

*National Museum of the Pacific War*

*Nimitz Education and Research Center*

*Fredericksburg, Texas*

Interview with

**Mr. Richard “Rick” Smith**

Date of Interview: January 18, 2017

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Interview in progress.

Reagan Grau: My name is Reagan Grau; I'm the Archivist at the National Museum of the Pacific War in Fredericksburg, Texas. Today is January ...

Mr. Smith: 18<sup>th</sup>.

Reagan Grau: ... 18<sup>th</sup>, 2017, and I am visiting with Rick Smith today, and we're going to speak about ... he's going to talk about his experiences related to this site. So, with that, Rick, I'd like to ask you when were you born and where and talk a little bit about growing up.

Mr. Smith: Okay. I was ... I was born in El Paso, Texas in October 1939. My parents were Arden (sp?) Robert Smith. He was a ... he was a mechanic for the city bus lines there, and my mother was Winnie ... uh, Winnie May Hagee Smith. She ... she's Mike Hagee's old ... one of his older sisters. And I'm the fourth out of five children. I have two older sisters and a ... older brother, and I have a sister younger than I am. And we ... we grew up, well, we ... we were all born in El Paso, but my mother ... my daddy died in 1945 right at the end of the war. He wasn't in the war; he got ran over, got hit by a street car, so he was in an automobile accident anyway. So, he passed away and my mother had to uh, bring my grandparents down from New Mexico and they raised us kids. And for a couple of years there, we ... we or a year, about a year we spent in El Paso. Then my uncle, uh, Mike Hagee's father, had a place out here north of Fredericksburg, and he was fixing to go back into the Navy. He got out in '45, decided it was a little bit tough trying to make a living with six kids, so he ... I don't know if he had six of them yet, but he ... he ended up with seven actually, but he decided he wanted to go back in the Navy. Well, he wanted to keep this property out here, so my grandparents agreed to move out here from El Paso

and take care of the place for us ... for him, and we ... we came with them. So, we grew up out here, and the place is out there where the Boot Ranch is.

Reagan Grau: Uh hum.

Mr. Smith: That's where we grew up. And I graduated from high school here in 1957. And the ... the years that we were here growing up were pretty interesting. My association with the Nimitz at that time, the old Nimitz Hotel, it was a ... a bus station also.

Reagan Grau: Hum.

Mr. Smith: And my mother worked in ... in Austin for the Southwestern Bell Telephone Company. And so, she would come down and visit us, oh, once or twice a month, and she would ride the bus and come down here. And we would, if ... we would go to ... come from school most of the time, we'd come ... this school just right over here, and we would come from school and hang out here and ... in the hotel or bus station waiting for her bus to come in. I know we got chased around the hotel corridors a few times 'cause the night clerk didn't want us ... you know how kids are (laughter) ... didn't want us running around, but we'd manage to sneak by him and go exploring up in the second floor of the hotel, you know? Anyway, that's my first association with the ... with the old hotel. And I graduated from high school with the ... the owner's daughter who is a director, Barbara Schmidt, or Heinen.

Reagan Grau: Yeah.

Mr. Smith: Yeah, she is ... she and her husband ... well, her husband's daddy had a car parts dealership right next door over here at Heinen Auto Supplies over here where Anglo's (sp?) Deli is now, I think. Anyway, we graduated in '57 and I ... I went in the Navy 'cause, and my brother had ... my brother is five years older than I am, and he ... he and I both admired our ... our uncle, Bob Hagee, and he had gone in the Navy, you know, before World War II in 1939 and we thought he had an exciting life. And he would come home a lot of times and bring the kids and the family, you know, and when he showed up, we knew we was going to get a ... a good slide show that evening 'cause he took thousands of pictures. And he put it all on slides and we'd get ... we'd get to see Washington State and

all these other places that they'd visit while he was in the Navy. And so, my brother joined the Navy in '52 and I graduated in '57 and joined the Navy and were both (unintelligible) Machinist Mates just like our uncle. You know, we kind of followed his footsteps, and we both served at least twenty years. I served twenty and my brother served twenty-two. When we retired, we went to work for Civil Service more or less. I went to work, at first I ... well, I first worked myself for about three years before I went to work here, this job came available in 1980, and I applied for it and I got it. I was ... I've always been really appreciative of Mr. Hubbard hiring me when he did. But the place kind of just like ... the job kind of fit me with my military experience and my being a hometown boy, and uh, being a mechanic and that's just what he was looking for ... for as a maintenance chief. And I say maintenance chief, I did have a ... a few people working for me, but they were mostly entry level people. I had to do a lot of the higher skilled work that they weren't capable of doing. Of course, I trained some of them and then just about the time I'd get them trained and get them going good, they'd quit and go somewhere else, you know? (chuckles) That's ... that's typical of the way ... way things go, so ...

Reagan Grau: Yeah, that happens sometimes.

Mr. Smith: Yeah.

Reagan Grau: Well, would you mind elaborating a little bit about what you did while you were in the Navy?

Mr. Smith: Yeah, well I was a ... I was a aviation machinist mate which was a ... is a jet ... jet engine mechanic. Initially is what ... that's what I did; I worked on jet engines up ... down at Beville and I worked for my brother for a little while. He was ... he and I were able to get brother duty for a couple of years there, and I worked for him and I was working on aircraft engines. And I went from there ... went to uh, for sea duty. And like I say, I had ... I served three ... on three different carriers at that time on VA-146, and I was a ... during that time, I was ... I advanced from ... I made third class while I was in Beville and then I made the second and first class while I was with VA-146. So, I went there as a third class and advanced in ... in three and a half years I ... I made E-6. And I went

through ... first I started out as a plane captain which is a ... is a really a drudgery job, you know? You ... they assign you an aircraft and your job is to clean it, service it, take care of it and strap the pilot in when he comes out to fly it, and for the little short period of time he's out flying, you ... you can go to lunch or something like that, you know (chuckles). But you have to be back on the flight deck ready for him when he comes back, getting ready for the aircraft, you know. And if your aircraft goes down below deck for maintenance or something like it, you stay with it, you ride brakes whether they push you or whether they pull you with a ... a tractor or whatever, you ... you're in the cockpit riding the brakes and you're responsible for the airplane, you know? You ... you got to make sure they don't run it into something. If you see something they don't, well you put on the brakes and tell them, "Move it." (laughter) So, anyway, (unintelligible). Went through (unintelligible) my first cruise and then my second cruise, I was up the ... I made E-5, and I was the power plant's night supervisor aboard the [USS] Lexington for that squadron and which was basic, just working on engines and aircraft at night, you know? 'Cause we didn't fly at night much in those days. That was ... that was before ... they could fly at night, but they didn't push it, you know, 'cause it was still some of that learning experience, and these aircraft weren't ... weren't really equipped with that good of radar. And then in '62 when I left ... we left on the [USS] Constellation; we had brand new aircraft and everything. And it was ... that was ... they put ... put me back on the line, and I was the line petty officer in charge of all the plane captains. So, I went from being a plane captain to being the head plane captain, (unintelligible) more or less. And then in '63 I put in for instructor training to go to, you know, to go teach maintenance on whatever aircraft they decided to put me with, and so, they sent me to instructor training in Memphis, Tennessee, actually Millington. And I spent a couple of months there going to school, and then they assigned me to Naval Air Maintenance Training, Detachment 1069 in uh, Imperial Beach, California, which we taught ... I taught the H-3 helicopter, taught the power plants and transmission system, the rotor system, fuel system on all that on this helicopter. I didn't know a thing

about it, so I had to go through training there for the instructors that were at the ... at the site. And then as I became qualified, I started teaching, you know, I ... I taught there from 1963 to early 1968, a little over three years. And ...

Reagan Grau: Did you end up ... did you go to Southeast Asia during this time or ...

Mr. Smith: Not (unintelligible).

Reagan Grau: ... after your ...

Mr. Smith: Yeah, well yeah ...

Reagan Grau: ... after Memphis?

Mr. Smith: Uh, let's see, the other three cruises, uh, we went to Hong Kong, but we didn't go to ... and we went to Sub ... Subic Bay.

Reagan Grau: Uh hum.

Mr. Smith: But we didn't go into (unintelligible) Vietnam or anything. But when I was aboard the ... my next ship which was after I finished my tour with Naval Air Maintenance Training Group, I ... I was transferred to Helicopter Anti-submarine Squadron Eight which was stationed aboard the USS Bennington which was a ... an anti-submarine carrier. Well, we made a cruise aboard the ... aboard that carrier from '68 to '69. When we got back from that they decommissioned the squad ... the decommissioned the squadron. But anyway, while we went on that cruise, we were operating 'cause Vietnam was going on. We were operating off the coast of Vietnam as a ... basically a logistics carrier 'cause we didn't have the ... the ... we didn't have the big, attack aircraft aboard. We had helicopters, we had S-2s which were ... has a twin-engine op, uh, anti-sub hunter, and so we ... we basically carried the mail to all the other ships in the group out there. The ... the aircraft would fly aboard, bring in parts and mail and so forth and land on our carrier, and then we'd take helicopters and deliver mail or whatever to the destroyers and the cruisers and the other ships that didn't have the capability for landing a big mail carrier aircraft (throat clearing). We did have some (unintelligible) helicopters did go inland and serve as ... we had ... there's a de ... detachment of HC-7s which is a helicopter composite squadron, and they were equipped for uh, rescue.

Reagan Grau: Hum.

Mr. Smith: And they would go in. None of our squadron, none of our aircraft went in for that because yeah, they weren't equipped for ... for ... they didn't have any armament or any kind, you know, but they could drop ... they could drop a ... a torpedo, but there's not any submarines operating in that ...

Reagan Grau: Alright.

Mr. Smith: ... that shallow waters (chuckles) of Vietnam.

Reagan Grau: Alright. Did you ever get to port in Vietnam?

Mr. Smith: No.

Reagan Grau: No?

Mr. Smith: Never went in the country.

Reagan Grau: Okay.

Mr. Smith: I was there ... I was there in 1968 with the Bennington; I was there again uh, in '72 with the USS Midway, and again in '73, '74 and '75 on the USS Midway.

Reagan Grau: Wow.

Mr. Smith: And I was there during [the] Vietnam evacuation.

Reagan Grau: Uh hum.

Mr. Smith: We evacuated, I don't know, something like seven hundred refugees. We landed ...

Reagan Grau: Boat ... boat people?

Mr. Smith: Yeah, kind of. They came aboard though in helicopters. They ... Hueys, you know?

Reagan Grau: Right.

