

Chitra Smith

July 24, 2001

Jeff Charnley,
interviewer

Charnley: Today is Tuesday, July 24, 2001. I am Jeff Charnley, interviewing Dr. Chitra Smith for the MSU Oral History Project for the sesquicentennial, to be commemorated four years from now, in the year 2005.

Dr. Smith, you can see that we have a tape recorder here for this session. Do you give us permission to record the interview?

Smith: Yes, I do.

Charnley: I'd like to start with some personal and educational information questions, relating to that. Where were you born and raised, and where did you go to school?

Smith: A fairly weird history. I was born in Jerusalem, which was then called Palestine, rather than Israel, but I was a Czech. I mean, my parents were Czech, and returned. I grew up in Prague. I was sent off to boarding school in England in March '39. From boarding school I went to Oxford, where I got a degree in history. After that, I went to work for the American Occupation Army in 1945. No, that's not right. You don't want all my whole occupational history, do you?

Charnley: No, we're interested in both, of course.

Smith: My first job out of college was in adult education. The university had a so-called

delegacy for extramural studies, which means extension division, and my first job, after graduation, was in adult education. By this time it was World War II, and I taught classes to people like aircraft production workers and firemen and people in basic training at a nearby air base. I did adult education courses. The title that I devised for one I thought was really quite prophetic. You know, these would be twelve-lecture, twelve- evening courses. I had one that I called "Britain, America, and Russia--Allies for How Long?" [Laughter]

Charnley: That was in '45 or '46?

Smith: That was in '44.

Charnley: So even anticipating what was happening, or what happened right after the war. So you were in England during the blitz?

Smith: Yes. Oh yes.

Charnley: Were you in London?

Smith: No, I was in Bristol, or in the suburbs of Bristol, but I do have some wartime memories that are quite picturesque, in that I was doing what was then called school certificate leaving exam, high school leaving exams, which are now called O levels or A levels, or what have you. At my school in Bristol, we were doing our school certificate, meaning very important. This captures your high school record, exams. The air raid would start, and we would be shepherded into the basement. We all had to turn over our test papers, go down to the basement. Then usually it didn't take very long, half an hour, forty-five minutes later, the all-clear sounded, the matron at the head of the stairs with milk and cookies, and then we'd go back and turn the exam

over and continue. Not everybody took his final high school exams under these conditions.

Charnley: I guess not.

Smith: Then I went to Oxford from there. At Oxford I was politically extremely active. I was chairman of what was called the Labor Club, but there were two Socialist clubs, and the Labor Club was not the Labor Party type, not the Social Democrats, but the very leftist, more or less solo traveling variant of a Socialist club. So the Labor Club was by far the largest political organization in the university, and many, many famous people got their start there. For me, with my eccentric foreign name and my quite noticeable accent, to be chairman of this very large political body was distinctive.

Charnley: Who were some of the people that either later became famous that you knew in that club? Any that you recall?

Smith: The one that only comes to mind immediately is Iris Murdoch, because she was well-known as a major novelist. I've forgotten the names. They'll come to me as I read *Economist* or something, it'll come to me. I may send you note about who they were.

Charnley: I forgot to ask, what was your maiden name?

Smith: Well, the male version is easy--Rudinger. But since all Czech females have an "ova" tacked onto their name, it was Rudingerova. Just as it sounds. R-U-D-I-N-G-E-R-O-V-A. In the Slavic languages, you can't just dispense with the "ova" because it makes no difference in England. You feel funny if you--a female, it's as though you were a transvestite if you don't add the "ova."

Charnley: What languages did you study?

Smith: I was brought up by my parents bilingually, in Czech and German. They were very hot on not being provincial. My mother had studied in England in World War I, and she spoke very fluent English. So she taught us English at home. At school we had German, Czech German, Latin, and French. So I spoke French, not elegantly, but serviceably. I still speak German badly, but fluently. Same with Czech.

So when I went to England, I could speak English fluently, but with a very noticeable accent. I couldn't have gone if my mother hadn't taught us, you know. I picked up the senior-level curriculum in English without any trouble when I went to England from France.

My family had a history of being very good at languages. My mother grew up bilingually in German and Hungarian because her family had a winter home in Vienna and a summer home in Budapest, or on the lake in Hungary. My father was really a linguistic genius. He could swear in about eight or nine languages, but he could have cultivated conversations in four or five. So this was taken very seriously in our family.

When my father wound up in jail during the early Communist era, he decided, with all this spare time, what would one do with it? Well, the answer was obvious: learn another language. So he learned Russian in jail, which he then put to good use when he finally got let out. Hey, you don't want to know this.

Charnley: No, this is very interesting. In many of the interviews that I've done, World War II shaped many of the people that I spoke with, and it's important in understanding you as a scholar and your experience at Michigan State. Understanding that perspective is important, and how the war, especially, shaped--and the postwar period. This university was shaped by World War II in many regards.

Smith: That's very true. That's very true.

Charnley: I think many people today forget or overlook that, and yet I think your World War II experience during the war is critical. Your parents, they both survived the war?

Smith: They both survived the war in England. They both went to England as refugees and worked, because they both spoke English fluently, so for them it was a very interesting time. It was not a time of deprivation or anything. In fact, our whole family had what in England they called "we had a good war." That is not an insignificant sort of turn of phrase, because I don't think the English have ever been as admirable before or since, during that war. I mean, the degree of social cohesion, of solidarity, of genuine mutual consideration under these constrained conditions was absolutely superb. You've never seen human nature so beautifully expressed by a whole people as you did during that time.

Charnley: Do you think that it chipped the social class structure?

Smith: It was ready to be shed. Between the wars, the labor unrest had been pretty serious and there was an absolute social consensus in England that during the rationing and the blackouts and so on, we're never going back to the same thing. That was a universal notion in England.

