, but I did OK at school. Despite the fact that we moved so often the fact that we had these other kids on the crew made it OK, we moved together so to speak.

*Q: You were showing me your family tree. Quite a few people in there had military experience. Was the military sort of pretty prevalent in your family and all?*

SMITH: You know it didn't seem to me to be so during my childhood. We moved; I didn't have contact until very late with anyone who had been in the military. We established contact and came up and visited my aunt and uncle from Virginia. Uncle Sanford Marion Pool. He was in the army and remained in the army. I have his portrait back in my bedroom. I really didn't have much contact with relatives who had been in the military until Uncle Sandy. However I joined the Marine Corps the day I turned 17. I graduated from high school and joined the Marine Corps.

*Q: Where did you go to high school?*

SMITH: Finally in Corpus Christi. I went to Gulf Coast Military Academy for a year, the reason being my father thought they were going to continue to move and going to high school I shouldn't be moving all the time. So he put me in a military school. But then he took a permanent job as an oil scout in Corpus Christi, Texas. So after my year at military school I came home and lived in Corpus and finished high school there. I went the last two years of high school in Corpus Christi, played football there and everything.

*Q: What was Corpus Christi like?*

SMITH: Oh it was lovely. It was a wonderful place. It was a port and beaches and very nice. And we had a sail boat. Much better than some of the little towns we had lived in in the interior of Texas.

*Q. While you were a kid were you much of a reader?*

SMITH: Oh yeah.

*Q: Do you recall some of the books?*

SMITH: No, I don't. I read a lot of books about dogs, horses. Lassie and all that.

*Q: Well let's talk about your military experience. When did you join the Marine Corps.*

SMITH: I joined the day I turned 17. August 16, 1949. I joined just in time for the Korean War which started in 1950.

*Q: You want to talk a little about your early experiences in the Marine Corps?*

SMITH: Well, I had been up to Camp Pendleton where the first Marine division was based. These guys would stay up there for their whole three years. They would be there at Camp Pendleton. I didn't want to stay there so I decided I would put in for sea duty and did. I got it and went to sea school and was put aboard a heavy cruiser, the St. Paul. Then the war started and foolishly I was disappointed that I hadn't joined the division to go to Korea. A more practical sense came over me when I saw some pictures of what the guys in the division were doing, what they were going through. We had a few brushes with North Koreans, they shot at us and we had some people on the cruiser wounded. Some of us in the Marine detachment went over with shore-fire control parties and that sort of thing. But I didn't see anything like the combat that the guys in the division did.

*Q: Well what was sea duty? I don't know if the Marines do that anymore. What did sea duty mean? What sort of jobs were you doing?*

SMITH: Oh yes, they still do it. The Marine detachment takes care of the guard duty. When we were in port we were the sentries. We took care of the brig If you got arrested for something you went into the brig and were guarded by Marine sentries. We manned the 20mm anti aircraft guns, and we were the ships landing party.

*Q: What did the St. Paul do during the Korean War?*

SMITH: Oh we were offshore shelling the North Koreans. They would shoot back at us.

*Q: Were you involved in the evacuation of was it Wonsan?*

SMITH: We were there. There was Wonsan and also Keelung. We were involved in both. Keelung was the one where we took the division off after they had been up at the reservoir.

*Q: That was quite something wasn't it?*

SMITH: Oh God yeah. As they came straggling in I was really glad I had gone to sea duty and not with the division.

*Q: Were you involved with taking civilians and Koreans down south at all?*

SMITH: No.

*Q: Well after that period what did you do in the military?*

SMITH: First I went to Camp Lejeune. I was on guard duty for a couple of months. Then I was transferred to Parris Island where I became a drill instructor. The GI DI from PI.

*Q: Did you have the Smokey the Bear hat?*

SMITH: Exactly. Well no, I didn't. I wore a dungaree hat.

*Q: This was quite exacting wasn't it? I mean this is really a difficult job wasn't it?*

SMITH: No it wasn't. I think I was a good DI. I demanded discipline and all of that, but I was fair. I got along fine with the troops, but I was strict.

*Q: How did you find it in the military just when integration started to take hold. How was integration working in the Marine Corps?*

SMITH: You know at the time it seemed to me that it was working fine. We did have black recruits. They were pretty good. They were physically better than some of the white recruits. And tougher. When I was a DI I think I was always fair. I was not prejudiced at all. Integration seemed to be working fine at that time. I don't know though. I left the service at that point. I mean as I ended my tenure I was ending as a DI and went home. There may have been difficulties that I didn't see. It was working fine so far as I could see, but once you got out into the division and all I don't know how it worked.

*Q: Well you left the Marine Corps when?*

SMITH: In 1953.

*Q: What did you do?*

SMITH: OK, I left the Marine Corps in 1953 and went home to Corpus Christi. My plan was to go to school in Mexico. But I thought I ought to spend some time with my parents. So I registered and started to Delmar Junior college in Corpus Christi.

*Q: OK you went to this school in Corpus Christi.*

SMITH: Yeah and then my parents moved. Exactly like when they put me into military school and then moved to Corpus Christi. So now they moved to Midland, Texas. I stayed in Corpus Christi. I had already started school. I had a very pleasant period in a boarding house. A lovely old lady and there was another roomer, another boarder. Anyway, then I

went to Mexico and went to school for three years.

*Q: Had you had an interest in Mexico before, or was this...*

SMITH: Not so much Mexico. I wanted to learn Spanish. So I did, I went to Mexico and it was wonderful. I loved it. I had three wonderful years.

*Q: Where in Mexico?*

SMITH: Mexico City. I went to Mexico City College. It had opened after WWII to take advantage of veterans who had the GI Bill. That became La Universidad de Las Americas. The University of the Americas, but it started as Mexico City College. So I had three terrific years there. I came away with a BA and an MA.

*Q: While you were there I mean obviously you were learning the language, but were you looking at the history of Mexico.*

SMITH: The history of Latin America and especially the history of U.S. Latin American relations. I then left Mexico, came to Washington and joined the Foreign Service.

*Q: OK, well let's talk first about what were you getting out of Mexico. The United States is not usually the best reputed in Latin America but here is a university more or less keyed to veterans and all. What sort of history were they teaching?*

SMITH: Very interesting because most of the professors were Mexican. They had their point of view. It didn't always correspond with ours. I think most of us could sort of see both sides. A lot of the things that I had been taught going to school in Texas, for example about the Alamo. Here it took on a somewhat different tone. After all we had moved in. I am not saying that the Alamo wasn't an atrocity; it was, but I came away, and I think most of us came away with a somewhat more balanced view of our relationship with Mexico. Balanced, not pro Mexican by any means, but we could see some points of view we perhaps hadn't before.

*Q: Well in the Marine Corps the red stripe down the trousers represents the storming of Chapultepec, the citadel in Mexico city .*

SMITH: That is right, I had forgotten that.

