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Charles Smith Memoir

Smith, Charles

Interview and memoir
digital audio file, 71 min., 19 pp.

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Smith enrolled in Sangamon State University in 1971 and earned his master's degree in business and public administration. A Chicago native, Smith discusses his family background in politics, his previous attendance at Loyola University from which he earned a bachelor's degree in political science, and his military service including a tour in Vietnam. Smith especially remembers Michael Ayers, who acted as his faculty advisor. He recalls the relaxed atmosphere of Sangamon State in the early 1970s and relates that many of his classmates were working professionals who attended courses at night and on the weekends. Smith also discusses his role in Illinois and National politics including working for Secretary of State Michael Howlett and United States Senators Alan Dixon and Wendell Ford. Smith also relates anecdotes about his mother, Anna May Smith, a former faculty member at Sangamon State.

Interview by Mary Caroline Mitchell, 2010

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Narrator: Charles Smith
Date: June 17, 2010
Place: Alexandria, Virginia
Interviewer: Mary Caroline Mitchell

Q. This is June 17, 2010, and this Mary Caroline Mitchell. I'm interviewing Charles Smith. Would you tell us where we're sitting right now?

A. We're sitting in the conference room at the Flagship Government Relations Office in Alexandria, Virginia.

Q. And what is your position?

A. I am a senior associate with the firm.

Q. Ok and tell me a little bit about your background so we can understand some of the questions that we may ask. Are you a native Illinoisan?

A. Born and raised in Chicago.

Q. Ok.

A. I attended a high school in Aurora, Illinois, Marmion Military Academy.

Q. How do you spell that? Could you spell it?

A. M-A-R-M-I-O-N.

Q. Ok.

A. It was a boarding school much to my parents' dislike because it was a military thing. My parents were very liberal, but I had a cousin going there so I thought it would be a good place to go. Nobody else went there from my grade school. I hated it after the first semester, but I stayed for four years.

Then I ended up going to Loyola University getting a degree in political science because my mother and father were very involved in politics. My mother was a professor at Barat College, Lake Forest, Illinois.

Q. Spell that name please?

A. B-A-R-A-T. Barat. My father was involved in politics going back, with the Secretary of State's Office in Illinois: Edward Barrett in the early 1950s and then Charles Carpentier, who was Secretary of State for eight years, and then Paul Powell.

After that my father then went with at the mayor of Chicago, Daley's request to work with the Metropolitan Sanitary District of Chicago, which was having some problems. My dad was

basically a hatchet man. Then he retired from that and became a PR guy. He was basically a PR man. He ran the CYO of Chicago, the Catholic Youth Organization, boxing, stuff like that.

Q. Oh cool.

A. So my parents were involved in politics and that's why I became a political science major. I was also in ROTC. At that time 1966 to 1967, the Vietnam War was on. After I graduated, I got called up to active duty. I was a lieutenant in army intelligence, served one year in Vietnam, 1968 to 1969.

In Vietnam I was assigned to the combined interrogation center, which was an interrogation center in Vietnam. We supported troops in the field with prisoner of war interrogations. After you finished your year's tour they basically sent you to Fort Bragg, North Carolina or someplace like that. So I had a senior officer who said, "You ought to go into counter-intelligence and stay on." So I did.

I went to counter-intelligence school, and I was first lieutenant. They asked me where I wanted to go and I said, "Chicago." They said, "Really? Ok." So I became the head of the Chicago office during 1969-1970 and 1971. Then I got transferred because we were opening a field office in Springfield, Illinois and was responsible for central and southern Illinois and parts of Indiana. They wanted someone who knew state politics, how state politics operated. So I took over that office, and that's when I found out about Sangamon State.

Q. What year was that?

A. 1971. I had a person who worked for me also, and we started looking at going to graduate school. Illinois, at that time, had a very interesting program where if you had gone into the military from Illinois and you were a resident, you could go to a university, an Illinois institute for free basically.

There was a problem that we ran into. It's the fact that the original law stated you could no longer be in the military, so we were still on active duty. I called my uncle who was Commissioner of Securities at the time. I said "I need to talk to somebody to get this law amended." So we eventually did, myself and the other guy got it amended. I signed up at Sangamon State for a degree in business and public administration.