And then along came Sir William Beveridge, who was, well, technically, a liberal. He was the leader of the liberal party. He was also, I think he was master of University College at Oxford. In any case, the Beveridge Plan that he concocted was the sort of brave new world of the fairer, juster England that we were going to have after the war. It was essentially what you would call today a Social Democrat agenda of welfare statism, of free university education. The National Health Service was part of that plan. This is why Churchill didn't last after the war as a

political leader, because people, by that time--again, there was extraordinary degree of consensus. People knew what they wanted, and it wasn't what the conservative party was selling.

Charnley: Did you ever see Churchill in person?

Smith: Yes.

Charnley: What was that circumstance?

Smith: That is a good anecdote. It has the advantage of being absolutely true. VE Day, which was May 7, 1945, the friend with whom I shared an apartment, we had been friends at Oxford and we were roommates in London, when we were working in London. We did what everybody else did, go out in the streets to celebrate, and so we wandered out. We lived in B____. We wandered a long time until we got to Whitehall [phonetic], and there the streets were absolutely packed with people, waiting and yelling for Churchill.

It was known he was indoors, and he came out on the balcony and he waved and people screamed and everybody was ecstatic. He made a 100-word little remark, but he seemed to be really blind drunk by this time. I mean, amiably. The only thing I remember about the speech--it wasn't a speech, the remark. I'm not making this up. My friend Dorothy Wurttemberg [phonetic] will testify to this. He talked about "the bird of freedom ch-ch-ch-ch-chirping in our hearts." [Laughter] And all these decades, I thought he was drunk, until I read some biographical piece about him recently, which said that he had had a serious stutter as a younger person, and it may be that he had only a reasonable amount to drink and that that stutter reasserted itself. So in any case, I heard him talking about ch-ch-ch-ch-chirping in our hearts.

Charnley: What did you study at Oxford?

Smith: History.

Charnley: Any great teachers or influential teachers that you had, or memorable teachers?

Smith: Yes, two or three. The most memorable, I guess, was my moral tutor, which is what the university called academic advisors, which I think is a nice notion. My moral tutor was a medievalist called Mrs. Agnes Leys. She was married to a clergyman who had a living somewhere, but he never went there. This is very nineteenth century England, sort of. In any case, Mrs. Leys was a lovely, lovely lady who was what one would call today sort of a Christian Socialist, and she really kept an eye on her girls.

When it came to picking my special subject, which is what we would call the senior thesis, everybody did one in those days and there was a list of fourteen topics the university had approved. This is in history, now. Modern history I majored in. The most recent was William Peale's economic policy, 1846-'48. So this is the most modern. You have to visualize me as, you know, I've spent all my life on my political activities in this labor club, the Socialist club, so I would do the most recent and the most economic, so I said that's what I would do.

Mrs. Leys, who knew exactly what I was doing with most of my time, said, "No, my dear. You're getting quite enough of that sort of thing. I think the time has come for you to spend a little time in the company of a great mind, and therefore thou shalt do Saint Augustine and the decline of the Roman Empire." And then she added as an afterthought--and that was really what was behind it, she wanted to brag to her buddies that she had someone who could do it--and she said, "Anyway, you're the only one of my girls who can handle the Latin." [Laughter]

So I did Saint Augustine and I got a good Marxist fix on the causes of the decline of the Roman Empire. It stuck with me as a fascinating subject. I have a three-volume Gibbon

[phonetic] sitting next to my bed, and when I can't sleep and I've finished all my mysteries and my political journals and so forth, I pick up my Gibbon and I read a few pages before I go to sleep.

Charnley: We're talking about your education at Oxford and how it shaped you.

Smith: Significant teachers. Mrs. Leys, I never had what we would call a course with, a tutorial with, but she was extremely significant. I had a Pusey House high church cleric, who was the expert on Saint Augustine, and he was a guy who went around in black skirts and silver buckles on his shoes. Pusey House was the foundation that served Anglicans, or Church of England people, who were really Catholic in all but name. They had essentially this very, very high church, a quasi para-Catholic thing, and he was the university's expert on Saint Augustine. I was very lucky to get him.

That man was absolutely brilliant in that he never called me on my half-baked Marxism, but he made me see all the--I won't say errors--the unexamined assumptions that go into a Marxist interpretation of history. So he was the one who probably subverted my basic political ideological certainties. It wasn't a crisis for me or anything. It was just interesting. So he was one.

Charnley: What was his name?

Smith: Oh, God. It'll come to me. These memory things, what happens is once you've activated the topic, it'll come back, but you don't know whether it's going to be five minutes or five days. So I will make sure that I figure out who he was.

Charnley: Then we can add that.

Smith: Yes, you can add this. The other one was a guy I tutored with. "Tutored," we used to call it, if you went to a man for your tutorials. That was in the days when you really did have individual tutorials once a week. That was the ideal traditional Oxford system, where you were given an essay to write, and you worked furiously, reading and writing for a week. Then you handed it in the night before so he could read it, and then you went in for your hour's tutorial, where he would then tear it apart and go from there.

So the major part of your university career was reading and writing these weekly papers, and then spending an hour having them reviewed and discussed by an expert, a real expert. The other half was lectures, and on lectures, nobody made you go to any lectures. It was just a matter of whether you wanted to go or not, and you could go for one of two reasons, either because you were very instrumental about this and very calculating and you knew that three years from now you would have to write some very searching exam papers on all this stuff, so maybe you'd better get it from the horse's mouth. That's one reason. The other was that you just heard this guy was so interesting or he had such a wonderful topic or something, that you wanted to go hear it. So being me, I mostly did the latter and had a wonderful time.

Even on unpromising things, like Stump's *Charters* [phonetic] was a big book of pre-Norman English, Anglo-Saxon constitutional documents, proverbial. It was the dullerest thing you could possibly imagine. But to me it didn't seem dull, because he had such very interesting things to say, in effect, what we would say today about the social dynamics that led to these constitutional arrangements and inventions.

I used to go to lectures a lot, a lot more than my friends, but the central part of your genuine educational experience was not the great lectures. I mean, I can do that today. But this business of spending an hour a week, rethinking, the best you could devise on a subject you had read about a lot, and then spending an hour in conversation about that with somebody who was a certified, proven expert on the subject, that was the core of our education. It was a wonderful

system, but, of course, very expensive.