*Q: Did you have much contact with Mexican students? Or was this pretty much....*

SMITH: It was mixed. There were quite a few Mexicans. They came to Mexico City college to learn English. So we had a pretty mixed group. I thoroughly enjoyed it. How would I put it? It was an experience that expanded my views, expanded my horizons so to speak.

*Q: Well did you have the foreign service in mind?*

SMITH: Yes I did.

*Q: What brought you to that? Coming up in Texas, the Foreign Service is not something that normally crosses your path.*

SMITH: That is right, but I had studied history. I had been in the Marine Corps, fought, been to Korea and Japan. So I had experience other than Texas. Then I came to Mexico City and was fascinated with the history of U.S. relations with Latin America. So I wanted to be a part of it, to join the Foreign Service.

*Q: Did you have any contact with people at the American embassy?*

SMITH: Very little in Mexico City. Some, but very little.

*Q: All right you left the University in Mexico City when?*

SMITH: Let's see, it would have been in 1956.

*Q: Then what did you do?*

SMITH: I came to Washington.

*Q: Had you ever been to Washington before?*

SMITH: No. Well yes I had once. We came up to visit my aunt and uncle, Uncle Sandy, who were living here then.

*Q: Did you take the Foreign Service exam at that point?*

SMITH: Yes. When I came up I took the Foreign Service exam.

*Q: How did you find it?*

SMITH: The Foreign Service exam? Very tough. I passed but it was a tough exam.

*Q: Was this a 3 1/2 day exam at that time or was it a one day exam? Do you remember?*

SMITH: It was a one day exam.

*Q: I took it in '53 I think, and it was a 3 1/2 day and then they switched over to a one day exam. But you took the oral exam?*

SMITH: Yeah.

*Q: Do you recall any of the questions that were asked?*

SMITH: No. I don't remember any of them.

*Q: I assume you passed. When did you come into the Foreign Service?*

SMITH: I came into the Foreign Service right after that, went to the Foreign Service School, took the A-100 course and all that. Then I was transferred to Cuba in 1958.

*Q: Do you recall anything about the A-100 course or the introduction to the foreign service course?*

SMITH: Not really. My mind was on getting to Cuba.

*Q: Do you remember any of the people in it or not?*

SMITH: No, none.

*Q: So your first assignment was where?*

SMITH: To Havana. Which delighted me. They were undergoing a revolution. Castro was already up and fighting against Batista, so it was a very exciting time to go in.

*Q: Who was the ambassador at the time?*

SMITH: Earl E. T. Smith.

*Q: What was your job at the embassy?*

SMITH: When I first went I was vice consul down in the visa section. But if I do say so myself I had worked on Cuba in the Department of State before I came in. I was a civil service employee and I did some work on Cuba. So when I arrived in Havana I think my experience stood me in good stead. Although I started off as a vice consul in the visa section I was very quickly moved up to be third secretary of the political section.

*Q: What were you doing as a civil servant in Washington on Cuba?*

SMITH: Just doing some you know reports, handling some visas and so forth. Work for a very junior officer.

*Q: Well what was life like at the embassy when you arrived there.*

SMITH: Look, let me say I was married just before we left Washington, so I spent my honeymoon in Havana and despite the revolution my life in Havana was still great. So here I was, on my honeymoon; it was a wonderful six months.

*Q: What was the background of your wife like?*



SMITH: She had worked in the State Department. In fact I looked at her across the air shaft when I was a civil service employee. How could I not be impressed? Really a good looking girl.

*Q: Beautiful picture.*

SMITH: So I finally got up the nerve to ask her out for a date. We dated and so then we were married and then went off to Havana. We were married for 50 years. She passed away last year. We had a great marriage.

*Q: Oh I am sorry. I know mine just passed on a couple of months ago.*

SMITH: That is tough, but it is inevitable. You understand that.

*Q: What was your feeling when you arrived in Havana? This revolution will succeed or not succeed or what.*

SMITH: Yes. Everyone assumed that Castro was going to win. Batista was really at that point totally unpopular. He had had people tortured and some shot and so forth. So people were really hoping for Castro's victory, or most were. When Batista fled the country, I remember another officer and I were sent around to the hotels to talk to the tourists that were there. Tell them that no problem. No Americans are being arrested so if they would just stay in their hotels they would be OK. But they wanted to get out. So very quickly after the first day we organized convoys to get them out to the airport and organized flights to come in and pick them up. So I spent the first days doing that. They were not in any danger, but you can understand they weren't sure of that. We got them out and then started organizing, and I was by then in the political section, third secretary in the political section. We got a new ambassador, Phil Bonsal, who was terrific. A very polished veteran foreign service officer who had spent other tours in Latin America and spoke Spanish perfectly, as Smith did not. Anyway, it was a very exciting time. Castro came in. Remember he came to the States on a visit. It was not that Castro was immediately in bed with the Soviets but his idea was, as he put it, to turn the Andes into the Sierra Maestra of Latin America. He said U.S. influence was bad for Latin America, so he would now offer them a better course to follow. So he started relations with all of the Latin American countries with the idea of having them follow his influence. Of course we didn't like that, so our purpose, I don't mean in the embassy but the purpose of the United States became to stop that, to make sure that Castro did not dominate influence in Latin America. That was how it began, but soon it became clear that the US was determined to get rid of Castro. We had the Bay of Pigs and plots against Castro and so forth.

*Q: Let's go back to the very early days when Castro came in. Was this did you and maybe fellow officers feel that this is new blood and it will sort of revive Cuba and all?*

SMITH: Well yeah. I had a rather sympathetic view towards Castro because Batista had

been awful. Well OK, Castro is coming in, maybe he will do better. Maybe he can offer the Cubans something better. At first, we thought that might be. Then as things went along and Castro soured on us, on the US, I became more doubtful that this was going to work to Cuba's advantage and certainly not to ours. Still, I couldn't agree with some of the things we started doing, the raids and trying to organize Cubans against the government. It was understandable and I understood it, but didn't like it. Anyway, we were there for two years, and then we broke relations. So it was an unpleasant, I should say uncomfortable, two years for me. We had doubts about U.S. policy and what we were doing, but also doubts about the Cuban government and what they were doing. Then we broke relations and came back to the States.

*Q: While Castro came in and we still had our embassy there, were we giving, were you under restrictions, were they freezing us out? What was happening on the island as far as American Cuban relations?*

SMITH: Well they were tense, very tense. There were restrictions on us in the embassy, and I would say that relations with the Cuban government were strained. Americans were under increasing pressure. Cuba was beginning to nationalize properties, agricultural properties especially. Americans were beginning to leave, so it was an uncomfortable period.

*Q: How about the American staff? Were they being harassed?*

SMITH: Harassed is probably too strong a word, but there were tensions. Some staff members were hassled by police but nothing terribly serious. Still it was a very tense time.

*Q: Not too long ago I interviewed movie actress and stage actress Kathleen Turner.*

SMITH: Oh yes she was a child in the embassy. Her father was a consular officer. I knew him well. I worked for him.