Q. What year did you...

A. 1971.

Q. 1971?

A. I got started in 1971.

Q. So where did you go to sign up for a class or to get enrolled?

A. I just went to the university and said, "How do I get enrolled?"

Q. Well, where was the office? Was there a campus at that time?

A. Yes it was out near, it's been so long ago. It wasn't downtown. It was outside of Springfield.

Q. Ok, just where the campus is.

A. Where the campus is now, yes. They had just opened there.

Q. Ok.

A. I signed up.

Q. What did you have to do to get accepted?

A. Well, I just had to get my grades from Loyola University and show that I had graduated with a degree, and that I was a military guy, but they just took me.

Q. Did you know what you needed to do to complete a degree? Did they know at that time?

A. Not really, I mean it was all independent study. Mike Ayers became my advisor, and we sat down.

Q. Ok.

A. Most of our classes were in the evening, and there were five or six of us. It was just small. All of us did different jobs and stuff like that; we went at night. Then I got notified that I was going to be sent back to Vietnam, and I decided to get out of the army because I didn't want to go back. So I went to get a job.

I wanted to stay in Springfield so I could finish my degree. I got a job with a guy by the name of Mike Howlett, who was Auditor of Public Accounts, who was an old friend of my dad's from the Southside of Chicago although I grew up on the Northside.

Howlett gave me a position, and I started working for him and got involved in his race for Secretary of State. At the same time I was with the Auditor of Public Accounts and I was at Sangamon State, so it allowed me to continue to stay at Sangamon State. I got my veteran's money for education and stuff like that for education. I had gotten married and my wife went to work for a bank in Springfield, First National or Springfield National or something like that. I stayed and got involved with Sangamon State.

Q. How many courses did you take at a time, do you remember?

A. Oh, I think it was two or three, two or three.

Q. At night?

A. At night. I think it was two at night.

Q. Two at night?

A Yes, two or three at night, yes, and on the weekends.

Q. The weekends?

A. On the weekends. It was a lot of independent study, and it was pretty good. It was a fun time.

Q. What was your professor that you first remember?

A. Mike Ayers.

Q. Ok, he taught you?

A. He taught me, and he became my advisor.

Q. Ok.

A. Then I had another professor, more psychology, a psychologist. He was from the St. Louis area, he drove up. Stan something, I can't remember.

Q. Ok.

A. His name but he was like in psychology, business psychology and stuff like that.

Q. Ok, all right.

A. Mike Ayers is the one I remember because he was also my advisor. He helped steer me through the rigmarole to get stuff. Then I remember one instance where Sangamon State used to have a one week or a couple of days off from school and they'd bring in, have a seminar or something like that where they would close the school and everybody could come in.

Q. Right, right.

A. They were trying to find, to get somebody. I said to Mike Ayers, "I think I can get you Saul Alinsky." He said, "You think you can?" I said, "Yes, my mom and dad were close to him." But my father had passed away by this time. So I called my mother up and said "We have this thing and do you think you could talk Saul Alinsky into coming out?" Well he did, he agreed to it.

Q. What year was that can you think?

A. I want to say 1972.

Q. Oh, right at the beginning.

A. At the beginning because the funny thing was, at first, Saul Alinsky had never heard of Sangamon State and, in fact, thought it was a private school. So he waived his speaking fee or his fees and what happened is, then he found out it was part of the University of Illinois, a state school.

Q. A state school.

Smith, C.

A. So he called my mother up and said, "I'm going to bill them." Typical Saul Alinsky. Well, the Springfield newspapers I guess found out about it, and there was this huge uproar that this radical was coming out to speak at Sangamon State. It was hysterical. Springfield is a very conservative town.

Q. What was... all the classes were required... the students who were enrolled were required to take some seminars or lectures?

A. Right, to attend seminars and lectures, and they had different lectures and stuff like that. Saul Alinsky was like the kickoff speaker. I remember we had an evening with Mr. Alinsky at Mike Ayers' home where a lot of the students came, and then we had dinner with him.