Mr. Smith: Hueys, and they ... they ... there was one ... one of those Hueys came aboard and had fifty-four people on it. I ... and of course, a lot of them ... Vietnamese are small people, plus they had a lot of kids, you know? So, that's how ... they were able to get that many on that ... on that little helicopter like that (chuckles). But every ... every helicopter that landed on our ship, we kept it. I mean, we ... we kept it on ship. You see ... you saw pictures of some being dumped over the side on some ships? Well, that was the ships that didn't have the capability for storage of the ... of the aircraft, you know. We left most of our air group back in Subic Bay when we left there. When they ... they told us, they ... they ... we

were going to have to be on station to respond to the ... to the evacuation of Saigon and everything, so ...

Reagan Grau: How far off ... how far off shore were y'all when y'all were (unintelligible)?

Mr. Smith: Ah, it's probably ...

Reagan Grau: (Unintelligible).

Mr. Smith: ... thirty, forty miles. You could see ... you could see land off in the distance, but not close enough to identify anything, you know?

Reagan Grau: Yeah.

Mr. Smith: And we had ... we recovered, oh, something like about fifty Huey's and I think a couple of CH-47s. And then we went around the peninsula to Phnom Penh. And there was a bunch of F-5s and A-37s that had escaped. They were South Vietnamese pilots that had escaped from the North Vietnamese ...

Reagan Grau: Uh hum.

Mr. Smith: ... and flew into Phnom Penh. And we were going to go down there and load those helicop ... er, fixed wing aircraft aboard our ship, you know? Well, there was a diplomatic uh, hold up there because the North Vietnamese said that they were theirs by rights of conquest and so forth, you know? Well, after a bunch of diplomatic, about three days, uh, we finally loaded all the ... all the aircraft aboard. We ... we had about fifty of those various - A-37s, and F-5s and T-38s, loaded them aboard. And then we went to Guam and offloaded them.

Reagan Grau: This was 1973? Or '75?

Mr. Smith: '75.

Reagan Grau: This was '75.

Mr. Smith: In May, the ... the evacuation started either April 30<sup>th</sup> or May the 1<sup>st</sup>, somewhere right in there.

Reagan Grau: Saigon fell sometime in April ...

Mr. Smith: Yeah.

Reagan Grau: ... I think.

Mr. Smith: Yeah, that's ... so, we were able to ... uh, recover ... we had ... we had a detachment of Jolly Green Giants aboard, Air Force Green ... Jolly Green Giants? And they were ... they ... during the time that we were bringing all



those helicopters aboard they were going in and bringing people in also. A lot of times they didn't bring them to us, they took them to the USS Blue Ridge which was a amphibious attack, assault ship. and it had ... it came building for birthing and cleaning these people up and feeding them and all this stuff. All ... all we did, the ones we brought aboard, on these little (unintelligible) on the Hueys and stuff like that and they came aboard we'd ... we'd uh, search them, take away all their, if they had any weapons, and feed them and delouse them and then we'd put them on a ... on a helicopter, one of those Jolly Green Giants, a bunch of them on there, and they'd fly them to the Blue Ridge or one of the other ships that were around that were ... could provide birthing spaces for them. And so, it was a ... it's different (chuckles). And I ran into one of mine ... mine and Mike's cousins while we were going down there. The ... he was another Hagee; he was ... he was in a helicopter squadron and they ... they landed aboard and they were there with us for a couple of days, but they were going ... they were going to, I don't remember where they were going to. We had ... we picked ... picked them up, I think, in Okinawa on the way, no, not Okinawa. Anyway, I ran into Doug at ... and it doesn't really matter, but uh, the evacuation of Vietnam was ... was kind of interesting. That's it, a little point of interest there – that's the longest I'd ever been to sea at one time without going into port.

Reagan Grau: Right.

Mr. Smith: We left Subic Bay around the 18<sup>th</sup> of April, and we didn't ... we didn't go ashore when we were evacuating the helicopters and the aircraft, and we didn't go ashore in Guam when they were offloading. They wouldn't ... they ... they didn't have any liberty. They let, uh, some of the crew people, that ... some of the crewmen that were from Guam, they let them go ashore, but the rest of us, we didn't get any liberty. We got to stay aboard. It took us twenty-four hours to offload all those aircraft and so, we just got to look at Guam. We didn't (chuckles) get to ... get ... but anyway, we ... we pulled back into Subic uh, thirty-three days later.

Reagan Grau: Wow.

Mr. Smith: Yeah, that's the longest I'd ever been at sea without being in port. I mean, without actually getting off the ship which is not very long really, but it seemed like it was (laughter).

Reagan Grau: Well, that was ... you were ... you were in the Navy at that point, eighteen years. How long did you stay in the Navy?

Mr. Smith: Twenty.

Reagan Grau: Twenty?

Mr. Smith: Twenty years, and six days.

Reagan Grau: What'd you do for the last two years after the ... after the ... Vietnam closed?

Mr. Smith: Oh okay, well, in '75 my mother, I got a ... I was supposed to get transferred in August of '75, I was supposed to go to shore duty and back to Beeville. I'd ... I'd requested going back to Beeville, and my orders had been cut and everything. Well, we came back from the Vietnam evolution and everything, and right around sometime in June of '75 and I got a message from the States that my mother was not expected to live. She'd been fighting cancer for about five years, and she was not expected to live more than two weeks. Fact, fact, two weeks from the day I got that uh, message, she passed away, but I was home luckily. They were ... that's the fastest I ever seen the Navy move.

Reagan Grau: Hum.

Mr. Smith: We were out of there, me and my family, in three days.

Reagan Grau: Wow.

Mr. Smith: All our furniture packed up and shipped, and we went to uh, Naval Air Station Ring Field in ... in ... back to the training command, and I was the, uh, by that time I was a master chief uh, I was the maintenance chief for one year of the intermediate maintenance department there which is ... was responsible for maintaining major uh, components that were pulled out like engines and so forth in the squadrons. They were, I think there were three squadrons, either three or four squadrons there on uh, Imp, no, what ... Chase Field. I think I said Ring Field a while ago. Ring Field is the old name of the ... the old helicopter base where I was stationed in California.

Reagan Grau: Uh hum.

Mr. Smith: But it was ... it was Chase Field. Chase Field's about five miles south of Beeville. It's not ... not there anymore, but anyway, that's ... we had ... uh, whenever the squadrons there on Imp ... on Chase Field would pull out an engine or major component like a radio or a radar or something like that, it would go to the intermediate maintenance facility which was not part of the squadron. It was a ... it was a central maintenance facility for the major repair of these components, and I was the maintenance chief for that organization until about ... about a year. In '70 ... '76, the uh, master chief of the command retired, and I was the senior master chief on the base, so uh, I got to have that job for a year which it was not much of a job (chuckles). It was, you know, more of a ... it was a kind of a connection between the enlisted personnel and the commanding officer of the station. And we didn't have a whole lot of trouble. We had a little bit of marijuana problems once in a while. And then we had WAVES on the base, so naturally we had a few problems in that regard with these young women, men getting together doing things they shouldn't and so forth. But ... and then I retired there in 7/7/77.

Reagan Grau: (Chuckles), that's easy to remember.

Mr. Smith: Yeah. I had a friend who was ... he was a big gambler, and he ... he thought he could retire then, you know? So, he put in ... you have to ... have to request a date from Washington to get a date for retirement. You don't actually retire, you get transferred to the Fleet Reserve. So, anyway, he tried to do that and he said, sent back and said, "You weren't eligible." He didn't have time in, enough time in yet, he was right at eighteen and a half years. And you can retire at eighteen and a half years and get twenty years of pay, but ... but he didn't have ... have enough time, so he ... he had requested 7/7/77, and I said, "I know I'm eligible ...

Reagan Grau: (Chuckles).

Mr. Smith: ... 'cause I'll ... I'll have twenty years and six days." So, I requested that date, and when I told him about it, he got all (chuckles) ...

Reagan Grau: (Laughter).

Mr. Smith: ... burned up with (unintelligible) I got his retirement date. He didn't ... he didn't get to retire till August 18<sup>th</sup>. But anyway, that's ... that's why I retired on 7/7/77 because he requested it and didn't ... didn't get it, so I did (laughter).

Reagan Grau: That's pretty funny.

Mr. Smith: Yeah (chuckles).

Reagan Grau: So, you had ... you had already had a ... had a career in the Navy before you was forty years old.

Mr. Smith: Yeah.

Reagan Grau: What did you do when you left the Navy?

Mr. Smith: Well, I came back ... I had a place ... in 1971, the Navy sent me to college back in ... that's a part of the story we missed out on. When I was on shore duty between '70, uh, and '72, I went to college down at Del Mar College in Corpus Christi.

Reagan Grau: Uh hum.

Mr. Smith: And during that period of time, we always wanted ... we knew we wanted to ... whenever we retired from the Navy, we wanted to live close to home 'cause this was my home and her home, and so we uh, we bought a place ... the best we could find was uh, in Blanco County, twenty-five miles from here, but I paid three, ninety-five an acre for seventy-five acres there. I couldn't find anything in Gillespie County, it was already starting to grow.

Reagan Grau: Hum.

Mr. Smith: And anything cheaper than five hundred dollars an acre for fifty acres, and that's the best I could find here in Gillespie County, so I ...

Reagan Grau: And that was 1971?

Mr. Smith: Yeah.

Reagan Grau: '72, somewhere in there?

Mr. Smith: '71, yeah.

Reagan Grau: Wow.

Mr. Smith: Yeah. Yeah, I paid three, ninety-five an acre and there ... there's an ole boy that used to work at ... he's an old ... be dead now, but the postmaster over in Hye, Texas told me, says, "You paid too much for that; you'll never make that much

money back out of that place.” And I said, “Well, I know I won’t, but I ... I have ... I’ll be living in the country like I want to be (laughter), you know.”

Reagan Grau: Yeah.

Mr. Smith: But, yeah. Yeah, I ... I spent, let’s see, I spent one year there running my own service station. I’ve re ... I’ve ... I rented the station from Roy Strayer (sp?).

Reagan Grau: Uh hum.

Mr. Smith: From Strayer’s son; he has a station, in fact, it’s still down there. It’s closed now, but it ... the building is still there. But I had that for a year trying to make a go of it, and we worked fourteen hours a day, seven days a week, me and my son and my ... and my wife running that service station. And then I said, “Well, I think I’m going to shut her down (laughter).”

Reagan Grau: Uh hum.

Mr. Smith: ‘Cause it just ...

Reagan Grau: That’s a lot of work!