Charnley: One on one. What did you do for graduate work?

Smith: I think I'd better tell you my guilty secret. I never finished graduate work. I never even started graduate work until years and years later. I didn't see any need for it. There were so many other exciting things to do. I don't know if you know, at Oxford you automatically have an M.A. bestowed on you four years later, as long as remain a member of the university, so I had this M.A.

But when I came here and started teaching in University College, or in Basic College, that's all I had, and then--I don't know whether I should say this--no, I won't say this for the record. I was going to name names about who started pressuring me about "You've got to get a Ph.D. We can't promote you without."

And I said, "I don't have time for a Ph.D."

My mentor said, "It doesn't have to be a good Ph.D. Just get one in education. Just get it. Nobody will ask what it's in. You've got a record in the university that you can stand on, but it's just, we need this." So to cut a long story short, I resited this.

Then I went to Indonesia for a year with my husband. He was on a research assignment and I was along for the ride. While we were in Indonesia, I got so fascinated with development economics as a discipline, as a field, and, of course, you have to remember, I had been teaching in a multidisciplinary social science program, and I was very much committed to the inside-producing nature of multidisciplinary, what we used to call interdisciplinary, study.

So, development economics is an absolutely classic case, where you cannot get to first base understanding economic development unless you take a very close look at the culture, anthropological. You know, the values, the orientations, the priorities. Anthropology, sociology, for the social structure, and who's powerful and who's poor and so forth. Political

science, for how is power exercised and by whom. So that development economics was the ultimate, quintessential interdisciplinary social science topic, and this began to interest me so much, I was prepared suddenly to do a Ph.D.

I was going to do a dissertation on a really important subject and the subject was going to be, can a culture, a country--I mean, Indonesia was what I then knew best--become modern and prosperous without sacrificing its culture, its values, its traditions, its rather exquisite rules of social conduct. You see, the question was, can you get the good without the bad, of modernity? Basically that was what I was going to do.

But to do that, I realized, would involve manufacturing of a unified theory of social science, which, of course, didn't exist and doesn't exist. It doesn't begin to exist, even though in the fifties and sixties, there were people like T____ Parsons who thought they could produce such a thing, but they didn't. In any case, so I was going to produce one of those. I did the absolute minimum of coursework, because my coursework by this time was all "read it yourself with a friend in charge," you know.

I have what is known as an A.B.D. in multidisciplinary social science at MSU, which means I have done everything except the dissertation. I even had orals. I don't know whether to tell you this on the record, because it's not fair to give the impression that the university was handing these out. I think, to my knowledge, I'm the only person who ever did it that way. But most of the experts were colleagues whom I knew well. Some were friends.

So I took most of these courses by independent study, with an occasional chat. My orals were presided over by Bill Ross, who was an anthropologist, who was also director of the Asian Studies Center, of which I was a founding member. I became an Asianist as a result of that experience in Indonesia. So Bill Ross and some other friends sat around and we chatted, and that was my oral, and it was lovely. It was great fun. So then I said, "Now I will start my dissertation."

To cut a long story short, I worked very hard, and after about three years--you know,

there was no rush. I had a perfectly good, tenured husband. We didn't depend on my income for anything. We lived very simply. We never had great aspirations. The first time I remember we really needed money--by this time I was making what to me seemed a lot of money--was when we decided the children should be able to go to school anywhere. They didn't have to go to a place that was cheap.

Charnley: For a university education?

Smith: Yes, for their university education. They headed in very different directions, but more about that--no, that's not part of what you're talking about.

But the dissertation, and the way the university coped with me, was interesting. My husband used to say, rather scornfully--this was not necessarily flattering--he'd say, "You were just born lucky, and you have luck no matter what the issue is." In fact, his favorite name for me was "you luck jute," which was a corruption of my name. So I was very lucky. I was given this very pleasurable way of doing graduate work, and I did do a full--you know, as I look back on it, I didn't cut any corners. It's just that it looks fishy.

Charnley: It sounds more like you continued the Oxford style of education here, which, if you had that flexibility, actually--

Smith: It's true. But also it was sort of potentially corrupt, because by this time I had peer relationships with all these people who were my tutors, and that is not good, actually.

Charnley: Let's go back a little bit. How was it that you came to Michigan State?

Smith: We had a fairly interesting life. My husband was a political scientist. His specialization

was in international relations, which was at that time a branch of political science. His name was Bruce L. Smith. I met him in Germany, where was working for the OSS and State Department on a liaison deal, looking for war criminals. He was looking for them to interview for our version of oral history. Find these super Nazis. They were in jail. I mean, most of them were in jail. And if you found them, you had them put in jail, and then Bruce used to interview them in jail. He would go for two or three hours a day.

[Begin Tape 1, Side B]

Charnley: When the tape ended, you were talking about your husband's experience in OSS in 1947.

Smith: Right. Actually, it must have been in '45 or earlier, because, as I say, he used to conduct these prison interviews before we met. In fact, I found that very interesting when we first met. We met on a blind date. So in any case, Bruce was something of a specialist on propaganda, and he was specifically assigned to find the propaganda big shots and interview them, which he did.

Charnley: He interviewed Goebbels' henchmen?

Smith: Well, yes. Goebbels was not available, but some people at the working level. Well, these were upper bureaucracy, sort of, basically, experts in propaganda, but they were not politicians like Goebbels.

Charnley: Was he at Nuremberg?

Smith: No.

Charnley: We were talking about his work, interviewing and looking for prisoners.

Smith: So when he came back from Germany, he had, briefly, a research job at the University of Chicago, which was his alma mater. He was undergraduate of Pomona, and Ph.D. University of Chicago. He also had this interdisciplinary bent. He was there long enough. He was there on a Carnegie [Foundation] grant to put together a social science abstracts journal. It still exists. I think it still exists. Last time I looked, it did.

After that, he got a job in the State Department, which had at that time an advanced training institute called the Foreign Service Institute, and he taught international relations at the Foreign Service Institute.

Charnley: Where was that located?