The students were able to talk to him and listen to him. Then the next day, he did his little thing. There was this one professor, I wish I could think of his name but I don't know, was kind of a blowhard type person. Alinsky put him down really bad, and the students loved it. That was one of the things I remember mostly about getting involved at Sangamon State.

Q. So were you working fulltime and then going to school?

A. Yes.

Q. So were your classes downtown at the Leland Hotel?

A. No my classes were...

Q. All out there?

A. Out there.

Q. In one of the temporary buildings?

A. Yes, Uh-huh.

Q. Ok, right.

A. So that was it.

Q. What were some of the course names, can you remember at all?

A. Oh, god...I'd have to...

Q. They had such interesting names for things.

A. Yes. I would but it's been awhile and I just can't remember. They had some great courses there, were very interesting. They had statistics courses and I'm not a math guy and thought it was boring. But we needed to take it in order to graduate, and it was just an interesting group. We were more of a small group. There were about five guys, a couple women.

Q. Were they all fulltime workers?

A. Yes, fulltime workers and part time students.

Q. Were they involved in the government do you think?

A. Some of them were. One was a pharmaceutical salesman for one of the big pharmaceutical companies. Another one had one of the first cellphones, but it wasn't a cellphone. It was a phone you carried in its briefcase, and it was the old type telephone. He was in something, and he would bring in his phone. We thought it was a briefcase but he'd flip it open, and it was a phone.

Q. Wow.

A. It was a hell of a phone.

Q. (laughs)

A. But then I guess I had to do a...

Q. A master's project?

A. Yes, a project, to do a thesis. So Ayers asked what I was going to do it on. And I said, "Well, how about I do mine on why patronage is a much better in government than civil service." I thought that was unusual.

Q. Interesting.

A. So I did a whole paper on why I thought patronage jobs were much better than civil service, and then I had to defend it.

Q. Uh-huh.

A. And there were two, I guess and I can't think of the two other professors who were put on the board along with Mike. So I had three of them. We all decided and Mike said, "Where do you want to do this, to defend your paper?" I said, "There's an old bar that a lot of people used to go to in Springfield called Norb Andy's." We went in the backroom. We had a couple pitchers of beer, and I defended my thesis at Norb Andy's.

Q. (laughs) Oh, that's great.

A. It was very unusual.

Q. Right.

A. And I told my mom that. She said you did what, where?

Q. (laughs)

A. I said, "Yes, it's a very enlightening school."

Q. Were you taken aback by the way the classes were taught as compared to Loyola where you incurred your first impression?

A. No, in fact I liked the way the classes were taught. I remember one class though and this one guy from St. Louis and I can't think... Salinsky... no, it's "S", or something. I remember he had Saturday class, and he wanted us all to say (and there was about fifteen to twenty kids) something that we had never told anyone in our lives. Something that had happened, something like that, and I thought it was the most ridiculous thing I'd ever heard of. I mean, who's going to say something that they've never told their parents, wives, brothers or sisters in front of strangers basically. Even though we were classmates, we were still strangers. So I came up with a thing based on my Vietnam experience. I went through this whole story, and everybody is going, "Oh that's great." When it was over, I finally said, "Look, it's all been bullshit (laughs)."

Well, he went nuts, and if I remember correctly, he basically wanted to kick me out or flunk me or something like that. But I was honest with him. Then we had to go up to the dean, and Mike Ayers defended what I did based on what the whole thing was. So it was worked out and he didn't flunk me. I think he gave me a C and I was told never to take another course from him.

Q. Did you have lectures in your classes?

A. Yes, we had lectures, but a lot of the classes were give-and-take because most of the people with us, Sangamon State at that time was set up as a two year, senior year type grad school.

Q. Uh-huh.

A. A lot of the students at Sangamon State were working.

Q. Right.

A. A lot of them for the state government naturally, and it was more give-and-take. What are your experiences, your true experiences and stuff like that and especially with public administration courses. It was very good, and it was laid back so there wasn't a lot of tension.