*Q: She said that while she was there, some people she considered Castroites or something killed her dog. She never forgot that.*

SMITH: Yeah, I guess not, exactly. Well there was some of that. I mean hostility towards Americans. I will never forget one afternoon there were two secretaries in the embassy who had been friends. But now one was pro Castro and the other was going to leave. So they had a fight in the embassy. It sort of summed up what was happening.

*Q: Well still back to that time when things were getting tense. As a political officer, one of a political officer's jobs is to get out and talk to government officials. Did you find yourself kind of frozen out of contact?*

SMITH: Let me put it this way, we could talk to some Cubans who were still in the government but had their doubts so were willing to talk to us. But in many cases, forget

it. They were no longer willing to talk to us. Anyway it was a really trying period.

*Q: Obviously you checked the papers, were the papers violently anti American by this time?*

SMITH: Oh yeah, sure.

*Q: Well did you and your fellow political officers see things turning into a Castro sort of unique type of government or did you see it moving closer to the Soviet Union?*

SMITH: No we really didn't see that at that point. The Soviets established relations. I still have a picture of myself coming down the steps of the U.S. Embassy with the new Soviet ambassador. The Soviets established relations and the relationship certainly did begin to grow, but I wouldn't say that Cuba had become a Soviet satellite so to speak at the time we were still there. It was on the way, and maybe they were closer than we realized.

*Q: Well were a significant number of our contacts being put against the wall and shot or...*

SMITH: I wouldn't say that. Many were just leaving. Or if they were outspoken, many of them were arrested, yeah.

*Q: Was our embassy flooded with people looking for visas?*

SMITH: Yes, getting visas? Oh my God yes. Absolutely. A long line every day, and by now the line is just to get an appointment to come back to apply for a visa. There were so many of them you couldn't handle them in a day. It would take weeks, months. But yeah a flood.

*Q: Were we relaxing our criteria or not?*

SMITH: I am not sure. I think so; I think we were because few Cubans could get immigrant visas, so they were coming in to get tourist visas. They are not coming back, so the normal thing was "sorry we can't give you a tourist visa. We know you are not coming back." But I think some of the visa officers became a little more lenient. OK, and would give them visas anyway. It was very iffy.

*Q: What did this do to the young political officer's social life there? You and your wife, did you find that it was being more difficult to carry on?*

SMITH: It was, but there were lots of diplomats. We had friends in the diplomatic corps. We had some Cuban friends. Some of the Cuban friends dropped away. But some continued to be our friends and willing to see us despite the tensions. You would begin to wonder though if they were still simply willing to see us, or were they perhaps spying on us or something. So our relations with Cubans became sort of iffy. But we had plenty of friends in the diplomatic corps. So we still had a good social life.

*Q: How about with the diplomatic corps. Were they if you consider the French, some of the different embassies, were they looking on this early manifestation of Castro as different. This is a breath of fresh air or not?*

SMITH: I would say that most did not. If you were living there you were under the same tensions and restrictions as everybody else. The Castro government was not terribly popular with the diplomatic community. Well, some differences. Mexico tended to be fairly friendly. It was the only Latin American country not to break relations with Cuba. As we broke, virtually everybody else did too. But Mexico didn't break, possibly because we asked them not to. We wanted one country to remain to sort of provide us with information on what was going on.

*Q: Well the other Latin American countries were breaking relations because of Castro's announcement that he was going to turn all of Latin America into...*

SMITH: Yeah, exactly. Turn the Andes into the Sierra Maestra. Exactly.

*Q: How about Venezuela? Was that a Particularly...*

SMITH: I don't remember. I didn't have any relationship with the Venezuelans. I don't remember exactly what their position was.

*Q: Then you came back. What did you do?*

SMITH: Yes, we broke relations on January 4 of 1961. We came back to Washington and I worked for A.A. Berle as the Executive Secretary of President Kennedy's Latin American Task Force. And then I went into Portuguese language training and eventually we went off to Recife, Brazil. Why Recife? Well Brazil was going to be a very important country for us. There wasn't any spot in the political section in Rio so I went to Recife. When two years later I came back from Recife, I was in the Department for a time but then went to Russian language training and off to Moscow.

*Q: Well let's talk about Recife for a time. What were you doing there?*

SMITH: I was vice consul. I handled political reporting more than anything else.

*Q: What was going on in Brazil? You were there from when to when?*

SMITH: I was there from late 1961 until the end of 1963.

*Q: What was going on in Brazil at the time you were there?*

SMITH: We were watching to see what might happen. The Bacardi Company was opening up a plant. Bacardi, Cubans. My wife said it seemed that wherever we went, there would be Cubans. The head of Bacardi, Pepin Bosch, was there in the same

building with us. He was married to the daughter of the Bacardis. So we had sort of a bird's eye view to Cuban reaction to what was going on in Brazil. They were concerned that the Brazilians were going to move towards the Cubans. They didn't want that to happen. Bacardi was opening a new plant in Recife.

*Q: Well when you were in Brazil, was the sort of the revolutionary fervor taking hold in Brazil? Were there students who were sort of involved ?*

SMITH: Yeah there were some. Yeah, even some guerrilla groups that emerged. But they didn't have any success. Anyway the two years in Recife we didn't have much to do with Cuba at that point except for the Bacardis.

*Q: What was Bacardi doing?*

SMITH: They were opening a plant?

*Q: Rum is it?*

SMITH: Rum, yeah. Bacardi Rum.

*Q: That is what I thought. What did they have lots of sugar cane there?*

SMITH: Yeah, you bet. Exactly. The northeast of Brazil is a sugar cane producer. So they opened this plant.

*Q: Were you getting the feeling that was this rum business was on communist terms?*

SMITH: No, Bacardi, I mean...

*Q: I know but they had their home office in Havana didn't they?*

SMITH: No, by then Bacardi was out of Havana. It was, let's say, an exile company. The Cuban government had seized all its assets in Cuba. The plant there still produced rum but it now went under the label "Havana Club" – and still does.

*Q: Well then did you find it difficult to go from Portuguese to Spanish?*

SMITH: Easy. Moving from Spanish to Portuguese was relatively easy although I found that while I was in Brazil I just couldn't speak Spanish. It all came out Portuguese.

*Q: Then you went to take Russian. What attracted you towards that?*

SMITH: I didn't decide. The Department decided. I was one of their Cuban specialists. Cuba was now moving into the relationship with Moscow so I needed to be conversant with Soviet Affairs.

*Q: So how long did you take Russian?*

SMITH: A year.

*Q: How did you find the language?*

SMITH: Very difficult, but after a year \_\_\_\_\_( in Russian)

*Q: \_\_\_\_\_ (in Russian) Well then after you took it where did you go?*

SMITH: Moscow.

*Q: You were there from when to when?*

SMITH: I was there two years -- 1966 to 1968.

*Q: What was your job?*

SMITH: I was in the political section.

*Q: Were you sort of the Cuba watcher?*

SMITH: Yeah, I was that and various other things, but basically that.

*Q: Who was the ambassador?*

SMITH: I don't remember.