Smith: In Washington, right in the State Department Building. We lived in Bethesda, Maryland, and I worked at a research outfit at American University called the Bureau of Social Science Research, where I worked on survey research.

How he came to MSU, this is also actually really part of the history of the era, rather than of Michigan State. While he was working at the Foreign Service Institute and I was working at American University, in research, the [Joseph] McCarthy era descended, and people in the State Department had just an absolutely miserable time, especially people like Bruce who were sort of -he was not extremely left-wing, but definitely liberal and definitely Democrat rather than Republican. In any case, he was absolutely terrified. We saw several of our friends go down by being dragged through the mud, and though they were cleared ultimately, their careers were ruined. So Bruce desperately wanted to get out of there.

But about that time, the decision was taken from him, because the [Dwight D.]

Eisenhower administration decided on reductions in force in the State Department and the Foreign Service, and it also wanted to turn over things to private enterprise. You know, we've been doing this for a long time.

Charnley: Republicans have.

Smith: Yes. These "reductions in force," people got RIF'd. That was the language for it. So they abolished the Foreign Service Institute on the ground that it should be turned back to private enterprise, meaning send them Harvard or send them to Michigan State. You don't have to have a specialized training institute.

So here we were, and it wasn't that he couldn't find another job instantly, because there were other government jobs. Air Force had an intelligence outfit that really made considerable efforts to get him. By this time, he was terrified. He wasn't going to work for the government ever again. If things like McCarthy could happen, he wanted no part of it.

So we were still trying to decide what to do, and one day, in the morning, the phone rang in Bethesda, and a man from Michigan State University said, "Our international relations man just dropped dead, and somebody said you might be available." It was about July or August, you see, or September. School year. So, Michigan. And Bruce was such a snob. He used to talk about "the middlewaist," when you talk about the Midwest. [Laughter] He was a terrible snob. He was an elitist in the nasty sense. So he came and we came and that's how I came to Michigan State University.

Charnley: What year was that?

Smith: He came in '54. He came in '54, and I came in between Christmas '54 and New Year's '55. So here I was, in 1955, but I still had brought with me a job. I was doing a huge book-size,

annotated bibliography on international communication and propaganda. This was a contract with the Rand Corporation, which in those days was much more government-oriented than it is now. The Rand Corporation is sort of a high-brow, basically, not just defense. It started as a high-brow defense research outfit. Now it does other things, too. So in any case, I had that, but being a hopelessly gregarious person, a job that involved just sitting at home or in the library just wasn't enough fun.

So, to cut a long story short, there was a man, a colleague of my husband's in political science, whom I had met at a convention once, and we had one of those typical convention flirtations, and he was very amused that I suddenly showed up here as the wife of this new colleague. But he was plugged in in various places, including University College, or Basic College. He was a friend of the chairman of the social science department, and he mediated this business of one course, strictly what we call a temp these days, a temp to teach one course. The guy needed somebody badly and Leroy Ferguson [phonetic], my friend, vouched for me, and so Walter Fee hired me for this one course.

I went for years, but then pretty soon I had three courses a year, and year after year, it became a permanent temporary job, and I loved it. I really enjoyed myself. This was my other experience with interdisciplinary work, you see, because the social science department was that. I got involved in editing our common readings and so forth. In those days that's what we did. We edited our own readings books. Anyway, I think it was a good idea. At the time it seemed not so good, but now they seem to me like damn good books that we put together.

So I was very much settled in, in the social science department. Oh, yes, and that's where the question of promotion came up, because I was a permanent temporary instructor, and the pressures began about, you know, I ought to be promotable. But I had to get a Ph.D. and I said, no, until we took that year off and we went to Indonesia and then I decided, well, now I will do this.

So now I'm back where I was before. I have been teaching for years. I am, I guess, well-

regarded as a teacher because there were enough people, not only in the University College, but in the provost's office, who wanted me to get this obstacle out of the way. I didn't do it until we came back, and I thought it would be fascinating to be the person who would unify the social sciences apropos of an application that required it.

I should tell you that while I like playing with theory, and I do it reasonably well, I basically don't like theory as a d_____, as an intrinsic thing. I like it the better to do applied research and applied writing. I mean, theory, to me, it's a device to assist in doing more insightful interpretations of facts. See what I mean? Anyhow, I was going to cobble together the theory so that I could then find out what I really wanted to know, is whether you had to throw the baby out with the bath water when you modernized a wonderful, rich, lovable, traditional culture. And that involved systematizing the interactions between social, political, economic, religious.

So I worked on this quite happily, but with increasing frustration. I used to have rolls of paper on the floor, where I had diagrams. The children were not allowed to walk on this part of the dining room because of my-- [Laughter]

Charnley: That's where your research was spread out.

Smith: Since I never really was any good at mathematical logic, I had to do it in terms of visual, graphic things. You know, the theoretical and convolution. In any case, I said I've got to just either do or die, so Bruce went off and took the children on vacation to Jamaica. I didn't go. Jamaica was the closest we could come to Indonesia in terms of atmosphere and looks and feel and so on. I said, "I will just simply break the back of this while you're gone. No distraction."

And when they came back, I announced to Bruce, "It cannot be done. I have had a really major breakthrough, and I now know that what I am trying to do cannot be done in the current state of the particular social sciences. They will have to evolve a lot more highly before one can begin to do a genuine systematization of the whole lot." So I felt basically liberated. To hell

with the Ph.D., to hell with the dissertation.

Then I got recruited from University College and became one of the founding fathers, mothers, parents, of James Madison College, and there I was given a highly-visible job which began to raise questions about, you know, where's the Ph.D.? I was chairman of a team that taught the required freshman course, which means the whole first year, for three terms, our freshmen had to--this was non-negotiable--they all had to take the same, which was essentially an introduction to the social sciences. One term was primarily sociological, one primarily economic, one primarily political.

The boys who taught were from these disciplines, but I was the coordinator. Today, we don't call such people chairmen or director. I was the coordinator, in modern parlance, of this course. But it was a very tightly-knit group. I had, variously, between five and seven young men, half of whom had just got their Ph.D., and half of them were still working on it. Oh, this was, I think, probably the most productive job I ever had.