Q. How did people dress?

A. Some people came in suits because you came from work. But on weekends you dressed up in jeans and sweatshirts.

Q. Did you have tests?

A. I can't remember whether we had a lot of tests. We had a lot of written assignments. Being in the master's program we had to get the thesis; the big thing was your thesis and defending it.

Q. How long did it take you to get your degree?

A. About two and a half years.

Q. Ok.

A. I think I got it in, let's see. I do this by election, so I can't remember exactly when I got the degree. I was with Mike Howlett in the Auditor's Office, and I think he announced for Secretary of State in 1972. I think I got my degree in the summer or spring of 1972.

Q. Oh, the first graduating class.

A. Was I? Because I didn't go to the graduation, they just sent me the certificate. It was because I was working on a political campaign.

Q. Uh-huh.

A. It was 1972 or 1973.

Q. Ok. As you reflect back on it, was there anything you learned at Sangamon State that has stuck with you through your career? Or was it just a credential that you were trying to get?

A. No, well originally it was just a credential I was trying to get. One of the interesting things is I had applied to another university, Loyola University, to their Management Program. During that period as you know the Vietnam War was a very contentious thing. When I went I was still on active duty at the time. When I went to talk to Loyola University, I ran into a dean who was really obnoxious and very anti-military.

There had been reports of the army spying on civilians and demonstrations and stuff like that. He asked me if I was involved in that. I said that it was none of his business whether I was or not. But when I went to Sangamon State and even though I was in the army then, I was still doing army intelligence work and running the office, there wasn't that thing that I got because most of the people were older and not as, I don't want to say radical because I was a Democrat, but not as obnoxious because most of everybody worked.

Q. Uh-huh.

A. They were there to get there to get an additional degree or another degree, and so we were older. Well, older. I was twenty-four, twenty-five years old, but I think I was older.

End of Tape 1

Beginning of Tape 2

A. The more that I think about it, it's the fact that you did have an older student body. Whereas with us, you'd go to Norb Andy's or you'd go to another bar or something like that.

Q. So you hung out after class?

A. Yes, after classes.

Q. And your faculty, did they join you?

A. Yes, some of them did. Mike Ayers as conservative as he turned out to be would always join us. That's one of the things that made it so, the faculty on the whole was very good.

Q. Were they near you age?

A. Yes, and a lot of them were very laid back and weren't real, I forget the term but they were more open.

Q. Did you feel that they had the credentials to teach you?

A. Oh yes and again I think the best thing was the exchange between the students from different areas of government and private industry that were there in the classes.

Q. Uh-huh.

A. When you were discussing something like management or something like that, well here's what management means. There were more people with my background so to speak; I had managed two offices.

So that's why the classes were more discussions. Yes we had exams, but it was more what did you learn and partake? Class participation was a lot of the thing. Sangamon State didn't have basketball teams; they didn't have things like that. So it was more, let's get together. A lot of students spent time together, got to be friends,

Q. Is that true for you?

A. Yes, when I was there and eventually we all drifted apart after graduating.

Q. But you hung out socially?

A. Yes, yes.

Q. You took classes only out on the campus? You didn't do downtown?

A. No I don't think I ever went downtown.

Q. Alright, did you sit at desks?

A. There were desks I think.

Q. Ok, they did have desks. Did you have grades?

A. I think there were more chairs and stuff like that.

Q. Did you have grades?

A. No, I think it was pass/fail. Well, most of the courses I had it was a pass/fail.

Q. Oh, Ok.

A. I can't remember the grades; it's been thirty years.

Q. Right, I know.

A. So I had to go back, you had permission to check grades and see if I had grades. But I don't remember it. It was just a very relaxing time.

Q. Did you have other veterans in your classes that you were aware of?

A. There were one or two veterans that I was aware of because of the Vietnam thing. A lot of people didn't talk a lot about it.

Q. Right.

A. But some of us did. Since part of my years when I was there were I was head of the counter-intelligence investigation unit in Springfield.

Q. You couldn't talk?

A, Yes, you couldn't talk about a lot of things you were doing. But at the same time, nobody held it against you. It wasn't like you had problems, you read about the problems on other college campuses or something like that.