Mr. Smith: It’s a lot of ... lot of hours to put in for very little reward. And so, I put ... I went to work for a station right next to me for three months. And then I got a ... got a chance to get ... get on a carpenter’s crew with my neighbor, my neighbor who was a ... a contractor, and I worked for him for two years. And I enjoyed working for him, I learned a whole lot. And ... and this job came available here in the fall of 1980, and I applied for it and Mr. Hubbard gave it to me, and I really ... it was ... it was a high point of my life really being able to work here because I’d always been an admirer of Admiral Nimitz, you know, having grown up here where he grew up. And ... and it didn’t mean as much to me back then as it does now. Well, it did when I started working here, but when I first started working here it was ... we had five permanent employees, that was it. Mr. Hubbard, the boss, and we had ... he ... she ... he had a ... a Ruth Peters who was the office manager, and then we got ... we had a lady that was the bookkeeper, and we had a lady, Carol (sp?) Sattler (sp?), she was the ...

Reagan Grau: Retail store.

Mr. Smith: ... yeah, she ran the retail store and the front desk, and ... and I had ... I was the maintenance chief and I had one permanent employee working for me, Felix Tribes (sp?), he was the custodian.

Reagan Grau: Uh hum.

Mr. Smith: And ... and I had two other entry-level, part-time well, they weren't part-time, they ... they worked for me full-time as long as we had the money (laughter).

Reagan Grau: Uh hum.

Mr. Smith: When the end of the fiscal year come around, a lot of times, they'd have to cut back on their hours, so we could get a ... just to keep them in the budget.

Reagan Grau: (Laughter).

Mr. Smith: 'Cause it held it to ... let them go and then have to rehire somebody.

Reagan Grau: Uh hum.

Mr. Smith: 'Cause it's ... it's, you know, it's a mess to try to hire somebody. It's worse now, I ... I guess, than it was then.

Reagan Grau: Now, in 1980, that's when you started?

Mr. Smith: Uh huh.

Reagan Grau: This was operated by the Texas Parks and Wildlife. Was that ...

Mr. Smith: No, it was ...

Reagan Grau: ... agency?

Mr. Smith: ... no, it was ...

Reagan Grau: Oh, it was (unintelligible).

Mr. Smith: Yeah, the old Commission, oh, Admiral Nimitz named a memorial ... memorial commission, I think.

Reagan Grau: That's right, alright. And that was ...

Mr. Smith: Yeah, that ... that was ...

Reagan Grau: That was the body that hired you?

Mr. Smith: ... that was the body, yeah.

Reagan Grau: Okay.

Mr. Smith: We had five, like I say, we had five State employees, permanent, and then the other ones were ... were temporary or part-time or what do they call ... what did they call them? Had a name for them, but I don't ... uh anyway, it ... they

weren't full-time but we were salaried and ... and the part, uh, the full-time people were salaried; we got paid once a month; they got paid uh, once every two weeks, I think. But ...

Reagan Grau: It wasn't long after you started when Parks and Wildlife ...

Mr. Smith: Right.

Reagan Grau: ... assumed ...

Mr. Smith: Uh huh.

Reagan Grau: ... responsibility for the ...

Mr. Smith: Yeah, right.

Reagan Grau: Tell me about that transition; do you have any memories that stick out?

Mr. Smith: Well, I ... I kind of welcomed it because we had a ... we had a ... uh, we had a better ... we had a ... a go-between between us and headquarters in Austin. Well, we didn't have a headquarters in Austin; we were it (laughter). But we were ... we had ... we got some more money, so we were able to get ... do a few more things. We got a little more equipment, and we were able to hire one more maintenance person, and they were able to hire a ... a curator which was also the assistant superintendent, and that was Bruce Smith. He got hired uh, I put in for the job, but I didn't get it because ... and I realized later that I really wasn't qualified for it anyway, but I ... I had put in for it because seemed like I was doing all the jobs that they were asking.

Reagan Grau: Uh hum.

Mr. Smith: But I didn't know anything about cur ... curitorial stuff like that and thing like ... I learned a lot later, you know, as time went by, but ... but Bruce he ... he came in in '83 I believe, or '84, yeah, early in '84. And then he was here till, I think, '94 or somewhere in there. Anyway, he ... he he's the one that relieved Mr. Hubbard in '85 when he retired. And so ...

Reagan Grau: Well, you saw the installation of the ... the new exhibits, maybe 1982, '83 in the old hotel?

Mr. Smith: '80 ... '83, yeah. Well, we had a grand opening with a fly over and all this stuff, and then, yeah, it was ... we had, let's see, we had uh, trying to remember who ... what all ... I ... I remember that we had uh, oh, John Tower, Senator John

Tower, came to that opening, and I didn't know it until ... at that time, you know, he introduced himself to me, and I ... I mean, I went to shake his hand and everything and ... and he said, "You know, I'm a ... master chief boatswain's mate in the reserve." I said, "Oh, I didn't know that!" Said, "Yeah, I'm the only enlisted man in the Congress (laughter)."

Reagan Grau: (Laughter.)

Mr. Smith: I thought that was kind of funny.

Reagan Grau: That's funny.

Mr. Smith: Yeah, but it was ... it was a lot people there. I get that ... that particular celebration mixed up with the V+50 which happened in 1995 when we had George Bush and George Bush, Jr. and god, a bunch of people; it was quite a ... quite the big celebration.

Reagan Grau: Well, one of the questions that I did want to ask you was about any World War II or personalities that came through while you were here that you got to ...

Mr. Smith: Oh yeah!

Reagan Grau: ... meet.

Mr. Smith: Well, have you met Helen McDonald?

Reagan Grau: Oh yes.

Mr. Smith: Oh. Well, Helen, bless her heart, she ... she was responsible pretty much, 95%, of starting our symposiums.

Reagan Grau: Right.

Mr. Smith: And with the symposiums beginning, we got to meet a lot of people. I mean, I ... I thought I'd met a few people in the Navy, you know, that ... during my tour that were pretty important. But uh, I got to meet George Bush, both of them. Of course, George ... George W. was the ... was the governor at the time, and his daddy was ... had just uh, finished with being the president. President Clinton was in office at that time, but uh, yeah, I got to meet Colonel Tibbets ... that was before ... that wasn't (unintelligible) didn't have anything to do with the ... with the uh, V+50 or the ... the symposiums or anything, he just came to visit and then to see his ... see what we had here ...

Reagan Grau: Uh hum.



Mr. Smith: ... on exhibit that related to his time. And we had a ... a big uh, prop from an R-3350 hanging from the ceiling in the second floor over there, and we called it our ceiling fan.

Reagan Grau: Uh hum.

Mr. Smith: And I went to a ... I went to Midland or Odessa, Midland I think, in a ... a little Dodge short-bed pick-up truck and to see ... to visit a guy by the name of Donnie (sp?) Smith. He ... he's the one that gave us the ... uh, let's see what did he give us? (Pause), he gave us a couple of vehicles. I think we ... one of them was artillery, uh, artillery tractor, a big tracked vehicle that was used to pull the big 155 Long Toms on ... on Saipan, and ... and Tinian, and ... and he gave us that. Well, we used it to trade off for something else; I don't remember what it was, but anyway, Donnie ... I went ... I went down ... went up there to visit Donnie and he gave us a ... a propeller and it was in pieces, you know, four blades and a hub and all this stuff, you know? And he says, "You think you can put this together?" And I said "Yeah, sure." So, just load it in the back of the truck. Well, that little ole pick-up was sitting like this (laughter).

Reagan Grau: (Laughter).

Mr. Smith: It didn't have much in the way of suspension, and I know that ... that had to weight a good twelve hundred pounds at least, you know, that ... that propeller. And we ... we got to hang it in that ... over there.

Reagan Grau: I've seen a picture of it.

Mr. Smith: Yeah.

Reagan Grau: Yeah, made a nice looking ceiling.

Mr. Smith: Anyway, getting back to ... I got to meet, uh, ...

Reagan Grau: Actually, I know we have pictures of Jimmy Doolittle visiting the Museum.

Mr. Smith: Yeah! Yeah, I got to meet Jimmy, uh, Jim Doolittle, and I got to meet Paul Tibbets and him, and ... then when the symposiums started, it was just a wealth of people. I got to meet, oh, the World War II, uh, Marine from Guadalcanal, Joe Foss, got to meet Joe Foss. Got to meet uh, the pilot that shot down Yamamoto would ... he supposed ... he got the credit for it anyway. That ... the other guy that got credit for it, he said didn't shoot him down, he did. But it ...

Reagan Grau: Oh, Barber.

Mr. Smith: Barber! Yeah. I got to meet Barber, but I didn't ever meet ... I don't know if the other guy might have been passed away already, I don't remember, but ... but we had ... that's ... this ... we got ... had that story on one of those video discs that we had in the ... up on the second floor.

Reagan Grau: Uh hum.

Mr. Smith: And we had some movie stars. We had Eddie Alper ... Eddie Albert was here one time, and uh, I forget, another guy's name on my mind, but I can't bring ... I can't bring it up. But I got to meet Admiral Nimitz' son, Admiral Nimitz, Admiral Chester, uh, Junior.

Reagan Grau: Uh hum.

Mr. Smith: Yeah, he ... he was here for the ... the submarine symposium they had in 1991. I believe it was ... I believe it was '91, and god, you'd ... he looked just like his daddy.

Reagan Grau: Uh hum.

Mr. Smith: Just like him. But it didn't sound ... it didn't sound like him or ... or act like him. He said ... said, "No, I kind of favor my mom." (laughter)

Reagan Grau: (Laughter).

Mr. Smith: But I enjoyed that talking to him.

Reagan Grau: Well, what were some of your duties while you were on ... on a daily basis? I ... I know you spoke ...

Mr. Smith: Well ...

Reagan Grau: ... a little bit about the memorial courtyard ...

Mr. Smith: ... yeah, yeah.

Reagan Grau: ... briefly.