*Q: Well we can always fill that in. But what did you do? What sort of work were you doing?*

SMITH: Well I watched the Cuban embassy very carefully, watched Cuban relations with the Soviets and reported on that.

*Q: Well by this time Cuba was fairly firmly embedded in the Soviet sphere.*

SMITH: Oh yeah, by then they were.

*Q: Did you get any feel for how the Cubans get along with the Russians?*

SMITH: Not really, but I had the sense that they got on reasonably well. I will tell you one interesting experience. In my office down in CIP I still have the sign. I'll show it to you. The U.S. had done something or made some statement against Cuba. So there were demonstrations in Moscow protesting these U.S. actions against Cuba. I was watching from the windows of the embassy. It didn't seem to me that it was a very enthusiastic demonstration. And here was this guy standing outside with this sign in Russian: "Ruki

Proch ot Kubi!”

*Q: What does that mean?*

SMITH: It means “Hands off Cuba.” I had to talk to him. So I went out of the side gate and mingled with some of the demonstrators, who didn’t seem all that hostile. They were Cubans. I spoke Spanish and I said I was from inside and sympathized with their feelings, but that there were always two sides and so on and so forth. Anyway, they were not threatening me in any way. Not only that, but at a given point, the guy with the sign was looking down the street and I see there are some Russians down there who didn’t look as though they were very happy with what was going on. At a given point the guy with the sign said, “Here would you like to keep this sign?”

I said, “Yeah, sure I would.” He obviously didn’t want to walk down the street with it, so he handed it to me. Interesting. So I took it back inside and have had it ever since.

*Q: well now did you talk to the Soviet foreign office people ?*

SMITH: Yeah, I did. Not very often but some. I had some contact with foreign ministry officers.

*Q: I imagine there was considerable enthusiasm at that particular point.*

SMITH: Oh yeah absolutely. Soviet-Cuban relations were relatively good at that point.

*Q: Well the missile crisis had come and gone.*

SMITH: '62 yeah.

*Q: Did that sort of scare everybody?*

SMITH: Oh yeah. Look it did, but the solution to the missile crisis eased everybody's concerns. I mean everyone thought we were moving maybe towards war. Then the U.S. And the Soviet Union reached an agreement. There would be no war. Tensions began to ease considerably. The missile crisis was really a turning point in a way. So we would still be perhaps hostile but we weren't going to shoot at one another.

*Q: Where had you been during the Bay of Pigs? Were you in Brazil at that time?*

SMITH: No. I was in the U.S.

*Q: Well how did this play, what was your perspective of the Bay of Pigs thing?*

SMITH: Oh, that we had been stupid. Utterly stupid. We were going to land these few guys against the whole Cuban armed force? It made no sense.

*Q: Well while it was going on what did you all do?*

SMITH: Nothing. We followed it on the radio.

*Q: Then how about how did you find life in Moscow during the time you were there?*

SMITH: Very interesting. We had a nice apartment. The work was interesting and so OK.

*Q: And then you came back to the Department of State?*

SMITH: Yes, I came back and worked in the department of state for a number of years. Then I went off to Buenos Aires, five wonderful years in Buenos Aires. I say five wonderful years because Buenos Aires is a great city with wonderful restaurants and great music. Also, Robert C. Hill came down as ambassador. He had been ambassador in Mexico. He was a Republican and he and Ambassador Bonsal had had a sharp disagreement over Cuba. Hill felt that we should not go easy on Cuba. Bonsal felt that we should try. So when I heard that Hill coming to be the ambassador, I thought I might as well ask for a transfer because I would never have a good relationship with him. After all, he and Bonsal were enemies and Bonsal was one of my benefactors. But Hill arrived and on that first day walked across the embassy to talk to me and to ask if I would stay, to request that I stay. He had been reading my reports. "You are obviously an excellent officer doing a great job running the political section." He said, "I hope you will stay." So I said to my wife that night, "The guy walks all the way across the embassy to ask me to stay, I guess I should. It would make sense for me to stay," so I did. And we had a wonderful relationship. But it was such a difficult period. Peron had returned and the expectation was that he would become president. But he died. Peron died. Isabel, his wife then becomes president, though not a very good one. She was not Evita? So she was overthrown by the military, and you know what happens then. The military starts arresting people and shooting them and torturing them and so forth. So it was a very difficult period.

*Q: Well let's talk a bit about what were our interests in Argentina at the time you arrived.*

SMITH: What do you mean by interests? We had economic interests of course. We had economic interests. It was a very difficult period for us because Peron was very popular of course. Then Isabel takes over. Growing doubts about her and then the military take over and God almighty this campaign of arresting people and shooting them was just terrible. The U.S. condemned all that. I mean we criticized it. We did not, to the ambassador's credit, kowtow to the military. We took a position against what they were doing. I think we did the right thing. We maintained correct relations, but made it clear that we didn't agree with the military and their policy. Meanwhile, economic relations were OK. Our economic interests in Argentina were all relatively safe but it was clear that we didn't agree with the military government. Of course the military government eventually was replaced, thank God. That happened after I left Argentina.

*Q: How did you define normal diplomatic relations. Were you able to work through the*



*foreign ministry, have contacts and all that?*

SMITH: Yes. We were, and sort of a strange period because most of the officers I had dealt with in the foreign ministry remained. They weren't replaced by military officers. The foreign minister was of course. I often had the sense that the officers I was dealing with in the foreign ministry didn't really agree with the military either but they were very careful not to suggest so or to appear so.

*Q: How about the people you would meet? How were they relating to this new government?*

SMITH: How? What?

*Q: The people you would meet, not the bureaucrats.*

SMITH: Oh I see. No, the Argentine people didn't agree with this. Friends and neighbors were being killed. Most didn't agree with the military government.

*Q: Who was being killed? Was there any particular class or group or what?*

SMITH: Well anyone who expressed disagreement with the government was likely to be arrested and maybe shot.

*Q: Had they started the disappearances and all that?*

SMITH: Yeah certainly.

*Q: Were you able to have any contact with the members of the military?*

SMITH: One or two. There was one officer in the foreign ministry. I have forgotten his particular job. I had some contact with him. That was pretty much it.

*Q: What was sort of our attitude from Washington's point of view on relations.*

SMITH: On what?

*Q: What was the attitude of Washington towards the regime in Argentina?*

SMITH: I think they agreed with us. This military government was not subtle by any means. So Washington could see what was happening and we were reporting it. So no more overtures to the Argentine military government.

*Q: did the government I mean were we doing anything or just standing there and observing?*

SMITH: Standing there and observing. We were not making any efforts to overthrow or

undermine the military government that I could see, but we did protest some of their actions.

*Q: Were we able to see any ties to Cuba and Cuban influence at the subverting level or anything like that?*

SMITH: No.

*Q: Was there any sort of Guerrilla movement going on?*

SMITH: Not that I was aware of, no.

*Q: I guess the country doesn't lend itself.*

SMITH: No, it really doesn't.

*Q: How about the living in Argentina at the time?*

SMITH: It was fine. Restaurants were still great. My wife and I would go out for dinner, often with friends. It was always very pleasant.