Q. Uh-huh.

A. There was none of that. I mean, maybe they didn't agree with it but what was going on and everything, but that was something different.

Q. You mentioned the reaction of the community to the University. What do you remember about that?

A. Well, on the whole the thing with Saul Alinsky -- why is he coming here? He's a horrible radical. Why is Sangamon State having somebody like that in Springfield, Illinois? Nowadays if he had been going to let's say the University of Chicago or if he had been going to Loyola or DePaul or something like that, Northwestern, nobody would have given a damn.

Q. Uh-huh, Uh-huh.

A. But I think it was because Springfield, central Illinois and most of the stories were of his activities. What's one of his books? *Reville for Radicals* or something like that, and it was great. They ran stories when he took on the injustices.

Q. But were there other things about the campus that you remember? Where you worked, people said about it?

A. No, it was basically, the uproar was.... I mean the campus, most of the people I talked to on campus when they found out that I could help get him were thrilled. They knew they were getting somebody like that with a reputation to Sangamon State University. You have got to remember we were still in infancy, and a lot of people hadn't even heard of Sangamon State.

Although I was always a little annoyed when I found out it became the University of Illinois Springfield because I always thought Sangamon State was unique. Sangamon State was unique to U of I because I was thinking, well maybe I'll go to U of I in Champaign grad school. Well, A, it would be a long drive.

Q. Uh-huh.

A. It's a huge campus, whereas Sangamon State was more local and easier to get to. It wasn't like Southern Illinois University, which is out of the way. But Sangamon State was kind of unique.

Q. Uh-huh.

A. And I always felt that that uniqueness gave it a little edge from everybody else. When you'd fill out forms and say, "Oh, I went to Sangamon State University. They'd go, "Where's that?"

Q. (laughs)

A. It gave me a chance to talk about it. Like when I was talking to my mother when she had decided to stop teaching for a while. And I said, "They're looking for professors at Sangamon State." [She said], "Where's Sangamon State?" I said, "Springfield." My dad had been working and he worked in Chicago and Springfield. She wasn't that crazy about Springfield because it's a small town. She's from Chicago, but when she got down here to Springfield and started teaching she loved it.

Q. So you were responsible for recruiting your mother?

A. Recruiting my mother as a professor, yes.

Q. Would you tell everybody the name of your mother?

A. My mother's name was Anna May Smith, Anna May Hawekotte Smith.

Q. And what did she come to teach?

A. She ended up teaching business, business speech, business and public relations. She was a professor of speech and drama at Barat College. She'd gone to Northwestern University and Columbia and she'd run what they called back in the 1960s, the first Upward-Bound Program at Barat College.

When my dad passed away, she decided that maybe it was time she'd like to go back to teach. She called me up one day and she said, "I'm looking around if you hear of anything." I said Sangamon State was just opening up and started to come down to talk and so she did. I talked

to Mike Ayers about it, and they offered her a position. Now she had a tenured position at Barat, but it would be as an associate I guess. They had different levels.

Q. Uh-huh.

A. Above the entry professor but not a tenured.

Q. Right, on a tenure track they call it.

A. Yes, right and so a lot of my friends worked for the state, were state reps [representatives]. And a couple of them needed to finish up their degrees. So I talked them choosing my mom, and she became their advisors. I can't remember exactly how it came about, but she'd been there three or four years. When she first moved down there, she lived at a place called Lincoln Towers.

Q. I know where it is.

A. It was right across from the Capitol and had a great restaurant and bar. My offices were in the Capitol at the time and so almost every day I'd stop by, say, "How are you doing? How are things going?" She finally said to me, "Charles, you do not have to keep coming by to see how I'm doing. If I need you, I will call you." I said, "Ok, sure."

I became Assistant Deputy Secretary of State under Alan Dixon. That was a couple years later. I got a call from my mom saying, she called me up and said she had been told she would not be getting tenure. I said, "Really, why?" She said, "I'm not sure." I called Mike Ayers up. He was still a professor there and so I said, "What's going on?" He just goes, "Oh, it's just voting." I guess they voted for tenure and stuff like that.