Mr. Smith: Yeah. We ... well, I used to hang some plaques on there, but I ... just general maintenance, a lot of thing ... I ... I a lot ... I would open up the Museum a lot of the times, I would open up early so I could leave early. They allowed me to do that so I could do some work around here that wouldn't bother the visitors, you know? 'Cause a lot of times there was things I needed to do such as work on some of the air conditioning, refrigeration units, you know, that were mounted

up in the ceilings and everything. Sometimes we had to get up there and take an air ... air gun and blow out the ... the coils and stuff like that. And just stuff like that they wouldn't, you know, wouldn't bother the ... anyway, I'd come in and open up. It ... it took about, usually took about twenty minutes to a half hour just to open the place up then. I imagine it takes probably an hour to get this place opened now (laughter). But we'd open up and we ... I had the responsibility, naturally, for the grounds, and I ... I had ... usually had enough people working for me to help out and we'd ... we'd hire some extra help sometimes in the summertime to help with mowing the grass and trimming the trees and stuff like that. And the garden was always a handful. When I first got here, I had a young man working for me that ... that he took care of the garden most of the time, and the other times when he wasn't ... he'd help with the other maintenance chores. But I had ... he was a ... he was the Sheriff's son, Dan ... Dan (unintelligible), and I had a little falling out with him a couple of years, after a couple of years because he got a little ... got a little independent, and then he would do things the way he wanted to instead of the way I wanted him to do it, you know? And I a falling out with him and he would go to Mr. Hubbard instead of coming to me, and I said, I told Mr. Hubbard, I says, "If he can't come to me with his problems, then ... and we come see you together, and the chain of command to me means a lot," and I said, "I was brought up in the Navy, and I just ... I can't have him going around me and coming to you." And he said, "Oh, I agree, I agree." So anyway, he got mad and left anyway (chuckle).

Reagan Grau: Yeah.

Mr. Smith: But anyway, that ... neither here nor there. We ... we had ... had trouble, had a lot of problems with keeping somebody kind of dedicated to the garden. It ... it's hard to hire somebody that is going to learn how to maintain the garden the way it should be. I think they got somebody 'cause Joy seems to be doing pretty good job. They sure did a fine job re ... redoing that place. That, and it's beautiful.

Reagan Grau: Yeah, they ... it ... it turned forty and it got a face lift.

Mr. Smith: Yeah. Yeah, it was ...

Reagan Grau: Well, you were here.

Mr. Smith: I was here right after they put it in.

Reagan Grau: Right. You were here in the early '90s when the Foundation purchased the HEB building ...

Mr. Smith: Yes.

Reagan Grau: ... that became the Bush Gallery.

Mr. Smith: Right, uh huh.

Reagan Grau: Do you remember installing the exhibits in the Bush Gallery and sort of that period in time?

Mr. Smith: Yeah. I remember we were ... we had ... of course, by that time, we had a curator and some curatorial crew of ... of sorts. I think the curator had one, at least one helper.

Reagan Grau: Uh hum.

Mr. Smith: Uh, Alex, dang what's ... Alex, dang it, I can't remember his last name ... Krueger! (sp?), Alex Krueger, and he did a lot of the work getting the exhibits installed down here in the first George Bush Gallery. He ... he was responsible for a lot of that, and ... and we helped him because we ... he had to have help. Whenever it came to moving heavy artifacts and things like that, we had to put our ... a lot of our maintenance duties off to the side and go on to get, you know, keep the program going, you know? And he was more ... he ... he was more of a ... a ... of a curatorial type anyway. I mean, he ... he was interested in a lot of the stuff I'm interested in – World War II paraphernalia and guns and so forth and so on, so he was good for that. And we had ... we had to help him out a lot of times, and some of the ... some of the guys I had working for me, you know, really weren't into this World War II, the historical part of the thing, you know? It was hard for them to understand, you know, or even read anything about Admiral Nimitz or anything else about World War II, that just wasn't their thing.

Reagan Grau: That's too bad.

Mr. Smith: Yeah, it is. I ... 'cause I ... I ... I took great pride in knowing something about ... about the Museum and about the World War II and about the ... the people that served in World War II. And people could ask me a question, usually, and I could answer it, you know?

Reagan Grau: Yeah.

Mr. Smith: And if I didn't know, I'd find out, you know, 'cause we ... we could usually find out the answer to a question if we'd dig deep enough. And when we ... and we had ... I don't know if you knew ... if you know Charlie Dalstrom (sp)?

Reagan Grau: Uh hum.

Mr. Smith: He's ... his ... his wife just passed away a few weeks ago, and he started a program here. People would come in wanting to know something about their daddy's ship or something like that, and he had a big volume, a bunch of books, I can't remember the name of it; it listed all the ships in the Navy of various names and went all the way back to, you know, back to the Revolutionary War, when this ship was named the Enterprise and then ... there was another Enterprise, and another Enterprise and so forth, and that's ... Charlie would get ... would ... people would come in and ask and leave a little note that said, "Could you tell me about my dad's ship? ... you know. And he'd dig into it and if they were available, he'd get the information to them right away. But if they weren't, they'd leave an address, phone number or something and he'd send the information to them. He had a good little program going there for visitors.

Reagan Grau: Yeah, we have been blessed this Museum with really good volunteers.

Mr. Smith: I know, I know, it's ... and it's been, I guess you got a whole bunch of (unintelligible) than what they ... I think when we had ... when I was here, they're probably thirty.

Reagan Grau: Uh hum.

Mr. Smith: You know? And they were, most of them were here only when we really had a big function. But they were, oh, they were surely appreciated when they came because they ... they did ... they ... they wanted to come help, but a lot of them are too old to come every day and weren't capable of coming. And some of

them had jobs! You know (laughter), but they would come and help whenever they could.

Reagan Grau: Yeah.

Mr. Smith: And if you ... I don't think you can run a museum, especially one this size, without ...

Reagan Grau: Not ... not nearly as well as it does function.

Mr. Smith: No.

Reagan Grau: Not without them.

Mr. Smith: Why, Carol Sattler, I think, is involved with a museum up in Mason.

Reagan Grau: Good!

Mr. Smith: She's helping out up there (laughter). I knew she couldn't stay away from it very long (chuckles).

Reagan Grau: (Chuckles). Well, you've seen a lot ... a lot of changes ...

Mr. Smith: Yeah.

Reagan Grau: ... in your tenure. When did you ... when did you retire from Parks and Wildlife?

Mr. Smith: '99.

Reagan Grau: 1999?

Mr. Smith: Uh huh.

Reagan Grau: Was that before, no, I guess that was ... when did the ... when did the George Bush Gallery open? In the old HEB building? Was it in 1999?

Mr. Smith: Uh, the first one?

Reagan Grau: Yes.

Mr. Smith: Oh, it was before that.

Reagan Grau: Was it?

Mr. Smith: I think it was a little before that. I don't really ... I don't recall ... recall it; it might have been a little after that. I know the first time that I saw Mike, General Hagee ...

Reagan Grau: Uh hum.

Mr. Smith: ... in a long time is when he came here to make a ... a presentation, to give a speech. I think it was 2001.

Reagan Grau: Uh hum.

Mr. Smith: Uh, (pause) and I don't remember if it was to do with opening this place officially. I think ... I think it was; it had to be, yeah, had to be 'cause, no, this ... this place was ... it was just a big empty building. I was here when they were building it.

Reagan Grau: Yeah.

Mr. Smith: Fact, I remember the murals that they had painted on the walls of the B-25 with a B-25 in the background. They fellow that we had doing that came from California. His name is Richard, I don't remember his last name, but I mean, that was all going on when I was here the last few years.

Reagan Grau: Uh hum. Well, that mural is still there.

Mr. Smith: Yeah, yeah.

Reagan Grau: And it ... it survived the 2009 uh, reinstallation or renovation of ...

Mr. Smith: Yeah, yeah.

Reagan Grau: ... gallery, and we ... we decided that we ought to keep that since we're still going to tell the ...

Mr. Smith: (Unintelligible).

Reagan Grau: ... tell that same story. (Unintelligible).

Mr. Smith: Yeah, you're not going to move the B-25 (laughter).

Reagan Grau: You can't move that.

Mr. Smith: Yeah, that was ... I remember when the B-25 came, it was ... that was quite a deal, and they got it from uh ...

Reagan Grau: Yeah, from Reese (sp?) up in Lubbock.

Mr. Smith: Yeah, Lubbock, yeah.

Reagan Grau: I grew up in Lubbock and I ...

Mr. Smith: Oh, yeah.

Reagan Grau: ... I remember that.

Mr. Smith: It was sitting up on a pedestal.

Reagan Grau: Yeah, I remember it on the (unintelligible).

Mr. Smith: Right there. I'll be darned, that ... that's pretty neat.

Reagan Grau: As a kid, yeah.

Mr. Smith: Yeah. That's a ...

Reagan Grau: Well, you were here when the ... when the HA-19 Japanese mini-submarine (unintelligible).

Mr. Smith: Oh yeah, yeah, I was the maintenance chief here when that hap ... when (unintelligible).

Reagan Grau: What was that day like when it arrived?

Mr. Smith: Oh, that was pretty neat! We ... it came in out front, they had it on a low-boy, and of course, it was in three pieces, and the fellow that, the crane company, Eckart ... Eckert Dozer and Crane Company, uh, he ... he did a lot more crane work for us, but he ... he unloaded those three pieces, and we had it sitting, I think we had it sitting in front of the Museum for a short period of time.

Reagan Grau: Uh hum.

Mr. Smith: And then they wanted to put it over here in the courtyard, and so we had to figure out ... he couldn't get that crane into the ... into the yard, you know, and it was right at the ... it was right at the outer extreme of his capability 'cause he didn't have a big crane. I think it was a fifteen-ton crane and the further out you have something boomed, the less you could pick up. Well, they pulled it up, the ... they pulled it up here on some trucks and ... right next to the wall. Of course, at that time, this was a driveway out here.

Reagan Grau: Uh hum.

Mr. Smith: And he picked it up piece by piece and set it over in the courtyard, and it was ... it was as far as he could go with that dad-gum crane. And if we ... we didn't have any way of moving it after it set it down, so it had to be wherever we were going to use it, you know?

Reagan Grau: Yeah.

Mr. Smith: So, he set it down there and we set it down in pieces. And we took ... we put Plexiglas on both ... on the ends, bolted them in where you could look inside, we put some lights in there so people could see it inside. There wasn't much, I mean, it's pretty well gutted, but at least they could get some general idea how close it was and all that, so ... but ... and then we had to ... to strip it so we could repaint it. Well, that was quite a fiasco because we had no idea whether the



paint was on it had any lead in it or not, so we had to chip all that paint off, and we had to put tarps underneath the sub to catch all the debris and then we had to get ... had a heck of a time getting somebody to take the stuff, you now? Headquarters, I guess Headquarters was pulling their hair out in Austin just trying to figure out how they're going to get rid of this dog-gone paint, you know?

Reagan Grau: (Laughter).

Mr. Smith: 'Cause we had bags of it, you know? It had, I don't know, it probably had six dad-gum coats of paint on it, and no telling what kind of paint it was. But we had to take it all the way down to bare metal so we could repaint it, you know?

Reagan Grau: Uh hum.

Mr. Smith: And that was quite a fiasco.

Reagan Grau: I'll bet.

Mr. Smith: And we ...

