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An Interview with Frederick C. Smith

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library
Family Memories Oral History project

Interview # FM-V-L-2010-015

Frederick C. Smith, a career civil servant with the Department of Defense who was interviewed about his project to visit all of the nation's Presidential Libraries and Museums, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Family Memories* Oral History project.

Interview dates & location:

Date: April 2, 2010 Location: IL Information Service Studio, Springfield, IL

Interview Format: Digital video

Interviewer: Mark R. DePue

Technical Support: Greg Lipe and Tony Bateman, IIS Videographers

Transcription by: Susan Burke, ALPL volunteer

Edited by: Betty Workman & Rozanne Flatt, ALPL volunteers

Total Pages: 15 Total Time: 1:01 / 1.02 hrs

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on March 13, 2013.

The interview is archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield, Illinois.

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Abstract

Frederick C. Smith, *Family Memories*, FM-V-L-2010-015

Biographical Information Overview of Interview: Frederick C. Smith was born on March 23, 1947 in St. Paul, Minnesota. After a tour in the U.S. Navy during the Vietnam War, Smith did his graduate work at The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy in Medford, Massachusetts. In 1978, he began a decades-long career as a career civil servant in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, specializing in international security affairs. He served as Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs during the Clinton Administration.

In late 2008, Smith was diagnosed with lung cancer, news that inspired him to visit all of the nation's 12 Presidential Libraries and Museums administered by NARA (the National Archives and Records Administration). He visited the last, the Herbert Hoover Library in West Branch, Iowa, on April 1, 2010, then traveled to the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum in Springfield, Illinois. This institution is not administered by NARA, but Smith decided to include Springfield on his itinerary because he heard so many positive reports about the Lincoln Museum and Library. In an interview conducted following Mr. Smith's visit to that Library and Museum, he shared his observations about the presidential libraries and their value to the country. He explained what inspired him to take on this project, and shared anecdotes about many of the libraries and the presidents they represent, including John F. Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson, Gerald Ford and Ronald Reagan. He cited Harry S. Truman as the president he most admired.

Subject Headings/Key Words: National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) Presidential Libraries and Museums; Herbert Hoover Presidential Library and Museum; Harry S. Truman Library and Museum; John F. Kennedy Library and Museum; Lyndon B. Johnson Library and Museum; Richard M. Nixon Library and Museum; Gerald Ford Library and Museum; Jimmy Carter Library and Museum; Ronald Reagan Library and Museum; George H.W. Bush Library and Museum; William J. Clinton Library and Museum

Note to the Reader: Readers of the oral history memoir should bear in mind that this is a transcript of the spoken word, and that the interviewer, interviewee, and editor sought to preserve the informal, conversational style that is inherent in such historical sources. The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library is not responsible for the factual accuracy of the memoir, nor for the views expressed therein. We leave these for the reader to judge.

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