Q. The faculty senate.

A. Faculty and some of the people were not ready for her.

Q. How many women were there?

A. There weren't that many women professors there at Sangamon State at that time. I don't know how I did it but the guy who was, he was from Northwestern University, he was the dean of the business school I guess at that time. And I had gone into somebody, Mike Howlett or somebody like that I was very close to. And I said, "She's getting screwed by these people." He says, "Well, I'll check into it."

So all of a sudden, a couple days later, I get a call from this guy and he said, "Would you please call off the dogs? I like your mother. I'm working to get around this. If you keep this up, then you can't force it." I can't remember the man's name from Northwestern. And I said, "Ok, no problem, I think I can turn it off." So I did, and she got the tenure position and everything was fine. She was happy.

Q. Do you know about what year that was?

Smith, C.

A. I want to say 1975, 1976, something like that.

Q. Ok, Uh-huh.

A. She loved Sangamon State. She then bought a home, a condo, out there and loved it, loved the school and they loved her. She had Dick Durbin, who is now a senator from Illinois. She had one of the first cocktail parties for him, fundraisers at her house, and she loved politics. She went to the community and just very involved in things. Then I got another call from her. This was like 1978, 1979. Anyway she had turned the mandatory age, I guess, for retiring under the university system. It was sixty-two or something like that.

Q. Uh-huh.

A. She called me up and she says, "I just got notified that one more year and I have to retire." She said, "I'm not ready to retire." I go, "Ok." She said, "Well, remember all those legislators you had me help?" I said, "Yes." She said, "Well, tell them I want some help myself." So I called up two of the state reps. I can't think of their names right now, but one was on the Higher Education Subcommittee in the House of Representatives; the other one was on the Senate side.

They both introduced a piece of legislation that said anybody born in the year 1915 did not have to retire from the university system. I guess the Illinois retirement people went, "Oh my god, oh my god." And so I get a call one day from one of the reps and he said, "How long does your mother want to teach?" I said, "Why?" He said, "I think we can work this deal out because they're very upset."

So I said, "Oh ok, I'll get back to you." So I called my mom and I said, "Anna May, how long do you want to stay teaching?" She says, "Another two or three years and then I'll retire." I said, "Fine, two or three years." I got a call back from the state rep and he says, "It's a deal. They will grant a waiver to your mother and she does not have to retire at the age of 62, she can wait until she's 65."

Q. Oh wow.

A. So she did. But again it was Sangamon State, and she found it a great time and loved the place.

Q. Tell me a little about her involvement in Springfield that you know about?

A. Well, she's very liberal and she's very strong-willed on women's issues, and she was pro-choice. In fact there was somebody who she had a fundraiser for who was running for office and she found out later that he was neutral on the question of choice. She said to him, "I will never support you." Finally he said, "Well, I think it's a woman's choice. I agree because of my religion." But she was happy with that; she compromised on that. She was like that. She was always looking for something better.

The Arab students loved her. And one day she called me up and said, "They want me to go teach students in Saudi Arabia." I guess there were a number of Arab students, wealthy from Saudi Arabia. And I said mother, "Do you know what it's like Saudi Arabia?" She said, "What do you mean?" I said, "Well you can't drink Jack Daniels, you can't drive. "

My mother loved driving and a few other things. So before you make this decision, you ought to check out the living conditions and stuff like that. So eventually she decided that she probably shouldn't be there and she liked Springfield better. But she was very involved in the community. She got involved in a lot of different community action groups and things like that. She was just a bubbly little redhead.

The reason she finally retired was because her grandchildren were growing up, and they all lived in Chicago. So she just thought it was time that she go back to Chicago. She did and she lived to the ripe old age of 92. That's how I found out that a bunch of her students had set up a scholarship fund for her under her name when she passed away. I got a call one day from a friend of mine who was at University of Illinois down at Springfield. He said, "Do you know your mother has a scholarship in her name here?" I said, "She does?" We didn't know anything about it.