Reagan Grau: You were also here when the torpedo bomber arrived.

Mr. Smith: I was here.

Reagan Grau: Yeah.

Mr. Smith: Yeah, and they ... we had ... we got two of them. Well, actually, we had ... we had one that was brought up here (sigh) let's see, which one was which? We had one of them that ... one of them flew in here (pause). Yeah, one ...

Reagan Grau: I think it might have been the dive bomber.

Mr. Smith: One of them flew in here, huh?

Reagan Grau: Was it the dive bomber?

Mr. Smith: No.

Reagan Grau: No?

Mr. Smith: No. That's something I wished we have never lost.

Reagan Grau: (Unintelligible).

Mr. Smith: The SBDF ...

Reagan Grau: Yeah, that one (unintelligible).

Mr. Smith: ... we traded it. We trade that for the PT boat. I mean, the PT boat was important, but ...

Reagan Grau: Uh hum.

Mr. Smith: ... it didn't make near the contribution to the war that the SBD did, and ...

Reagan Grau: Yeah.

Mr. Smith: ... I loved that old airplane sitting down there; it was something else!

Reagan Grau: I think it's in Galveston now.

Mr. Smith: Yeah, it's ... did they ever get it flying?

Reagan Grau: I couldn't tell you.

Mr. Smith: That's what I understood, that the Confederate Air Force was going to get it, and get it flying again. And ...

Reagan Grau: Well, the last I saw it was ... 2008, 2009 maybe.

Mr. Smith: Yeah.

Reagan Grau: And it was ... it was in Galveston.

Mr. Smith: Uh huh. Well, one of the TBMs I ... I get confused which one was which, but one ... one of them came up here on a truck from Corpus Christi.

Reagan Grau: Uh hum.

Mr. Smith: And they had to ... they had to route it in such a way because they couldn't load it ... they had to load it on kind of the ... the main landing gear was straddle of the trailer; they had to drop the main landing gear down just to have clearance. And the tail was the only thing that was ... that they ... they were concerned about having clear ... enough clearance and they ... it got routed clear around through Bandera Pass, up Highway 73, but it made it here. And I think that was the one we have now. The other one flew in here, and then it had developed some kind of problem with one of the cylinders.

Reagan Grau: Uh hum.

Mr. Smith: And they didn't want to put the money into fixing it, so we got one of the big sky crane helicopters to come in here and pick it up and haul it down to the coast of Texas. I don't remember where it went.

Reagan Grau: Wow.

Mr. Smith: But it was ... we had to ask ... at one time, we had ... we had two different TBMs. I don't remember if they was both TBMs or TBFs; they were probably TBMs 'cause that's what they made the most of.

Reagan Grau: Uh hum. Well, we still have one of those.

Mr. Smith: Yeah.

Reagan Grau: We still have a TBM.

Mr. Smith: Yeah.

Reagan Grau: It's ... it's down there on display.

Mr. Smith: Yeah. We had ... when George Bush came, we had a ... we had a dedication, I guess, when we put that aircraft in that hangar that we had built down there.

Reagan Grau: Uh hum.

Mr. Smith: And he came down, and they had a ... a dinner down there in that area, and that's another time I got to meet him, yeah.

Reagan Grau: Uh hum.

Mr. Smith: So, got to talk to him a little bit that time, a little, yeah, and he told me ... told me about all the ... little bit about him, when he got shot down and submarine rescued him and everything.

Reagan Grau: I'm sure that was ...

Mr. Smith: Yeah.

Reagan Grau: ... pretty good to hear, neat story to hear.

Mr. Smith: Yeah. Yeah, yeah. We ... we had that little film clip that they took from the submarine showing him getting out of the rubber raft and on to the ...

Reagan Grau: Uh hum.

Mr. Smith: ... on to (unintelligible).

Reagan Grau: You ... you also ... you also, at one point, met the Prime Minister of New Zealand, Sir Robert Muldoon.

Mr. Smith: Yeah. Yeah, he's ...

Reagan Grau: He visited.

Mr. Smith: Yeah, he came ... he came and we ... I was ... I was responsible for leading him around because Mr. Hubbard at the time, at that time, had ... was gone somewhere. So, he had told ... we knew about it ahead of time, and he told me that I'd be responsible for ... for touring him around the Museum and showing him everything. So, we started our regular tour through the first and second and third floor of the Museum over there and took him down through the garden,

and ... and down to the history wall. And as I mentioned before, he had some kind of, I don't remember what it was, he had some kind of relationship or knew something about Sergeant Lattimore and the tank story and he was ... he was kind of impressed with that little audio story we had down there and listened to it and everything. He knew ... he either knew Sergeant Lattimore or his, one of his crewmen.

Reagan Grau: Uh hum.

Mr. Smith: And ... (pause) but that's ... that's ...

Reagan Grau: When was that? What year? Do you recall what (unintelligible)?

Mr. Smith: No, I don't. It ... it was probably ... probably in the late '80s.

Reagan Grau: Uh hum.

Mr. Smith: Yeah, it was ... it was ... it was back ... back before we started the symposiums I know. I know Helen wasn't around at the time, but of course, Helen started here in '84.

Reagan Grau: Uh hum.

Mr. Smith: Just four years after I did.

Reagan Grau: I think ... I think the symposium series got started in 1988?

Mr. Smith: Yeah, uh ...

Reagan Grau: '89, somewhere in there?

Mr. Smith: Yeah, I think the first one was the ... the Yamamoto shoot down.

Reagan Grau: Uh hum.

Mr. Smith: Yeah, that was either that ... '88 or '89, one of those ... it was one of the first ones anyway.

Reagan Grau: Yeah.

Mr. Smith: And why it was ... that was ... those ... those symposiums were really interesting, and they were ... they were a big deal for us 'cause we didn't have a very big staff and it really depended on a ... a big volunteer staff ...

Reagan Grau: Uh hum.

Mr. Smith: ... that ... especially a lot of those ... a lot of those symposiums were not held here. They, 'cause we didn't have the facilities for an auditorium and stuff that ... that was big enough to handle the people that wanted to come and participate

and watch this, you know? So, I know we went to San ... San Antonio several times, went to Austin, uh, I think once anyway. Later on when they got a high school built their auditorium out ... out there, that helped us out a lot. And ... and so, there's ... there's some more better facilities now around here for ... for having those kind of functions, but back in those days, there weren't. It was ... but she was determined we were going to have them, if she had to (laughter) ...

Reagan Grau: Yeah.

Mr. Smith: ... she was a hard-working lady, I tell you what! She was, and I ... I enjoyed her.

Reagan Grau: (Unintelligible).

Mr. Smith: Sometimes ... sometimes I get mad at her 'cause she'd ...

Reagan Grau: (Chuckles).

Mr. Smith: ... she was kind of flighty. And it ...

Reagan Grau: (Laughter).

Mr. Smith: ... she would ... she would, well, she ... she was always responsible for ... she kind of did what Stephanie does now, she was what ... responsible for the plaque dedications and stuff like that.

Reagan Grau: Yeah.

Mr. Smith: Or any kind of big function that was going on. And she'd, "Okay, okay, I want to set the chairs up like this." She'd set ... make a map of how everything was supposed to be done. We'd get it all done and, "(Unintelligible) come out there and change it." And I said "What? Why didn't you tell me that to begin with!" "Well, I didn't know this and that." (laughter)

Reagan Grau: (Laughter).

Mr. Smith: I said ...

Reagan Grau: Well, I was ... I was impressed with ... with Helen's connections.

Mr. Smith: Oh, god, did she. And she had memory!

Reagan Grau: Yeah.

Mr. Smith: I guess she's still got that great memory 'cause she remembers the names of people, god, I can't believe it. Cliff Robertson, that's the other guy was trying to remember that he was the one that played JFK in the PT-109.

Reagan Grau: Yeah.

Mr. Smith: Yeah, when we got the PT boat here, that's ...

Reagan Grau: Well, that was 2000 or so.

Mr. Smith: Yeah.

Reagan Grau: Or 2001.

Mr. Smith: Yeah.

Reagan Grau: You ... now, you ... when you retired, I guess you stuck around.

Mr. Smith: Yeah.

Reagan Grau: Fredericksburg area.

Mr. Smith: Yeah, I'm always coming ... I always come and visit. I always have ever since ... I'd come and visit ... before Mike started here and his ... his daughter was ... was here available for me to talk to. I'd come and visit Carol Sattler, she and I were ... are good friends, and ...

Reagan Grau: Uh hum.

Mr. Smith: ... she had the bookstore and she didn't retire until ...

Reagan Grau: 2009 or ...

Mr. Smith: '09, somewhere in there, yeah. She ... she stuck around here for a long time.

Reagan Grau: Well, she ... she was here when I ...

Mr. Smith: Yeah.

Reagan Grau: ... when I first got here.

Mr. Smith: Yeah, she was seventy-five years old when she quit finally (laughter).

Reagan Grau: I don't know that!

Mr. Smith: Yeah (chuckles).

Reagan Grau: (Laughter).

Mr. Smith: Yeah, she's ... well, she's uh, let's see, she's three years older than I am, but she don't look it. (chuckles)

Reagan Grau: When you started, you said there were five or six people ...

Mr. Smith: Uh huh.

Reagan Grau: ... on staff in 1980, and 1999 when you retired, how large was the staff then?

Mr. Smith: Uh, probably, I don't know, ten or twelve maybe.

Reagan Grau: Uh hum.

Mr. Smith: It sure wasn't very big.

Reagan Grau: No, surely not.

Mr. Smith: Even with all the stuff we did. Uh, by that time, I had gotten ... I had gotten enough permanent positions in maintenance where, I think, I had a ... a staff of about four including me.

Reagan Grau: Uh hum.

Mr. Smith: And the curator had uh, two extra people, I think, and one ...

Reagan Grau: Were they all Parks and Wildlife positions?

Mr. Smith: Yeah, but the Foundation did ... the only Foundation employees was the Admiral who, he never get ... took any pay anyway.

Reagan Grau: Uh hum.

Mr. Smith: And ...

Reagan Grau: You're talking about Admiral Groeche (sp?)?

Mr. Smith: Yeah.

Reagan Grau: Yeah.

Mr. Smith: And the bookkeeper. The (unintelligible).

Reagan Grau: Yeah, I know who you're talking about.

Mr. Smith: Yeah, well, I'm trying to think of what name they (unintelligible).

Reagan Grau: I think they called it a controller.

Mr. Smith: Yeah, yeah, comptroller, yeah.

Reagan Grau: Yeah.