Charnley: Could you talk a little bit more about that? Because I haven't spoken with anyone who was at the founding of James Madison. What was the driving force behind that concept?

Smith: Herb Garfinkel. Herb Garfinkel was a fiercely anti-Communist Social Democrat from New York. He had a New York accent. He came from almost sort of a comic-book Jewish background, and like a lot of these New York intellectuals, was just tremendously socially involved and dedicated and so forth. Well, Herb Garfinkel, he had done his dissertation on some political labor issue, and he was a member of the political sci faculty.

Now, this is sort of important. Now we really are into serious university history. This was in the mid-sixties. There was in the air a tremendous amount of breast-beating and soul-searching about the massification of university education and the search for the small college atmosphere for the direct links between individual students and teachers, the sort of broadly

conceived interaction and role-modeling and support and whatnot. It was in the air, all over the university, the search for new models that would take the curse off mass education. That's what it was.

The residential college was again being discussed nationally, but in Michigan State this discussion became quite intensive, the residential college as a way of serving that goal. The idea was that if you studied and lived and ate in the same place and your faculty had their offices there, too, this would help reduce the scale of the unit in which you get educated.

Herb Garfinkel was a very active politician. He was a good lobbyist for this. And there were several other people. The guy at Justin Morrill, who was perhaps the most brilliant of them, in terms of the vision. Wait a minute now, his name will come to me.

Charnley: Was it Carlin?

Smith: No, no. Carlin was okay, but Carlin was an ordinary guy, not a great man. But this guy who founded Justin Morrill College, he had a sort of Grand Rapids Dutch name. I will have to go do something about these names.

The point is, it was in the air and there were other serious and fairly prominent people in the university who were pressing for these residential colleges. They were going to have one for each of the disciplinary groups, you see, not connected at all to University College, but as a formula for these residential colleges. They were going to have four for people who were primarily interested, who were majoring in one of these disciplinary sets. Lyman Briggs was the science one; Justin Morrill was the artsy English, history, languages; James Madison was the social science one. There was never an ATL equivalent. That was subsumed in the Justin Morrill model.

With tremendous energy, these people piloted this through and they got the university approval process to approve it, starting with committees and going through the Academic

Council--well, through the educational policies or academic policy committee, and then the board of trustees. It was a long time a-coming.

But Herb Garfinkel was the man who invented James Madison College, who piloted, who was a midwife of it, and who was the first dean, the founding dean. Herb Garfinkel I only knew because as a faculty wife, I went to political sci parties. We had no other source of mutual acquaintance. But he knew from those occasions what I was doing in social science, and he proceeded to recruit me. I said, "Why should I do this? I'm so happy where I am." But he was a great salesman. His family probably sold garments in the garment district.

So I went to James Madison College and was with the founding set of students and faculty. One of the students in that founding set, Teresa O'Sullivan, is now a well-known lawyer on the faculty at Stanford [University], who appears on TV quite often. Teresa O'Sullivan, whose name I happen to remember, was a big man on campus, in terms of student governance, and is today a major figure nationally.

The other major figure that I can think of in terms of Madison students, that was the miracle crop of 1977, which contained both Mary Norton and Mike McConnell. Mary Norton was the first female Rhodes Scholar in the history of the Rhodes Scholarship. My daughter always says I trained her from a pup, because I first had her as a student, a favorite student at Madison, then I made my transition to the Honors College, and by the time she showed up as a candidate, I was on the interviewing committee in the Honors College, the committee that recommended her.

She went to Oxford and came back. Then she married Mike McConnell, who was the most conservative, prissy, arrogant, and brilliant student at Madison. He came from a miraculous cohort. Mary was extraordinarily good. He was brilliant. There are a couple of other really brilliant people in that group. I don't know how you could have the statistical fluke of having them all in one year. There was a ten-year supply of super brilliant students that year.

Mike McConnell is now one of those controversial nominations to the Federal Appeals

Court that the [George W.] Bush administration is trying to get up its courage to submit, now that the approval process has been taken over by the Democrats. This conservative, who is on Bush's list. The question is, will he make it?

But Mike McConnell went and became a faculty member at the University of Chicago Law School, which is a very prestigious one. And then one day--I couldn't imagine why this happened--it turns out he is in the law school at the University of Utah. Utah? After this spectacular history and record he had made. Ah, but Orrin, what's his name?

Charnley: Orrin Hatch?

Smith: Orrin Hatch, chairman of the Judiciary Committee. He and Michael, I think, plotted this, that they would get him on the Supreme Court in these stages. I don't know this. I keep forgetting there is this tape. I have no idea that they plotted it, but why would Michael go to--I asked him. I saw him briefly, or Mary, somebody. I said, "What in the world possessed you?" And they claim it was because they wanted to protect their children from these nasty modern lousy influences.

Charnley: Utah was a haven?

Smith: Utah, at least they wouldn't be threatened with lousy values in the schools, which is stretching it a bit, because while Michael is, I suppose, a church-goer, Mary, who was a flaming agnostic, became an obedient Anglican when she married him. So he has had always a religious commitment, but the way Anglicanism is, you know, you keep it in its place; it doesn't become a flaming central public part of your life. So there's something very funny about going to Utah, and I think it had to do with facilitating the business of Orrin Hatch as a sponsor for his--

Charnley: So McConnell and Hatch were united in their conservative view?

Smith: Yes. Exactly, exactly. Michael became--again, he would show up on public TV frequently when there was one of those issues on which they would have a conservative legal opinion and the liberal legal opinion. He has done a number of these, so he's a sort of a semi-public figure, in a sense. I'm really very, very proud of him, because the part about his conservatism and his arrogance, my children hated him. He would come to the house once in a while. But anyway, I can't say these things, because if this ever turns up in the public record, and then Mike will come and listen to it.

Charnley: Well, it's part of his career at Michigan State.

Smith: Oh, but I really must be careful.