I was working for Senator Alan Dixon at the time. I said, "Ok." So we checked it out and my sisters and I continually deposit into the scholarship in her name. It's now the Anna May and Charles Smith Scholarship Fund. She loved Sangamon State. She really did. She loved Barat College. She was very involved with Barat College, but she loved Sangamon State because it was so open.

Q. Yes.

A. There wasn't as much tension among the... and the students and faculty were very good, very warm to each other. It wasn't, I've got a Ph.D. and you will listen to me. It was more of an exchange, an open exchange.

In fact, I remember another story about her calling. I was, at the time, with Senator Dixon in Washington; I was his National Security Advisor. She called me up out of the blue and said, "One of our students was stopped coming in through Chicago O'Hare by Immigration. You've got to do something about it because he's coming over with his wife, he's a student and he's supposed to start school."

I said, "Ok, give me the information." So she does, and I call up the State Department. It turns out that the gentleman who's continuing his education at Sangamon State was from Saudi Arabia, and his bride was fifteen. There was a problem getting the Immigration approval even though they were just students.

Q. Right, right.

A. Eventually they let them in, and he finished up because he was only twenty years old.

Q. Oh, ok.

Smith, C.

A. But there were some things she would get involved in.

Q. Tell me, I've heard a story about her and the Sangamo Club.

A. (laughs) Oh, the Sangamo Club, yes. My dad had belonged to the Sangamo Club. And then when I moved down to Springfield, I joined the Sangamo Club. When my dad passed away my mother got the membership to the club, so she could keep it.

One day she was going into the club, and they always put women up on the second floor of the club. She asked the concierge, the manager of the club, "Why am I not allowed to stay down here on the main floor?" He said, "Well, club rules." She said, "I am a fulltime member of this club. I pay dues like everybody else does. I want to be seated (raps hand on desk) on the main floor, at this table (raps hand on desk)." He goes, "I'll be right back." He comes back and all of a sudden he says, "Do you have any specific table you'd like to be sat at?" From that point on, they allowed women to sit down on the first floor.

Q. Thank you for telling that. A little more about your career in Springfield and when you left Springfield and what you've done since then?

A. Well, I started out in Springfield because of my assignment in the military.

Q. Uh-huh.

A. A great place, my offices were right behind the Springfield Golf Course. After I got out of the military, I went to work for the Auditor of Public Accounts, Mike Howlett. I got involved in his campaign. It was the first time that eighteen-year-olds could vote so we, myself and a guy, Tim McInerney, and still a friend of mine in Springfield and I coordinated the eighteen-year-old vote.

Then I started to work for Mike Howlett, then got a job offer from Mr. Howlett in the Personnel Office in the Secretary of State's Office. He put me in charge of this thing of hiring former jail people.

Q. Uh-huh.

A. Not murderers or anything like that.

Q. Right.

A. But just hard up; he was very interested in seeing if he could help people. I ended up doing the interviews of prisoners. I'd go to Joliet Prison and with the head of personnel. That was an exciting time.

Q. I bet.

A. I hired one; put a man on. He was African American from Chicago but wanted to live in Springfield, wanted to continue his education. We hired him at the Secretary of State's Office.

He ended up going to junior college and went to Sangamon State. Got married and had a great career from what I understand in Springfield.

Q. Ok.

A. We were very nervous about bringing an African American down to Springfield, Illinois, especially one from Chicago, in that office.

Q. Uh-huh, right.

A. But he wanted to be in Springfield so we did that. It was fine. But then, I decided that it was time to go into private business. I moved back up to Chicago and went with Aries Limited, which is a holding company for a number of companies. Using my master's degree in business, I worked for Aries Limited up in Chicago.

Q. How do you spell that?

A. A-R-I-E-S, Aries Limited. My sister was involved in the company and we had formed a manufacturing company, a supply company and a couple other companies. Then Mike Howlett, there was talk that he was going to run for governor and Alan Dixon had announced that he was. I had friends of mine on Alan Dixon's staff, Gene Callahan, who was a reporter for the *Springfield Journal-Register* at the time and others.