Mr. Smith: Yeah. Yeah, a little short lady, I forget who the heck was ... she replaced, oh, she ... she replaced Joe Montgomery. Joe ... Joe Montgomery was the one that worked for Admiral Groeche first, but she wasn't a CPA, but she ... she was a bookkeeper. She could kind of keep track of her ... most of the stuff, you know? But yeah, the Foundation had so many accounts that she'd just ... was pulling her hair out a lot of times trying to figure out where this money goes, and what we're going to take that money and everything else, you know? When she retired they hired this other lady, and I can't remember her name, but she was ... she was real good; she was a CPA so she knew what she was doing.

Reagan Grau: When I started in 2006, the person in that position was Betsy Wouk (sp?) and ...

Mr. Smith: Yeah, that's ... that's ...

Reagan Grau: ... is that ... ring a bell?

Mr. Smith: Yeah, that's the one, yeah.

Reagan Grau: Yeah.

Mr. Smith: Yeah. Admiral Groeche was ... was quite a guy, and everybody ... everybody misses him, everybody that knew him anyway.

Reagan Grau: Yeah.

Mr. Smith: He was ... he was always ...

Reagan Grau: This is ... this a result of his vision.

Mr. Smith: Yeah! Uh huh.

Reagan Grau: Of his leadership.

Mr. Smith: Yeah.

Reagan Grau: Where we are today.

Mr. Smith: Yep! Yeah, it's amazing; it really is ... I always called him, "Here come that ole Bubblehead."

Reagan Grau: Why?

Mr. Smith: 'Cause that's what they called submariners.

Reagan Grau: (Laughter).

Mr. Smith: (Laughter), Bubblehead.

Reagan Grau: (Laughter).

Mr. Smith: He didn't ... he didn't take as ... making a front to him.

Reagan Grau: He didn't mind!

Mr. Smith: No, hell no, he called me a Nasal Radiator.

Reagan Grau: (Laughter).

Mr. Smith: Naval Aviator, you know? I wasn't an aviator, I was ... I was a ground pounder in the aviation but that's what he called me Nasal Radiator.

Reagan Grau: Ah, so ...

Mr. Smith: I got along good with him.

Reagan Grau: I'll bet you did.

Mr. Smith: Yeah.

Reagan Grau: Everybody did, I would assume.



Mr. Smith: Yeah, I've been to every function that they've had pretty much, you know, and opening of the museums and stuff since ... since they started. I enjoyed meeting a lot of people, but I've forgotten a lot of them now that I met, but I do remember Colonel ... Colonel ... uh, General Tibbets and General Doolittle. And I didn't know he was so short, but he ... he was pretty short (laughter), just a ... just a little guy.

Reagan Grau: Yeah.

Mr. Smith: But ...

Reagan Grau: You get ... you get him in a picture by himself, you can't tell.

Mr. Smith: No, no.

Reagan Grau: But you get him standing to somebody ...

Mr. Smith: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, we had ... those symposiums were ... were really, really something. I enjoyed ... I enjoyed ... I didn't get to come to everything 'cause I had, you know, a lot of stuff was happening at night, and I had things to do at home.

Reagan Grau: Uh hum.

Mr. Smith: 'Cause I got a little farm, ranch out there in Hye and I ... used to run cattle years ago, but I switched over to goats, now I don't have anything, just ... I want to lease it out here pretty soon till somebody ... let them ...

Reagan Grau: Uh hum.

Mr. Smith: ... use it, so I can keep my Ag exemption, but ...

Reagan Grau: Maybe you let some of these girlies ... grow some grapes out there.

Mr. Smith: No!

Reagan Grau: No.

Mr. Smith: There's enough of them around.

Reagan Grau: (Laughter).

Mr. Smith: Everybody that's got two or three acres has got a vineyard out there (laughter) I'll tell you.

Reagan Grau: (Chuckles).

Mr. Smith: I remember years ago when I ... when I ... at one time, I was considering that because I've got a little spot out in front of my house that would probably be

ideal for a small vineyard. But I said “No, I don’t want to start over with that stuff.”

Reagan Grau: The funny ... the funny thing about a lot of these vineyards around here is many of them grow their grapes up in the Panhandle up in the high plains.

Mr. Smith: Yeah. Yeah, or over, I understand a lot of the juice come or the grapes comes from Fort Stockton, a bunch of them, too.

Reagan Grau: Uh hum.

Mr. Smith: Yeah.

Reagan Grau: So, they got ... well, they got the wineries here, but they ...

Mr. Smith: Yeah, yeah. Eventually they’ll ... they’ll grow enough grapes to support their own wine, I guess ...

Reagan Grau: Maybe so.

Mr. Smith: ... but I don’t ... that don’t happen overnight. I know those vine ... those vines, they can grow pretty fast, but not ...

Reagan Grau: Well, you’ve seen a lot of changes in Gillespie in the last forty years.

Mr. Smith: Oh, god, yeah. This ... this place is ... this place is ... has become a hub of Fredericksburg really, and then as ... there’s a whole lot of other changes. And I mean, they didn’t ... the Chamber of Commerce wasn’t what it is now. And the art community wasn’t what it is now. There ... there wasn’t any art here ...

Reagan Grau: Right.

Mr. Smith: ... to speak of. Now, they got a pretty good-sized art community around here, and they’ve got ... I think a lot of it is because of Nimitz being here and the ... the old German lore, the old German buildings and ... and, it’s just, you know, it’s a uni ... unique little place to come.

Reagan Grau: Yes. It has a lot of allure.

Mr. Smith: Yeah.

Reagan Grau: Yeah. Of course, I grew up in the Panhandle, up ... up in the flat in Lubbock and so ...

Mr. Smith: Yeah, yeah.

Reagan Grau: ... it’s a little bit different down here.

Mr. Smith: I ... I don't guess I've been there. I've ... I've been north of here; I've been ... been up through ... up through ... to Big Spring and up into Amarillo and stuff, but just as a short visit, I never have been to any of those places very long.

Reagan Grau: Uh hum.

Mr. Smith: When I was growing up here, we ... we pretty much worked seven days a week out there. And we'd come to town for the horse races and the 4<sup>th</sup> of July and the County Fair and stuff like that. Otherwise, we didn't ... I didn't even participate in intermural sports, you know, 'cause ... well, my grandparents didn't want me to, so they wouldn't let me 'cause it took too much time away from the place. You know, we had to ... I had to be there to help work the livestock.

Reagan Grau: Yeah.

Mr. Smith: So. We only had a hundred ... well, my uncle's place was a hundred and sixty acres. My mother bought a place there in '52; it was almost seven hundred acres, and it adjoined that place. And then there was another uncle, and he ... he and my ... Bob ... Bob Hagee both moved here at the same time back in the mid '40s after World War II, and so they had ... all of us together, there was a cousin that had a hundred and sixty acres, so there was about eleven hundred acres that was all adjoined ... joined property out there, and now most of it belongs to Boot Ranch (laughter).

Reagan Grau: Yeah.

Mr. Smith: I went, yeah, I hadn't been out there ... went out there once in 1978; I was waiting for job interview and went out there because I had some time between ... before I could go to the interview, so I went up there and looked at the old place. And (pause) it was different already. That was back when some Arabs owned it; they called it the The Fare's (sp?) Ranch.

Reagan Grau: Hum.

Mr. Smith: And anyway, the old house where I grew up, where me and Mike both grew up was torn down and ... and they since rebuilt it but they didn't rebuild it like it was. It's ... it's a ... not even a good copy (laughter).

Reagan Grau: (Chuckles), well what else do you do around ... around the old Museum these days?

Mr. Smith: Oh, I come and visit Stephanie, and I ... I help once in a while with ... I'm a ... I'm a woodworker and I had a furniture builder and I make things for their sign and auction, stuff like that.

Reagan Grau: Hum, okay.

Mr. Smith: I've made two- or three-gun racks for their silent auctions and things like that.

Reagan Grau: Okay. Anybody still on staff today that was here when you were here?

Mr. Smith: Marty.

Reagan Grau: Marty?

Mr. Smith: Yeah.

Reagan Grau: Marty Kaderli.

Mr. Smith: Marty is the ... the only one.

Reagan Grau: I think ... I believe that ...

Mr. Smith: I believe she's ... I help Marvin.

Reagan Grau: Marvin?

Mr. Smith: Marvin Schraeder (sp?)

Reagan Grau: Yeah.

Mr. Smith: I hired him.

Reagan Grau: Did you?!

Mr. Smith: Yeah, I hired him in 1990 ... was it '94, I think?

Reagan Grau: Uh hum.

Mr. Smith: Yeah, '94 as a ... as a park ranger. Well, and ... and I know that the reason that Bruce wanted me to hire so he could take him away from me 'cause that's what happened.

Reagan Grau: (Laughter).

Mr. Smith: I didn't have him a year.

Reagan Grau: Yeah.

Mr. Smith: He was ... he was in that ... what was that, the ... the Living History (unintelligible), you know?

Reagan Grau: Yeah, yeah.

Mr. Smith: And that ... that really, that really torqued my jaw. In fact, I was ... I was looking for another job, at that time, yeah.

Reagan Grau: (Unintelligible).

Mr. Smith: Yeah, I put in applications with the National Park Service, and I looked around for a lot of other places, you know, but I ... I couldn't come anywhere near to getting what I was getting paid here, so I stuck it out.

Reagan Grau: Well, Marvin came back in 2007 (unintelligible).

Mr. Smith: Yeah, he was gone for a little while, and then he came back, yeah.

Reagan Grau: He's been here since then.

Mr. Smith: Yeah.

Reagan Grau: Yeah, he's ... he's a versatile man.

Mr. Smith: Oh yeah, yeah. Yeah.

Reagan Grau: He's done a lot of good.

Mr. Smith: Oh yeah, I know he has. Yeah, I ... I didn't have anything against Marvin. I just ... Bruce and I never did get along 'cause he ... he was a ... he was an Army brat, and every ... from the time he got here, we ... he was trying to turn everything into a ... this ... into an Army Museum. I says, "This is a Navy museum!"

Reagan Grau: (Laughter).

Mr. Smith: "What are you doing?!" And I'd show him that one little graph that they had in the ... in the old ... I don't know if it's ... they don't still have it ... they might have it somewhere down in the Museum now, but where it showed how many U.S. Navy people were in the Pacific under ... under Admiral Nimitz's command, how many Army, now many Air Force, and the Army was a small part (laughter).

Reagan Grau: (Laughter). Yeah, well ...

Mr. Smith: But that ... that's his thing. No, he was a ... his daddy was a retired Colonel in the Signal Corps, I guess, and so he grew up as a ... in the Army, so ... and he was ... oh, he was a big re-enactor, he liked ... he on that was responsible for getting Fort Martin Scott off the ground out there out there.