*Q: Did the military government harass you at all?*

SMITH: No not really.

*Q: Then where did you go after that?*

*Q: So I would like to talk, I am looking at the time and I think this is probably a good place to stop and come back for another session. We will talk about the time from '79 to '82 when you were chief of the interest section and your experiences there and then we will talk about your subsequent career afterwards.*

SMITH: There wasn't any subsequent career.

*Q: No, but your being called upon to talk about your Cuban American relations.*

SMITH: Yeah, OK.

*Q: OK, Great.*

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*Today is 16 April 2015 with Wayne Smith. I am Charles Stuart Kennedy. We are picking this conversation up now, you have come back to the Department in 1977. What were you doing?*

SMITH: It's 1977 and I take over Cuban affairs in the Department of State.

*Q: How would you say was the attitude at that time?*

SMITH: The U.S. had just taken a positive step in our relations with Cuba. In 1977, we opened an interest section in the Swiss embassy in Havana that would be manned by Americans. Until then we had been represented only by the Swiss. And I say "in the Swiss embassy" but it was really in the old U.S. embassy building. Also, Carter had indicated that we should have a dialogue with the Cubans. So I thought that relations were going to improve as I was taking over Cuban affairs in the Department of State. But I reckoned without the National Security Adviser, Zbig Brzezinski who wants nothing to do with a dialogue with Cuba. He even says at this point in November of 1977 that normalization with Cuba is impossible. That was absolutely not true, but that is the position we took. Mengistu comes in in Ethiopia, and Siad Barre in Somalia, I remember, wants our help to try to oust him, to attack Mengistu. We certainly had no intention of doing that. But here was Brzezinski, the National Security Adviser, who says the Cubans and the Soviets are responsible for the overthrow in Ethiopia. Not really, but I remember a statement of Brzezinski's that "SALT lies buried in the sands of the Ogaden." But it was far more complicated than that.

OK, in May of 1978, the Katanganese, who were close to the Cubans, invade Shaba province in Zaire. But Castro tells us that he is not behind this by any means. Quite the contrary, he says that he would like to get this invasion pulled back and stopped. Could we perhaps cooperate in that effort? That could have been a useful opening for us. But to my consternation and disbelief, Brzezinski, without consulting with anyone, makes a statement to the effect that Castro is responsible for the Katanganese invasion.

*Q: Normally somebody like Brzezinski who was a Polish,*

SMITH: National Security Adviser.

*Q: But his background why was he taking, it sounds like somebody was feeding him this. That he had somebody on his staff who was committed to anti Castro.*

SMITH: Bob Pastor was working on Brzezinski's staff and Bob Pastor had not been a hard liner. I don't know, there may have been someone else, I don't know. But it seemed to me that it was Brzezinski himself.

*Q: Excuse me, how did he communicate that he wanted to work with the USA. When Castro said he wanted to stop the Katanganese attacks.*

SMITH: To us.

*Q: Yes, but how did he convey this. How was it gotten to us?*

SMITH: At that point, when I was still in Washington, he'd have the Chief of the Cuban

Interests Section simply talk to me.

*Q: Well who, you weren't in Cuba though?*

SMITH: Not until 1979.

Anyway the word came to us that this is what they wanted. In June of 1978 I did go to Cuba and had a meeting with Castro. He expressed unhappiness over the fact that Brzezinski had in effect called him liar, and said he hoped this was not "the portent of things to come." But he then indicated that they were going to release a lot of prisoners, which they did. To my disbelief, there were those in the U.S. Government who sort of played the release down as though we weren't happy about it. Some close to Brzezinski said it made it easy for the Cubans to make new demands of us.

OK. We're into 1979. Maurice Bishop seizes power in Grenada.

*Q: The New Jewel Movement.*

SMITH: Exactly, the New Jewel Movement. Now it seemed to me that Maurice Bishop was a leftist and he was obviously going to have some relationship with Castro, but he also needed American tourism. He was not, shall I say, hostile to us. We could have begun a policy of engagement with Maurice Bishop but we didn't do that. I forgot who it was but a U.S. official gave a speech at that point and took the position that we were going to be watching everything he did. Any step towards Cuba would cause serious problems. So we began a tense relationship with Grenada, with Maurice Bishop, from the beginning which it seemed to me was unnecessary. We could have moved to have a cautious constructive relationship with him, but we did not. And in 1983 we invaded.

*Q: And how about Nicaragua?*

SMITH: All right, then we come to Nicaragua. I remember that very well. Somoza was having serious difficulties. He had outlived his usefulness so to speak. Nicaraguans wanted to be rid of him. But we did not push him to leave and then to bring in a moderate. That, I think, was a mistake. He finally did leave but it was almost too late. A new government replaced him, but it was a government that was really controlled by the Sandinistas, from 1979 forward. We should have moved sooner.

But on to other things, I went back to Cuba in July of 1979 to take over as Chief of the U.S. Interests Section. I did so almost on the first day of the Soviet brigade issue. Look, I can't tell you how embarrassing that was.

*Q: I mean it was one of these stupid things. But anyway would you explain what it was.*

SMITH: Yeah, OK. There had been Soviet military personnel in Cuba all along. We had been saying in our official statements that there were 3,000 to 5,000 Soviet military personnel in Cuba, mostly in an advisory capacity. Well that for some time hadn't really

been the case. There had also been a small brigade. It was a conventional force and trained with the Cuban armed forces. Nothing to get excited about, but we hadn't officially acknowledged that there was a brigade. Then, suddenly, I have forgotten who it was, but a senator gets word that there is a Soviet brigade in Cuba. He says publicly this may be the case. At this point I am on the way to Havana. I went by the Department of State at night as I was driving down to Miami. The officer on duty shows me a statement that they are going to make. Jesus Christ, American intelligence has not yet acknowledged there is a Soviet Brigade, and what they are going to hand out publicly says that the 3000 to 5000 Soviet military personnel represented nothing new. I said, "Jesus, you can't put this out. In a day or two it will become apparent to everybody that it is not true, that some are there as a brigade. Why not say so?"

Well he said, "I'll try but this is what the intelligence community gave us." And they did put it out.

OK I go down to Cuba and wake up the second or third morning that I am there and I am told that the statement has gone out, and it is untrue. Now we are caught seeming to deny that a Soviet brigade is there. This has been a mistake. But I mean it is embarrassing, really embarrassing and absolutely unnecessary. There is no reason the intelligence community couldn't have come out with an accurate statement to begin with. And now, of course, we have to issue a correction, that is, which makes us look foolish, or having been initially dishonest.

OK, well the nonaligned summit begins. We have been very concerned about this summit because the Cubans thought they could use the idea of the natural alliance between the non aligned countries and the Communists to their advantage. To push this at the non aligned summit. But Castro does not do that. You can understand why. There are so many countries in the non aligned movement that don't want to be considered to be aligned with the Soviet Union.