My dad had done a lot of political statistical analysis of voting trends, and I had all that information. I helped the different candidates out running for state-wide office. I went to Mike Howlett and said, "Are you going to run for governor?" He said, "No." I said, "Then you have no problems with me working for Alan Dixon? Alan's my friend and want to help him out."

As it turned out, Mayor Daley talked Mike Howlett into running for governor. And to keep then State Treasurer Alan Dixon happy, they moved Alan Dixon to the Secretary of State's Office. I stayed with Alan Dixon through the campaign. He got elected, and I became Assistant Deputy Secretary of State for him in charge of the northern Illinois.

Q. Uh-huh.

A. Alan Dixon decided to run for the United States Senate. Stevenson decided not to run again, and I went out with Alan Dixon to Washington to be his national security guy, his business guy, a couple other areas. I told him I'd come out for two years but that was it. Then I'd move back to Chicago, no offense.

So I'm all set to move out and go back to Chicago and had gotten an interview with the RTA [Regional Transportation Authority] department of government relations. I call up Gene Callahan, who's the chief of staff at the time and I said, "Gene, I've got this offer with RTA, I'm moving back to Chicago, my wife will be happy, she hates Washington." He said, "Don't go away. I'll get the Senator on the phone." I said, "Incoming calls don't come in here." He said, "Just stay there, we'll get you."

So all of a sudden I get a page and it is Senator Dixon. He says, "Charlie, things are coming up. Can you stay with me through the primary? I'm getting on the Armed Services Committee, I need you." So I said, "Oh, ok." I gave the recommendation to somebody else, and they hired them. But I ended up staying with Alan Dixon for twelve years.

Q. Oh.

A. Then when he lost the election primary to Carol Moseley Braun, I then was going back to Chicago. I ran into the senior senator from Kentucky, a gentleman by the name of Wendell Ford, who was then the ranking minority leader, the Minority Whip. And he said, "I need somebody as my legislative director. Would you take the job?" I said, "Sure."

So I stayed here and then Alan Dixon got appointed as head of the 1995 BRAC base closure commission, which he had been very involved in. I became the executive director for a while and went back with Ford. When he retired from the Senate in 1999, I decided it's time to get out of government and go earn some money. So I went with a lobby group, and that's where I've been ever since.

Q. Wow, well, that's great. Well, do you ever come back to Springfield?

A. I've come back to Springfield a couple times. I was back when they were doing the 2005 BRAC. We did some consulting work for the State of Illinois trying to protect the Springfield Air National Guard there and Peoria Guard and stuff like that.

Q. Uh-huh.

A. Every once in a while I go back to see Gene Callahan because he's down now there and Tim McInerney. Tim went to Sangamon State.

Q. Yes. Do you ever come out to the campus?

A. No, I'll tell you what. I'm going to have to come out to the campus because I saw one of the brochures last night.

Q. Uh-huh.

A. And I was thinking that's not the campus I remember.

Q. No it isn't.

A. And now you've got basketball teams, volleyball and everything.

Q. Yes, yes.

A. Division II A, I think, isn't it.

Q. Yes, it's just starting.

A. And soccer, very big soccer program. So I have to and I guess because they give out the scholarships every year, I'm going to try to attend the scholarship luncheon.

Q. To the scholarship luncheon, that is so inspiring.

A. Yes, yes. So I'm going to try this year and see what happens.

Q. Do you have any other things that you would like people that are interested in the history to know about?

A. One of the things I've been thinking about doing and I talked to Stacy about this, is I have boxes of materials from my career at the Secretary of State's Office, the United States Senate, stuff like that. I was thinking what am I going to do with this because it's piling up out in my garage.

Q. Uh-huh.

A. So I'm thinking about giving it to SSU. Say it right, the University of Illinois Springfield and saying if this will help students here's what government's really like, here's emails.

Q. Uh-huh. Really neat, sounds like a good master's thesis for somebody to work on.

A. Yes, yes. To the different things we were involved in and things like that and maybe somebody else can come up and say patronage is the right way to go.

Q. Well thank you so much.

A. Thank you.

End of Interview

Total Time 70 minutes 39 seconds