Reagan Grau: Yeah.

Mr. Smith: He and Marvin worked together on that, too, quite a bit.

Reagan Grau: Uh hum.

Mr. Smith: And ...

Reagan Grau: So ... it's ... it's a ... it's curious item, I think, that there's so much ... there ... there's quite a draw for history in this town. You've got this museum, Fort Martin Scott ...

Mr. Smith: Uh huh.

Reagan Grau: ... architecture ...

Mr. Smith: Yeah.

Reagan Grau: ... all kind of things.

Mr. Smith: We were always ... we were always looking for new ... new, old things around here. Like when ... when they were building the museum, when they were building the ... the ... doing the inside for the 1983 opening ...

Reagan Grau: Uh hum.

Mr. Smith: ... back over here in the courtyard, they had, uh not in the courtyard, but over there where they ... uh, well, just on the west side there, outside the old kitchen, they were ... we were ...

Reagan Grau: Where the bank pass is?

Mr. Smith: ... yeah, well, over ... over where the ... where the bath ... where the restrooms are right now. They were digging ... digging some footings to pour some concrete. One of them was digging and all of a sudden, his (unintelligible) went (*Psst* sound), it was gone (laughter). Went into the cistern that's underneath. You know there's a cistern under the kitchen?

Reagan Grau: Yes.

Mr. Smith: Well, this was ... this extended into the other part of the old dining room which is, let's see, what is ... what is that now, what's in it? Let's see, I guess ... I guess that's where the ladies' restroom is now.

Reagan Grau: Uh hum.

Mr. Smith: Yeah. That used to be the Pearl Harbor room.

Reagan Grau: (Laughter).

Mr. Smith: Yeah, that's where they had ... where the ... for the 1983 version?

Reagan Grau: Oh, sure.

Mr. Smith: Yeah, yeah.

Reagan Grau: Sure.

Mr. Smith: And ...

Reagan Grau: And nobody knew that the cistern was ...

Mr. Smith: No, 'cause there was as rock wall between the cistern, under the kitchen.

Reagan Grau: Uh huh.

Mr. Smith: And *that* one; we didn't know that there was another cistern. They had built a rock wall between the two for some reason. I don't...if it was support the ... it had a vaulted roof.

Reagan Grau: Yeah.

Mr. Smith: Vaulted ceiling.

Reagan Grau: Yeah, I've ... I've been down under there.

Mr. Smith: Have you?

Reagan Grau: Yeah, I've seen it and ...

Mr. Smith: Yeah, that's ... but there were two sections to that thing and the ... the second section, we didn't know about it until they'd lost that bar down (chuckles) trying to dig a footing (laughter).

Reagan Grau: That's funny.

Mr. Smith: Yeah.

Reagan Grau: Well, there's no telling what sort of things are laying around in the ground out here.

Mr. Smith: Oh, that's right, that's ... I've never taken a metal detector and walked around here, but I bet if you had a good strong one, you could probably pick up all kind of stuff.

Reagan Grau: Yeah.

Mr. Smith: We found a ... let's see, over here just where you come out of the ... behind the bathhouse when you come out that gate right there, just outside there there's ... there's a ... we thought first when we ... we found that hole over there, we thought it was another cistern. But they had the archeologist come out from Austin and everything and started digging around in it, and they kind of figured well it was probably just a septic tank 'cause it was ... they were ... they were unearthing stuff that didn't (laughter) that didn't ...

Reagan Grau: Refuse?

Mr. Smith: Yeah.

Reagan Grau: Okay (chuckles).

Mr. Smith: But they did find, I guess, it was a trash hole, too, for a little while where people just threw trash in there because they found a lot of old tin cans and stuff like that and ...

Reagan Grau: Yeah.

Mr. Smith: ... but we didn't know ... we didn't know there was a hole there, too (chuckles).

Reagan Grau: (Chuckles).

Mr. Smith: And then they had the old boiler room over on the east side of the building where all the offices are now, well it was down under ... down underneath the floor there, too.

Reagan Grau: Uh hum.

Mr. Smith: I don't know what they've done with it. I guess, well I know they covered it up part way, and as ... when I was here, they ... they put an office in over the top of it.

Reagan Grau: Still there, that office is still there.

Mr. Smith: Yeah, yeah.

Reagan Grau: And the room below is still accessible.

Mr. Smith: It ... yeah, okay.

Reagan Grau: I think it's just, you know, office supplies ...

Mr. Smith: Yeah, yeah.

Reagan Grau: ... (unintelligible).

Mr. Smith: Yeah, I think they ... they finally took the boiler out and everything. The old boiler was down there, and ... 'cause I think they dug ... started that when I was here 'cause they ... we were ... they were concerned about asbestos abatement.

Reagan Grau: Uh hum.

Mr. Smith: And it had some asbestos uh, down there around some of the pipes and around the ... the boiler and so forth. So, they had to be careful when they were tearing it apart to make sure that the ... they wore masks and everything to make sure they didn't get any asbestos ...



Reagan Grau: Uh hum.

Mr. Smith: ... particles or whatever. So, yeah, our little coffee pot in our, kind of our breakroom was right there just at the ... just above or just ... where that ... where that ... where that door is on the east side, just inside there.

Reagan Grau: Uh hum.

Mr. Smith: That ... that was where our coffee ... coffee mess was.

Reagan Grau: Well, the ... the third floor of the old hotel now is a boardroom.

Mr. Smith: Yeah.

Reagan Grau: And the name of the boardroom, we ... the ... the Foundation has named it after Doug Hubbard.

Mr. Smith: Well, good.

Reagan Grau: Dough Hubbard boardroom. What was the third floor? Was it anything while you were here?

Mr. Smith: Uh ...

Reagan Grau: Of the old hotel?

Mr. Smith: No.

Reagan Grau: Any ... any exhibits up on the third floor?

Mr. Smith: Well, there was ... yeah, there was some exhibits on the third floor was a ... a, basically, after the war ...

Reagan Grau: Uh hum.

Mr. Smith: ... well, Admiral Nimitz, when he his ... his sundial was up there.

Reagan Grau: Uh hum.

Mr. Smith: And his dress blue uniform, I believe, it was a big, uh, big painting of Admiral (pause) which admiral was it? Yamamoto, I believe.

Reagan Grau: Uh hum.

Mr. Smith: Up there, and then later on we put that big aircraft carrier up there; that was quite a fiasco.

Reagan Grau: The ... the Nimitz model?

Mr. Smith: The Nimitz model that's downstairs here, yeah.

Reagan Grau: That giant model?

Mr. Smith: Yeah.

Reagan Grau: Was on the third floor?

Mr. Smith: Yeah.

Reagan Grau: (Laughter).

Mr. Smith: Know how we got it up there?

Reagan Grau: How?

Mr. Smith: We took it up on the roof here on the ... above the kitchen, and carried in pieces.

Reagan Grau: Oh my ...

Mr. Smith: Carried it up and put it through the back windows.

Reagan Grau: (Laughter).

Mr. Smith: Into that room. And then the guy that was ... that built it came back and he re-assembled it for us.

Reagan Grau: How'd he do that? How ...

Mr. Smith: And then he had to repaint the ... the ocean around it and all this stuff.

Reagan Grau: Did it go out the same way?

Mr. Smith: Yeah.

Reagan Grau: (Chuckles).

Mr. Smith: I wasn't here then.

Reagan Grau: Right.

Mr. Smith: Ron McCormack (sp?) had to do that.

Reagan Grau: (Laughter).

Mr. Smith: He said ... he said, in fact ... he was here when we took ... when we put it up there. And I said, "Well, don't you remember how we put it up there?" He says, "Yeah, I'm ... I'm not too excited about getting it down!" I said, "Well," said, "what are they going to do with it?" Said, "Oh, they going to put it in the George Bush Gallery," and I said, "Alright, then you better be careful with it!" (laughter) Yeah, that was quite a ... quite a deal. Fact, my little great-grandson, he's been here several times. In fact, whenever I can bring him, I bring him and he always wants to go look at that carrier.

Reagan Grau: Really?!

Mr. Smith: Yeah, and I ...

Reagan Grau: How old is he?

Mr. Smith: He's four, almost five. He'll be five next month. And ...

Reagan Grau: Yeah.

Mr. Smith: ... yeah, he's something else.

Reagan Grau: Are you ...

Mr. Smith: When we ...

Reagan Grau: ... you're going to see him today, yeah?

Mr. Smith: Yeah, I got to go pick him up; he's at day care, it's a pre-school thing that they have in Johnson City. I got to go pick him up at about ... but that's not till four o'clock or so.

Reagan Grau: Oh yeah.

Mr. Smith: So, I'll go get him and bring him home. His daddy's home today, but his daddy's working on the house and he'd rather I go pick him up, so ... just bring him home, so ...

Reagan Grau: Any other anecdotes or unusual stories?

Mr. Smith: No. Uh, well, a little thing I was thinking about ...

Reagan Grau: (Unintelligible?)

Mr. Smith: ... uh, just ... give you an idea. When ... when I first started here, my ... I don't know if you are familiar with the building that used to be down ... the history wall? Maintenance shop was ... we didn't have a maintenance shop. When I first started the little room where the maintenance office is now behind the ... the Museum ...

Reagan Grau: Uh hum.

Mr. Smith: ... that was the maintenance shop.

Reagan Grau: Where the barn is now?

Mr. Smith: No, the little ... the little building.

Reagan Grau: Oh, the littler one?

Mr. Smith: Yeah, the littler one.

Reagan Grau: Behind the barn?

Mr. Smith: Yeah, where Herb ... Herb's new office is.

Reagan Grau: Right.

Mr. Smith: Yeah. That was the maintenance shop; that was the whole shop. It ... there was no lights in there.

Reagan Grau: Oh.

Mr. Smith: Just ... it was ... and it was *cold*.

Reagan Grau: I bet!

Mr. Smith: And one of the things that Parks and Wildlife did for us is one of the very first things that they did was they built us a shop down on the back of hangar two, hangar ... there used to be two big tin buildings down there. We called one, Hangar One – that's where the SBD and the PT or the Admiral's barge were, and then the other one was Hangar Two – that's where the Rex (sp?) float plane was.

Reagan Grau: Yes.

Mr. Smith: And the ... the CIC ...

Reagan Grau: Uh hum.

Mr. Smith: ... uh, the Fat Man bomb was there, and I built another addition to it later on which was a ... a cruiser, a pilot house.

Reagan Grau: Right.