*Q: You have got India, Indonesia Ghana. Yugoslavia.*

SMITH: Yes, and especially Yugoslavia. If Castro tries to push this it is going to cost him and he wants his tenure as the chairman of the non aligned movement to be productive and to favor him and increase his political clout. If he tries to push this natural alliance theory it is not going to work. So the long and short of it he doesn't push the natural alliance concept.

*Q: But had you been seeing elements in Cuba which had been advocating this?*

SMITH: The natural alliance theory?

*Q: Yeah.*

SMITH: I would say some members of the Communist party did, but most Cubans did not. Your average Cuban did not at all. It is not something that went over well even with

the Cubans. So Castro sees that it is not in his interest to push this at the summit and he does not. I would say that the non aligned summit went off relatively well. They didn't push. Lets see, I have forgotten how many there were. There were a couple of countries who had been, well there had been speculation that they might be expelled from the non aligned movement. That didn't happen either. So the long and short of it was the non aligned summit went off relatively well from our standpoint. Castro I would say behaved sensibly, moderately and in Cuba's interests. It was good that he did because this was September, and in December, two or three months later, the Soviets invaded Afghanistan which is a member of the non aligned movement, a member of NAM. Thank God for Castro that he didn't push the idea of the natural alliance theory at that point. OK, let's jump to 1980.

*Q: One thing before so this will go chronologically. When you arrived in Cuba this was 1979.*

SMITH: Yeah.

*Q: How were you received? What were you doing ?*

SMITH: Well I was going to be the chief of the interests section.

*Q: We know that, but*

SMITH: I was very well received. Look, I had met with Castro on a previous visit, in June of 1978. I had visited Cuba. I was director of Cuban affairs at that point for the Department of State. Castro received me and we had a very cordial conversation. I indicated to him that I thought it would be possible and I certainly would try to bring about a more sensible, productive relationship between the United States and Cuba. So I arrived in Cuba and I was very well received. OK, then Mariel in 1980. Mariel. We had little to do with bringing about Mariel. Lots of Cubans at that point wanted get out to the United States. There was tremendous pressure to exit. And so, on April 1 there is an incident at the Peruvian embassy. A bus loaded with potential exiles, people who wanted to get out, crashed through the gate. The guards on each side of the gate opened fire and one shot the other. Castro was furious. The Cubans decided they were going to remove the guards at the Peruvian embassy, and they did. They removed the guards saying they were not going to risk the lives of Cuban military personnel to keep Cubans out if Cubans wanted to get in. It was up to the Peruvians to keep them out. Really? So they removed the guards. I remember I was at a cocktail party that night and some Cuban officials were there. I said, "Without the guards there, aren't you sort of concerned that you may have an influx of people ?"

"Oh no," they said. "there might be a hundred or so who might do that, go on in. Fine. It will be up to the Peruvians through us to make arrangements to get them out."

I said, "I don't know, a hundred or so. It seems to me there could be a lot more than that."

“No, no, you will see.” That is what those at the cocktail thought too. But they were wrong. Within two days they had 10,000 people in the embassy. They filled the whole compound. What the hell were they going to do now? I think the Costa Ricans had indicated a willingness to take some of them. The U.S., stupidly, said it was going to stages military maneuvers off the Cuban coast. I mean we were going to. We didn't. I sent out a cable saying for god's sake don't do this, and other chiefs of mission in the Caribbean area chimed in in agreement. So they did, they turned it off. They didn't hold military maneuvers.

They started the thing to Costa Rica but it didn't really solve anything. So Castro then says to the exiles in Florida, “OK, if you want to send boats to pick up these people you can.” That started the Mariel boat lift. They then started carrying thousands, packing them onto boats. .

*Q: Did you get involved in this with any sorting out or anything like that?*

SMITH: No, we had nothing to do with that. I mean the people were outside the interests section. We had no way of controlling it. They were just leaving.

*Q: What was our, I mean were we making noises about it?*

SMITH: Oh yeah. We were protesting, but there was nothing we could do about it. I remember at some point in June I heard Tarnoff in the State Department the Secretary's assistant...

*Q: Peter Tarnoff.*

SMITH: Yeah. Peter Tarnoff and Bob Pastor of the NSC were going to be coming for a conference with the Cubans to try to get this thing turned off. I flew up to Washington to look at their briefing papers. They seemed fine. Yes, we wanted to get this turned off and we would then begin a process of negotiations to try to resolve the problem and so forth. It was constructive. We had steps on our side and I thought it would go over well with the Cubans. I thought it would work.

So Tarnoff and Pastor actually come down. They show me the paper. It has been changed. There is nothing in it but turn off Mariel. Turn off the boat lift. We don't offer anything in return. Nothing. That is it. So I said, “Well Peter, they are not going to go for this. They will want something on our part.”

But Pastor said, “we thought the original draft was too soft.” The NSC again . You know the NSC screwed everything up. They did here again. The conference lasted about 15 minutes. The Cubans heard that we just wanted them to turn off Mariel and that was it.

*Q: Well you know Mariel had a reputation later and afterwards where all the prisons and lunatic asylums were.*

SMITH: Yeah.

*Q: but it was much more than that wasn't it? I mean the people coming across....*

SMITH: Yeah there was some of that. I don't know whether they took them out of the lunatic asylums, but they did take people who had problems and put them in. It is not that that is all there was. There was a flow of perfectly normal people who wanted to leave, but the Cubans added some who were not perhaps normal..

*Q: Were we planning something that later worked out with the Vietnamese the essentially orderly departure. Was that part of the original draft when Pastor and Tarnoff originally came to Cuba? Were we faking it or working on something like an orderly departure program?*

SMITH: Well, but that was not offered. We said nothing about an orderly departure. No, not a word, Just turn it off, that's it.

*Q: Did you get any feeling that this was in response to I would think that the Cuban lobby particularly down in Florida or maybe New Jersey would want an orderly departure.*

SMITH: Well of course, sure. And we eventually had one, but it is not offered here. Tarnoff and Pastor came down with what I had hoped would be a sensible offer to the Cubans. But it was simply a demand that they stop Mariel. But the Cubans weren't going for that without some quid pro quo on our side. OK, so that fails. And then there is May 2, because I can't go all the way through this without taking up the May 2 episode. We had been saying that we had a program for taking former political prisoners. That had been sort of in suspension but I had been saying that we would resume processing the former political prisoners in May. And I had authorization to resume in May. May 1 of course is a holiday. But on May 2, several hundred former political prisoners arrive outside the interest section to ask when we were going to begin processing them. I at first send out Susan LaManna, our vice consul, to talk to them. No, they wanted to talk to the heavy. So eventually I went out and assured them we were going to begin processing and we had the authorization from the Department of State and so forth. Then we went back in and were watching from the windows at what was going to happen. Well what happened was that a number of what I describe as Cuban redhots, Cubans who were I'd say fanatically on the side of the government and so who of course resented these former political prisoners being there voicing protests. Suddenly a couple of buses came swinging around the corner and disgorged these guys. They had bats and chains and they came charging out and attacked the political prisoners. And others came charging down the side streets and also attacked them. So, we have a full scale riot going on out there. Now there have been some women and children waiting to come in and apply for visas. I was watching from the upstairs window and I see the Marine guard. He has locked the door, but there are all these women and children. I was sort of mentally urging him to go ahead and unlock the door and let them in, and he did. He let in the women and children and then of course couldn't stop others that came in as well. So we had an influx of people into the interests section. The fighting eventually subsided and the attackers went



away.