Charnley: So you had an important influence on him as a mentor, as a teacher?

Smith: I had a minor influence. I did have, yes. I had him in class, and he would come and give me arguments. Always impeccably polite. He would come to my office. He would not try to have confrontations in class during questions or arguments in class. He would wait, and then he would show up during my office hours, and said, "You know, what you said was awfully interesting and I agree with a lot of it, but how could you possibly say da da da, in view of something something?"

This, of course, was what Madison was really intended to do. This kind of interaction was supposed to be part of this Holy Grail that we were all chasing in student interaction. So I knew him that way. Many years later--no, this is part of the university history. I'll go through that later. This is important, but it's really more part of something else.

We were talking about James Madison. We're talking about notables that were produced by that college. Mike McConnell is the one that will probably be most prominent over the next decade, of the ones I can think of, but they're scattered about. Again, I'd have to do a little thinking to dredge up some of the others. But this law school business is no accident. The two I remember are Teresa, Terry Sullivan, the first-year Madison founding cohort student, who, as I said, is a very influential law professor, and I think she's at Stanford. She's known as Terry Sullivan, and she was the first student that really had an impact in the Academic Council. She was so good that she could meet the faculty on its own ground. When we first added students, it was done as a sort of [unclear] political expedient.

Charnley: To give representation in the sixties?

Smith: Exactly. But Teresa was the first student where a lot of scoffers said, "Well, you know, if they were all like that, they'd be worth having." But she went to law school and Mike McConnell went to law school because James Madison always had that dual set of academic objectives. They're closely related. They were going to train people on a multidisciplinary social science base for graduate schools and careers in public service. That was the intent.

That sort of bifurcated quite early on into, one the hand, federal and state government. We have somebody very, very brilliant somewhere hiding as a super-expert in the Food and Drug Administration. Never mind, forget it. Back to the main line. This is a function of age. I'm seventy-eight, and the idea of, stay on a single track, without constantly branching, through a myriad recollection, it really is a certifiably geriatric trait.

Charnley: But the other thing is, the breadth and length of your career, and your knowledge of the institution, which we're trying to tap and capture, you have a lot to say, so don't be afraid. As a train of thought comes, we can continue to talk about that. But really, what you're talking

about in James Madison and how important that development was, both on the students and also on the institution, I think is critical.

Smith: And these two tracks, that there were people there who were budding public officials, and the other, it became a very super-stupendous, brilliant kind of pre-law program. This is due to two men, one of whom is no longer here. He's somewhere in Texas. The other is still here, Richard Zinman, who is the philosophy man, the political philosophy guy, in Madison. It was the vision of Jack Painter, his friend who is now in Texas, and Zinman, who's still here, it was their vision, basically, what a really superbly trained, elite legal mind ought to have by way of undergraduate preparation, and--

[Begin Tape 2, Side A]

Charnley: This is tape two of the interview with Professor Chitra Smith.

When the last tape ended, you were talking about the dual focus of James Madison Law School and also directed toward foreign service and public service.

Smith: Foreign service, among other things. Public service in general. The notion of responsible, elite public officials, on the model the French--well, that's something else. So it was Dick Zinman and Jack Painter who organized what was essentially the pre-law curriculum in Madison, but you would have never known it from its name because it was called--are you ready for this--Justice, Morality, and Constitutional Democracy. It was a name of an academic curriculum. Justice, Morality, and Constitutional Democracy. In Madison it was known as JMCD, not unnaturally.

So these people like the arrogant Mike McConnell, who wanted to become lawyers, brilliant lawyers, couldn't be arrogant when they were around Dick Zinman, because he is just

unbelievably erudite, and incredibly nice. I mean, he's just an absolutely angelic human being. At the same, he has this sort of brilliant Talmudically honed brain. Oh, he's a lovely man.

Anyway, thanks to Dick Zinman and Jack Painter, JMCD became a really superb pre-law program. It was never formally so identified. But the other fields, like the one that I was more into, I was in two fields in Madison. One was international relations, and the other was what was called socioeconomic policy problems, which is now called political economy. So what's now political economy is what I was sort of a founding member of, that concentration, in Madison.

Of course, the students in these two interest streams had a lot of interest in each other. It's clear that they were in fields that overlapped and melded. Some intended to go to law school, some intended to go to fancy graduate schools, but basically their interest areas overlapped, so it was a very wonderful, lively social life there among the students, and the interactions with the faculty were very, very--they took a lot for granted, these kids. They really expected you to be available almost anytime they had a great thought or not-so-great thought.

I used to spend so much on academic advising that I would stay at night to work, to prepare my lectures. I would be in my office in Case Hall at nine o'clock at night, working away on spiffing up tomorrow's lecture, and there'd be a knock on the door. I'm not making this up. This actually happened. There would be three girls in dressing gowns, one of them with curlers in her hair, saying, "Can we come in? Can we talk to you?" Yes.

This was an epic conversation about girls who were bright and good students, who felt persecuted by the sisters for not being feminists and for not having great ambitions and for wanting to become good wives and mothers, and they were willing to work, but they had no flaming career interests. And these girls felt so hassled in the atmosphere here. We had a very aggressive bunch of libbers on the faculty here.

I was viewed as a traitor to my class by them, but I became sort of den mother for the girls in Madison who were perfectly good--I mean, they kept up. They were among the best students, some of them, but they did not have career ambitions as a central part of their

conception of the good life. I was sort of their defender and their consoler, and I would give them pep talks about how good it was and how important it was to be like these Victorian ladies who raised magnificent sons instead of going out to run for Parliament. [Laughter]

So you see, again I'm drifting, because what I wanted to explain were some of the excesses of that intimacy in Madison, that you couldn't work in your own office without the girls coming in their dorm attire to try the latest problem out on you. But of course, I loved that particularly group dearly, and students have a way of knowing whether you're fond of them or not. You can be carefully impartial about what you do for whom, you do the same for everybody, but the ones that are loved know it and they will then, accordingly, impose on you.

Charnley: How supportive of the residential college were the various presidents of the university, like John [A.] Hannah? Was he a tough sell at first?