Mr. Smith: I ... I forget what the name of the cruiser was, but we had all the stuff for it. Anyway, that's where they built the ... it was just a lean-to off the back of it, but it was a ... boy, it was great to have a maintenance shop were we could do something. And ...

Reagan Grau: Those buildings were here when I arrived in (unintelligible).

Mr. Smith: Yeah, okay. Yeah, yeah, they would have been, yeah.

Reagan Grau: They ... they weren't displays anymore; they weren't exhibits.

Mr. Smith: Yeah, yeah, right,

Reagan Grau: (Unintelligible).

Mr. Smith: Yeah, 'cause they'd already moved the ... the other stuff was ... some of it wasn't even on exhibit anymore 'cause they were still in the process of building this place to put everything.

Reagan Grau: Uh hum.

Mr. Smith: And then the ... the ... when ... when they built the maintenance shed down there, they gave me an office downstairs in the (unintelligible) building, and that was my office from the time ... from that time until I retired. And I was Ron's office, too, when I left. And Ron was not a paper man; he ... he was hands on, outside ...

Reagan Grau: Yeah.

Mr. Smith: ... and the last time I went downstairs into that office, it looked like I just walked out of there.

Reagan Grau: (Laughter).

Mr. Smith: All my files were still in the file cabinets, nothing ... nothing had changed.

Reagan Grau: Yeah, I didn't see Ron indoors ...

Mr. Smith: Yeah.

Reagan Grau: ... very much. Well, when he and I were together.

Mr. Smith: He was ... he was a worker.

Reagan Grau: Yeah.

Mr. Smith: Yeah, he ... but I just ... sometimes Joe Cavanaugh (sp?) approaches me and asks me about some of the utilities and so forth, and I ... I said, "You know, if somebody would go through my office and go through my files down there, all that information is down there (laughter). Of course, when I got here, there was not a map or anywhere of where the plumbing was of this place. If we started digging somewhere, we'd run into waterlines all the time 'cause we didn't know where they were. Down at the history wall, we'd run into them all the time 'cause we had ... we had water down there for ... for watering some of the trees and so forth, but we finally found them all, little by little by hitting them here and there.

Reagan Grau: (Unintelligible).

Mr. Smith: Same thing with the water system here in the courtyard. And you know, when they were building this back in ... they were working on a shoestring, and they didn't have time for all that stuff. They just put stuff in and there it was! You know?

Reagan Grau: Uh hum.

Mr. Smith: So, one of the things that Parks and Wildlife wanted me to do uh, when I was here was to get all this stuff on paper, just ... get some maps as to where the water lines are, uh, where the electrical stuff is, you know, and 'cause all of it was just ... is just put in piecemeal, you know? When I got here, the ballroom ... that's where our main exhibit was for most of the stuff that we had except what's down at ... down at the history wall.

Reagan Grau: Right.

Mr. Smith: But we just had big ole, six-foot glass exhibit cases with four-foot fluorescent lights on top them. And whatever we had to display there, there it was, you know, and that was all in the ballroom. And the rest of the place was pretty much raw. The (unintelligible) Hotel was finished on the outside.

Reagan Grau: Uh hum.

Mr. Smith: You know? It looked like it does now basically. But the inside was ... is ... to go upstairs you had to use a ladder.

Reagan Grau: (Laughter).

Mr. Smith: 'Cause the stairs were gone. They'd tore ... they tore those out when they were re ... redoing the old steamboat in there, so well, there wasn't anything upstairs anyway, you know? We had to go up there once in a while and fix the light on the ... on the flag 'cause it was clear up on a, you know, on a ... in the crow's nest. But they had ... the old heater was in the bus station ... cafe/bus station, the old gas heater was till in that room, and that's what heated that oh, front lobby area. And the lobby area, doesn't look like it did then, it ... it had the old uh, real small tiles on the floor all the way into the ... to the, that's the exhibit area now. As soon as you leave the lobby, you go in there.

Reagan Grau: Uh hum.

Mr. Smith: This is the same tile that ... tile that ... I think that used to be the barbershop (laughter) There was a barbershop in there, I think it was on the ... on the ... that east side there years ago. But ...

Reagan Grau: Of the front corner (unintelligible) east side?

Mr. Smith: Yeah, yeah.

Reagan Grau: Okay.

Mr. Smith: And ... but they had ... the ... the girls would get kind of cold in there, so they had to buy some little electric heaters. They had those behind the desk to kind of keep their legs warm when they was ... 'cause it ... it was kind of a cold building. No air conditioning, no heating, and it ... over in the (unintelligible) building, they had uh, three wood stoves – one up in the uh, up the, I don't know what's up there now, but up in the upper stairs up ... up in the upper part there was Mr. Hubbard's office, and uh, Ruth Peterson's office, and there was a wood stove in there, and we had to stoke that thing up every morning in the cold weather before she came in, so we ... that's another reason that either Butch or I would come in early to start a fire. My office downstairs had a ... had a wood stove down there. Then in the back of the (unintelligible) there was a room back there we used as a breakroom, and we had a wood stove back there, you know, and ...

Reagan Grau: I wonder where those stoves are today?

Mr. Smith: I don't know, don't know 'cause they ... they were in there when I left, you know. But they had ...

Reagan Grau: I haven't seen any stoves in the collection that I know of.

Mr. Smith: No. I don't know if they ... I don't think they were old ones. They were ... some that they'd bought or got somewhere from ... probably somebody donated.

Reagan Grau: Uh hum.

Mr. Smith: You know, back in the ... back in the early days in the '60s and '70s when they were trying to get this place going there, people would donate things to the Museum and I got ... I ended up getting rid of a lot of stuff that had been donated 'cause they'd try to have a ... before I got here, there was ... they'd have sales, little garage sales or whatever, you know, and try to make money by selling off some of these donated things that they had and ...

Reagan Grau: Hum.

Mr. Smith: They had a lot of old windows that came out of the old, you know, the old 1926 version of the hotel.

Reagan Grau: Yeah.

Mr. Smith: Those things were sitting back there and we tried to sell those, and we, I don't know, we'd sell one here and there, but (unintelligible) had a bunch of things in it, you know (laughter), and I ended up carrying a lot of those home.

Reagan Grau: Well, where are they now?

Mr. Smith: Well, they're ... they're gone; they just ...

Reagan Grau: Yeah, just used them on something else (unintelligible).

Mr. Smith: Yeah, I used them and sometimes I'd use them if we needed ... replace some glass 'cause some of those had some of the old wavy glass in them, you know, and ...

Reagan Grau: Uh hum.

Mr. Smith: ... but I'd use them to replace some of the glass around here. But most of the windows they put in were different size, you know, so ... but it ... it's really gone through a lot of evolution inside ... since I was here ... since well, since it started. God, it's ... been really a lot of change.

Reagan Grau: Even since I've been here.

Mr. Smith: Oh my, yeah, yeah.

Reagan Grau: (Unintelligible).

Mr. Smith: Yeah.

Reagan Grau: I've witnessed a lot of change.

Mr. Smith: That's what really amazed me about this. I says, "God, I ... ," and I couldn't even picture that being ... all this being up here, you know? Well, I knew this was a big building, you know; I never ... never thought about what ... what's up there, you know (laughter)? But I knew there was some ... something up here, but I didn't have any idea it was like this. I ...

Reagan Grau: Most folks, you know, when we ... when we bring them up here, I ... I usually tell them, "We're going to the third floor."

Mr. Smith: Yeah.

Reagan Grau: "How many floors is this?"

Mr. Smith: Yeah.

Reagan Grau: "I didn't know this place had three floors!"



Mr. Smith: Yeah, yeah, right. Yeah, but I guess, well, I was surprised that ... where Joe's office is. I ... how'd this happen, you know, 'cause that just to...used to be a corridor back through that ... a way to get to the third floor.

Reagan Grau: Really?!

Mr. Smith: And they had some little cubby hole exhibits along that passageway there.

Reagan Grau: I'll be!

Mr. Smith: Just a ... a ... and now, but then you go around to ... to the stairs, you know, and there was a ... to go up to the third floor to ... to the other exhibits, and I always had a lot of trouble with that dog-gone air conditioning/heating unit up there. And ... but when they put the stuff in there, they didn't think about maintenance 'cause we couldn't get to a lot of that stuff to do what we needed to do.

Reagan Grau: Yeah, I think that's ...

Mr. Smith: I know one time there I ... I finally decided ... 'cause the ... that ... the unit up there was not cooling the room properly, and it was not ... and the (unintelligible) naturally was on me because uh, we had ... humidity indicators up there and it was not proper and the temperature wasn't proper, and I says, "The only way I know to do anything with it is ... I got to flush out those dog-gone coils up there and that's going to be a problem, you know?" I had taken ... I took a garden hose and went all the way up on the kitchen roof. And when I fed it through the back window up there and stuck it up in there, and luckily, we had a drain pan underneath it and where the condensate goes and it goes down out of the ... out of the building, uh, and when we started flushing out that thing, I'll tell you, you never seen the like of lint and stuff. And we had to keep unplugging that dog-gone drain line and everything else. After we got done with it, it ... it cooled off pretty good (laughter).

Reagan Grau: (Laughter).

Mr. Smith: But it just, but we changed the filters, you know, and we changed the filters pretty regularly, but some of it would leak around the filters and still end up getting in those coils and it ...

Reagan Grau: It just needed to be flushed.

Mr. Smith: ... yeah, they got plugged up. That was quite a job we had to do, but it was ... it was nice to be able to walk into the building; it was either cool or hot, whatever you needed, you know? Before that, there was no environmental controls at all.

Reagan Grau: Well, it's ... it's got it now.

Mr. Smith: Yeah. Yeah, they got rid of the old system, too. They put in a different kind. I don't know what the new system is now, but ... that old water-circulation system was ... was alright, but it ... it took ... took a while to get to ... get it figured out and how to maintain it and take care of it. But ...

Reagan Grau: Well, any other stories come to mind before ... before we need to wrap it up?

Mr. Smith: No, I don't think of any off hand here.

Reagan Grau: Well, on behalf of the Museum, Rick, I really appreciate you coming in and sharing ...

Mr. Smith: Well, I hope ...

Reagan Grau: ... a lot of your memories with us.

Mr. Smith: I hope I wasn't too boring (laughter).

Reagan Grau: No, no. We'll ... we'll end up putting this in the archive, and it'll be here ...

Mr. Smith: Good.

Reagan Grau: ... for anybody else who's interested in hearing it.

Mr. Smith: Okay, alright.

(end of interview)

**FINAL** copy

CD – #OH04683 – Mr. Richard “Rick” Smith

Transcribed by: K. Matras

Houston, TX

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