What the hell were we going to do? The Cuban government did send over some key officials asking if we needed anything. In other words the Cuban government did cooperate. They did send police to get the rioters away and we came out of it in one piece. And Cuban officials said if those who had come in would come out peacefully through the back door, they would have buses waiting there to take them safely away and back to their homes. I mean take them safely away to a spot where they could then go back home. A number did do that. They went out through the back door, and there were buses and they went away. But there were others, I don't remember how many, maybe it was a couple of hundred. Anyway we had a lot of people who didn't want to go out. They didn't think that would be safe, so stayed. This is May 2. Some went out gradually over the next couple of months, but we still had a hell of a lot of people inside as of the end of the crisis. Now, as to the end of the crisis, we of course talked to the Cubans. The Cubans understand that this is really not in their favor. That is, the aftermath of Mariel. It was not something they have arranged. It came about because of a mistake on Castro's part. Remove the guards at the Peruvian embassy and maybe a couple of hundred people at the most would go in. No 10,000 people. What do you do with them? The boatlift through Mariel. Thousands went. It is massive, but after a time it is embarrassing to Cuba and makes normal life difficult. It is of course also painful to us. So, increasingly, the Cubans are inclined to bring it to a halt – and they begin to do so. At the end of September, it ends. Meanwhile, however, the Cubans have said they are going to send this ship that could have carried several hundred people: the Blue Fire. Carter is supposed to come to Miami on a visit. They are going to send the Blue Fire to unload these people in Miami on the day that Carter arrives. The U.S. Government, through me of course, said that would be the end of it. Don't do that. We can bring this to an end peacefully and began perhaps to get back on track, but if you do that, it will end the program. So the Cubans did not send the Blue Fire and the sea lift did come to an end on September 26. Mariel ended.

OK, now very quickly what do we have after that? Ronald Reagan is elected. The Cubans seemed to hope that they could come to terms with him, that they could have a relationship with Reagan.

*Q: Like Nixon to China. In other words he was a hard liner about China and yet he opened relations.*

SMITH: Exactly. They thought maybe they could make a deal with him. I think because of that, Cuba suspended arms shipments to Nicaragua. The NSC, of course, said it was not true, said the Cubans were in fact stepping up their arms shipments to Nicaragua. Also, Mexico offered a peace plan for Central America and the Caribbean. Cuba and Nicaragua immediately accepted, but the U.S. did not.

OK, I think we can end on what I would say is the right point. General Walters had come down for a meeting with Castro. This is in March of 1982. I am still chief of the interest section. I am aware that Walters has come, but I am not invited to sit in on the talks, for

what became obvious reasons. Walters comes and he meets with Castro. Secret talks, nothing is said about it other than it is acknowledged that he is there. What the NSC then later says is that Walters came down to have a discussion with the Cubans but he finds them so totally resistant that it is hopeless. We can't deal with the Cubans. It was a deliberate misrepresentation.

And it was at that point that I decided to leave the foreign service. It is obvious that even with Jimmy Carter in the presidency we haven't been able to deal with the Cubans. Now with Ronald Reagan it is totally hopeless. There is not going to be any dialogue. I am told by friends in the State Department who are working in the State Department on Latin American Affairs to stop sending out these cables. I keep sending things suggesting a dialogue. It just makes you look foolish, they say. No one is interested in a dialogue. But this is what I believe in, I reply. This is what I think we should do and I am not going to send cables asking that we do something in which I don't believe. Hopeless. So I left the foreign service in 1982. One of the things I really regret is that there were still those former prisoners we had been promising to process. There were hundreds of them. I had urged Reagan to take them. But, no, he left them. We abandoned these people we had said we would take and there it was. OK So I leave the foreign service and that is it.

*Q: Well during the time that you were in Cuba, this is the second time, the Castro regime was selling arms to Nicaragua. But was it messing around in Latin America and what was it doing in Africa at that time?*

SMITH: Very little in Africa at that time. And let me put it this way, they had indicated to us on a number of occasions their willingness to discuss all these issues with us and to come to terms, so to speak. Brzezinski turned down every opportunity so there we were. I would say that we could have had, how would I put it, we could have had talks with the Cubans on Africa without any question, but we didn't. Of course their interest in Africa over the years did begin to wane and it came to a point where it was not really an issue. That could have come much sooner.

*Q: Had the promotion of revolution in Latin America and that area died? With Che Guevara?*

SMITH: Yeah that had pretty well died. Cuba originally had the idea that it was going to turn the Andes into an alliance of Latin America. They would overthrow governments and replace them with Cuban sympathizing regimes. It didn't work.

*Q: It wasn't a jungle mountains then.*

SMITH: What?

*Q: They weren't jungle mountains.*

SMITH: No, exactly. It changed, Che Guevara was killed, and that failed. The Cubans really gave up on that as the years went by and began reaching out to establish relations

with these other governments. So Castro reached the point at which Cuba has relations with every country in the hemisphere except the United States, which is one of the things which led Obama to change our policy.

*Q: In the Reagan administration did you see any enlightened areas of interest in Cuba?*

SMITH: No, I did not. Now remember I leave. I quit the foreign service and go back to work at Johns Hopkins University for awhile. As of '92 I have joined the Center for International Politics. So I no longer am in official circles so to speak.

*Q: When you were the head of the interest section what were you and your staff doing, almost routine things.*

SMITH: Well I was following, with a couple of guys helping me, following political and economic affairs in Cuba and reporting that back. At that point we had the influx of people.

*Q: Did you see a change in Castro? Is he you might say became more aware of world politics that you can talk big but you can't accomplish much just by talk. Is he changing in other words?*

SMITH: I am sure he was, but look, Castro during that period over and over again indicated a willingness to work with us, a willingness to have a dialogue. Reach some modus vivendi. We simply said no on each occasion. There may have been episodes in future years where there was some willingness on our part to listen to him but certainly not during those early years. Castro look, Stu, I believe that we had the opportunity very early on to have a dialogue with Castro and at the time of the Kennedy assassination. I think if it had not been for the Kennedy assassination we could have had a dialogue at that point. Another thing, Stu, I think the Cubans, Castro especially, very quickly came to realize that having a close relationship with the Soviet had all sorts of implications. Yes the Soviets could support them and defend them and so forth. But there were certain things the Soviets probably wanted that didn't serve their interests at all. Anyway, things turned out as they did, and it took a long time. God Almighty, 50 years.