Smith: Hannah was already gone. Now, who was after Hannah?

Charnley: [Clifton R.] Wharton [Jr.]

Smith: Oh yes. Wharton was very much aware of the fact that what he was getting was a crypto-elite program. You see, this was always the thing about Madison. It never had any admissions requirements or graduation requirements that were any different from any other, but within these standard parameters, the program was so demanding that we tended to get students who were extremely good, much better than average.

I used to, at one time, keep tabs of the statistics, which you might find mind-boggling if you ever want to do archival work, on the SAT scores and ACT scores, averages for the sixteen colleges in the university, and then for departments within the colleges. Madison and engineering were always at the top, and education and business were always at the bottom, and

the spread was huge.

But in any case, Madison had this rather elite bunch of students, because the program was so demanding that it was fun. It was a fun challenge for the good students, and the bad ones just didn't think it was worth the hassle. The averages ones. We had some average ones, and we tended them very lovingly, but the Madison student body was being given an elite education that was as good--I swear, this is true. I know I tend to be a little hyperbolic. The first full sentence my son ever said--he started talking late--was, "Mommy, you always zaggerate." [Laughter] He had heard my husband say that, of course.

Charnley: So you felt that they were getting a good--

Smith: Wharton, who knew an elite education when he saw one, having had one himself, was very supportive. Of course, Madison kept producing these golden eggs, in the form of Rhodes Scholarships, and for years the recruitment of good students to this university was really facilitated by the fact that Madison kept turning out these students that won Rhodes Scholarships and Marshalls, which I've always thought were more intellectually demanding than the Rhodes.

Incidentally, Paul Hunt's wife, Kathy, was a Marshall when he was a Rhodes, and she was at Cambridge and he was at Oxford. They were both undergraduates here. I think it's a wonderful story. Oh, sometime, if you want to, we can talk about his some more, but there is an extraordinarily interesting group of people on campus, some of whom you ought to interview. I think there must be about maybe fifteen or twenty by now. These are Honors College graduates. MSU products, Honors College graduates. The reason it came to me is that Madison and Honors College, between them, produced these golden eggs of students who went to prestige fellowships and prestige graduate schools. The Honors College had a lot to do with it. That's where I went after Madison.

Now, wait a minute, where was I with this?

Charnley: You were talking about the group of fifteen to twenty students.

Smith: Former students, alumni, who are now MSU faculty members. These people would typically graduate from something, say, chemistry and Honors College. They would then go away to some prestigious graduate school, and then they might work at some prestigious school, but then they would ultimately come back and join the faculty at Michigan State. We have at least fifteen--I think there may be more now--such people, of whom Kathy and Paul Hunt are two. That's why I brought this up.

You might want to sort of put him on your list, is Eric Goodman, who is an engineer, mathematician, whatever. He's in computer science, a terribly brainy computer science whiz kid. He used to be. So there are these Honors College alumni from very different fields. The woman in history is another one. [Teresa] Tess Tavormina. Tess Tavormina is English.

Charnley: She was associate dean, but then she went back to the disciplines in College of Arts and Letters.

Smith: I think maybe English. Yes, because she used to run poetry workshops during the summer. You know, national poetry workshops. Tess Tavormina was one of the few really good women. I mean, there was an awful lot of this sisterhood business and a tremendous amount of second-rate, ambitious feminism run rampant, but there were a few really superb women that sort of slid in there without being noticed by the sisters, and who, in some cases, were rejected by them as not counting as female appointments because they didn't have the right ideology.

Charnley: Interesting.

Smith: But among the really good women, Tess Tavormina was one. And another is very old, and if you were to talk to her, you must do it soon because she's hooked up to one of these breathing deals. She's very happy and cheerful. She doesn't act moribund, but she is, basically.

This is a different part of the university altogether, and I will tell you later--I don't want to do it here--you're getting this awful mixed salad here of references to everything. So say to me, "Gwen Norrell" after we get through, and then I'll explain why she--

Charnley: We've spoken with Gwen.

Smith: Oh, you have?

Charnley: We have. Wonderful energy.

Smith: Isn't she a wonderful lady?

Charnley: Delightful. Not just about athletics. We talked about her role in the Detroit Project, Project Ethyl, attracting some of the top students here, her academic advising.

Smith: Did she tell you that she was nurturing black athletes before anybody had ever thought of any of that? She's one of my favorite people, Gwen Norrell. So okay, you're doing all right. You're doing something right if you've already netted her.

Charnley: It was a wonderful interview. She enjoyed, I think, the opportunity to talk about some of the things that she'd been doing.

Smith: She's like me. The university was her life for many years, and she really felt strongly about the good things that she tried to accomplish.

Charnley: I'm sorry, I didn't mean to interrupt, but you mentioned the issue of the Rhodes Scholars and the Honors College graduates coming back, ultimately.

Smith: Yes.

Charnley: It seems to be an interesting subtext, when talking with a lot of the people, whether it was Pauline Adams in reference to Walter, the issue of what keeps people here, and the fact that, for example, when you came, did you anticipate that you would be here, in a sense, most of your career?

Smith: No, I feel that this is my home and I have felt this for decades, and you're asking how come so many people feel that, right?

Charnley: Yes. I'm hearing it from many of the people that I interview. In your own experience, what is it that maybe either kept you here, that has attracted you to staying at this place?

Smith: This is a very, very good question. I'm fairly glib most of the time, but I'm sure there must be some complex and valuable answers, but I have to think.

Charnley: But in your experience, too, being born not in the United States, having worldly experience during the war, seeing much of that, what attracts you to--

Smith: Yes, and how come this very provincial environment? I grew up in a very sort of metropolitan culture and so on.

Charnley: You've raised your family here.

Smith: There is a basic decency, a basic respect for individuals. This is such a terrible cliché that I get a hot flash every time I hear it, but in this place, people give other people chances, they make allowances. I have to put all this in the past tense because, very frankly, I think that a lot of these things have faded under the financial pressures and the research pressures. But in its heyday, the university was a very nurturant place.