*Q: Did you have any impressions of Raul Castro?*

SMITH: Yeah. I liked Raul Castro. I thought he was more pragmatic, certainly not as flamboyant as his brother, more practical and pragmatic and so forth. As I made the decision to leave in 1982, and had indicated to the Cubans that I am resigning, I was at a cocktail party and ran into Raul Castro. He said, "Tell me, why is it so difficult for us to have a dialogue? You have your system and you are not going to change it. We have our system and we are not going to change it. But there are disagreements between us which would serve the interests of both sides to resolve. We can't resolve them without talking. We have to have a dialogue. Why is that so difficult?"

I said, "Mr. Vice President, Cuba is an emotional issue in the United States." But then I

came back to Cuba for some reason another five or six years later. I run into Raul Castro again at a cocktail party. He says, "Wayne, Tell me why is it so difficult for us to have a dialogue?" Nothing has changed for God's Sakes. But the fact that he asks the question, the first question off his mind, shows that he believed in dialogue. He understood that we needed to discuss things, and I think he was a practical guy.

*Q: Did you find that just the very fact that you were talking to the Cubans with sort of the American body politic, did you have a lot of enemies?*

SMITH: Where?

*Q: In the States.*

SMITH: Oh yeah, I suppose so. I am sure I did. Look, it is interesting that you ask that question right now because I was talking to my daughter yesterday afternoon. She was saying I had caused her all kinds of trouble. She was married and lived in Miami. But she said there were jobs she couldn't get because of me. The daughter of Wayne Smith. "We don't want anything to do with her." She works for Reuters now, but has decided to open a consulting business, and she was saying the other night that at last being my daughter may help.

*Q: were you able to make in Cuba did you go over to Miami from time to time and talk to the Cuban groups there?*

SMITH: Cuban groups, I am sure I did. There were some groups on one side, and I may have talked to them, but I didn't waste much time in Miami, no.

*Q: Well just to finish this up, what did you do when you left in '82? You went to Johns Hopkins?*

SMITH: Yeah.

*Q:: You got a degree in anthropology?*

SMITH: I already had degrees. I had a Ph. D and everything.

*Q: So what did you do?*

SMITH: I taught. I was an adjunct professor at the school with John Hopkins SAIS for awhile. But eventually, in 1992 I came to the Center for International Policy. I have been here ever since.

*Q: To finish this off would you talk about your impressions of your last, you just made a trip to open a dialogue. We are beginning to normalize relations. So in 2015 what were your impressions. Whither Cuba, what did you think about this?*

SMITH: Look I was there last year. I was there in December of last year. Have I talked about that? Obama had indicated early on that he would try to improve relations with Cuba. But at first we didn't see any movement in that direction. Then, last year the Cubans organized a three-day conference on U.S. Cuban relations. They invited a number of very interesting people, people who might have something to say about it. And they invited me. Not only was there a conference on Cuba but on the second evening a homenaje to me for all my efforts to bring about better relations between the two countries. OK, so I get up to give my speech, and I said it seemed to me that what we should do was to establish normal diplomatic relations, remove Cuba from the terrorist list, remove travel controls, and a number of other steps to have a more normal relationship. The next morning, the morning of the 17<sup>th</sup>, Raul Castro and President Obama both announced that we are going to move towards a normalization, that we are going to take some of these steps. There were a lot of people of course who said, "Boy that Wayne really has a lot of influence." Well of course I didn't disagree, though the announcement came as a complete but very pleasant surprise. The next thing I want to say is that that morning of the 17<sup>th</sup> I went outside of the Hotel and was walking around and God, the Cuban people were cheering. Someone recognized me and said, "Hola, Wayne. Congratulations."

But there was such a wave of elation among the Cuban people. They totally approved. I don't know whether you have seen this thing. I forgot who put it out but indicating the need to have a statistic of course, polls. That the overwhelming majority of Cubans support normalization with the United States and the majority of Americans also support normalization. So that makes it very difficult for people like Marco Rubio to say we shouldn't do this. Well you may think not but the great majority think we should.

*Q: The last couple of trips there what did you think of Cuba? Where is it going and all?*

SMITH: It was going downhill. When I say it is going downhill I mean the economy has not worked well for some time. Cuba hasn't really been prosperous, and especially in Havana you begin to see that. So many of the buildings downtown are in desperate need of repair. It looks shabbier and shabbier. There is some reconstruction, yes. Drive along the Malecon and you see some of the places have been refurbished and look OK, but there are others that just look as though they are about to collapse. So the Cuban economy has not prospered. Cuba has survived but let's hope that this normalization with the United States does result in Economic recovery.

*Q: Did you get any news, this is a difficult question to really answer. Did you get any feel about the effect of the Cuban educational system on the Cubans?*

SMITH: No, I don't think so. Look there are two things in Cuba that the Cubans can be really proud of. Number one is the medical system. Wow! they have a great medical system. So much so that they are able to send doctors all over the world, as you well know. And the educational system is very good. So Cubans are well educated.

*Q: They certainly have done well in the United States.*

SMITH: Cubans are very bright. Anyway the educational system and the medical system are two things they can be very proud of and they have done well.

*Q: What do you see as far as Raul Castro, he is getting on in years.*

SMITH: He will be leaving in what two years. Then who replaces the Castros. Hmmmm.

*Q: Did you find dealing with Castro, he has a reputation along with Menachem Begin of Israel when they sit down to talk he just goes off and takes over and gives a monologue for a couple of hours.*

SMITH: I didn't really find that. Well on three or four occasions, I found he was someone I could talk to. He didn't dominate the conversation. Of course I don't know what that says about me?

*Q: What about the officials you dealt with over the years. How did they strike you?*

SMITH: Very competent. Most of them. There were a couple of exceptions, but most of the officials were competent and sensible, pragmatic.

*Q: I mean we have looked at some of the places like Russia and all where so many of the economies have been taken over by oligarchs who are really not, I mean they are just party apparatchiks who have jumped on top of going concerns. Has that happened much in Cuba or would you say they were pretty good managers.*

SMITH: That is hard for me to say because I really didn't deal that much. I am not a businessman or an economist. I didn't have the impression that was the case, but I am not sure.

*Q: Did Venezuela come up much when you were dealing with Cuba?*

SMITH: Well no it didn't really.

*Q: This was before Chavez of course.*

SMITH: Yeah. Look Venezuela was of course Cuba's benefactor. Has been until recently anyway. Now what is going to happen? Venezuela is going down the chute. How is that going to affect Cuba? I would be very concerned if I were a Cuban.

*Q: Let's say if things work right, where do you see Cuba developing, any particular fields they are particularly strong in, the economy?*

SMITH: Cuba you know I don't know if they will ever get back to it or not. I remember when they were going for 10 million tons of sugar and so forth. Now they are doing what, 2 million tons. Could they get back to that? If they could, would it benefit them? I mean

getting back to producing sugar? I don't think so. They still have to produce their own of course, so you have got to have some sugar. I don't know. Cuba's economic future is a blank screen for me.

*Q: It is probably a blank screen for the Cubans. Being such in a way good entrepreneurs and intelligent people they will find a way.*

SMITH: They will, but what is it going to be? But they will. I have every confidence that they will.

*Q: OK, well Wayne I think this was very good.*

*End of interview*