My second department head, whom you also have to talk with if you haven't already, Douglas Dunham, was chairman of the social science department in University College for years and years, was a nurturant chairman. He really, obviously, thought that his main job was to act as a sort of combination kindergarten teacher and psychiatric social worker to his faculty.

[Laughter] He is a lovely man. He was a Presbyterian elder, but a soft-shelled one. He had all the sort of rectitude that you associate with that, but none of the stiffness and strictness.

Charnley: Is he still living?

Smith: Yes. Burcham Hills has a little complex of houses that people can live in if they're still intact and don't need to live in the actual institution. They're called the cluster homes, and there may be twenty of them. They're nearly all occupied, I think, by former retired faculty, and Doug Dunham and his wife--I hope they're both still alive. I know he is, because somebody talked about him recently. I'm not absolutely sure about his wife, so don't refer to her until he does.

But Doug Dunham went through the travails of the Basic College, University College transformation, from the old model to the new model, all of it, from soup to nuts. He's just a

tremendously constructive personality. He's more like Gwen, not like me. I have a lot of nasty anecdotes that I keep reflecting. I have real reservations about many people, but Doug never spoke ill of anyone, even people who really practically destroyed him in the wars during the cultural revolution, you know, the late sixties, early seventies. So if you want to really--that's another really angelic person.

Charnley: Would you talk a little bit about the Honors College? Who were some of the directors that you worked with? What were your duties?

Smith: A name just came to me. Stan Idzerda. Stan Idzerda was, I think, the founding dean of the Honors College, director of the Honors College. He was sort of a humanities type, very much. In fact, he taught in humanities. But he was a high-brow humanities type, and also into philosophy and religion, seriously. He must be retired now, but he went from here to be at Wesleyan, which is the Wesleyan in New England somewhere, or on the East Coast. There are two Wesleyans.

Charnley: Did he end up at Cornell [University], or no?

Smith: He might have. I don't know. I think that the Honors College would have never made it through all the populist flak at this university if Stan Idzerda hadn't personally convinced people that it couldn't be all bad if a nice guy like that was for it. [Laughter]

This elitism thing had been a very bitter--it's not just sort of a little phrase people get off--it was a profound resentment among many people, especially in University College. University College was really the number one enemy of the establishment of the Honors College. Just my luck that I managed to be happy in both. [Laughter]

Then the next director was Frank Blackington, who had some kind of high administrative

position in a college in the South somewhere, I think. No, he was a natural scientist. Wait, now I'm getting this fused image of Madison and the Honors College. We're talking about Honors College. There was Stan Idzerda, who was just totally admirable and very charismatic. He was sort of a little ugly man with tremendous charisma. I'm really being quite infantile here. I'm old enough to know that you edit what you say when it's being recorded.

Okay, well, anyway, Stan Idzerda was followed by Frank Blankington, who left after a few years. There must have been somebody else. And then there was Jim Pickering. Jim Pickering was the man who hired me. He was an English professor in Morrill Hall, very bright and bubbly and sociable and energetic and charming. Lots of charm, oodles of charm.

Jim Pickering was the man who hired me, and when he left, I presided--no, I didn't preside. Lee Winder presided. I--I won't say "manipulated." I worked the system to get the successor of my choice, because I didn't want the job. I was associate director, and it would have been embarrassing for people to have, if it ever had come out--by this time, everyone had forgotten I never had a Ph.D., but if it had come out, it would have been extremely embarrassing.

So in any case, I was not a candidate, which put me in good position. I was the Honors College staff's representative, elected, on the search committee, on Lee Winder's search committee for the new director of the Honors College, and the director, that after months and months was chosen, was [Donald] Don Lammers, who was chairman of the history department and who was my candidate. He had two sponsors. I mean, this was all strictly informal, but there was a very brainy, entertaining, clever man in the history department called Warren Cohen. Chinese diplomatic history is his field.

Warren Cohen was a close friend of the man I just mentioned, my second boss, Lammers. Warren was a close friend of Don Lammers, and he and I were pretty good friends, too. I mean, Warren Cohen and I were pretty good friends, too, partly because we both belonged to the Asian Studies Center. It was Warren who thought that Don was getting bored with being chairman of the history department, and he said, "Wouldn't he make a nice director of the Honors College?"

We were having a drink, after work, across the street.

I said, "Yes, he would, wouldn't he? He's such a nice person." Not a nasty, ambitious guy who steps on people.

Well, anyway, Warren and I both thought he would make a very good director of the Honors College, and we had an all-university committee. I used to call these--in fact, I invented this. I notice it now shows up in the record sometimes. This is a Noah's Ark committee, you know, if you have one from every place, except that we didn't usually have two from every place, but we had Noah's Ark committees, with at least one from every place, from every college or interest group or whatever it happened to be. And ultimately the interest groups that matter in this university are the colleges.

So I sat on this Noah's Ark committee and I recruited one of my friends, who was chairman of the mechanical engineering department. I will not give you his name, because this begins to get into the sort of thing that shouldn't be talked about. I educated him on the value of the Honors College by having devised, before this came up, this search, a way that really super engineering students could get some kind of extra gloss and extra polish.

My hobby horse was that what they needed to be sold on was partly general education, but above all, speech, talk, writing. Writing, more than any other single thing. I sold him on this notion that in addition to honors courses in their engineering subject, which he did institute--I don't know if they still exist, but he did--that they ought to be required to take more, in effect, ATL-style stuff. Not less, but more. Because, in terms of their careers--I put this in very pragmatic terms--in terms of their careers, the difference between an engineer who never breaks away from a drafting table or a bench and an engineer who really makes it is his ability to write persuasively. And that was my strategy for honors emphasis in engineering.

So there happened to be this engineering chairman on the search committee who had already been persuaded that he and I shared convictions. He said, "You sure you want this man?" and I said yes. He helped me sell him to the rest of the committee and, by God, I'll say

that even if does embarrass me.

There were, of course, some affirmative action candidates for the directorship, and the sisterhood was very aggressive. They thought it looked like a good plum for them. We also had, I think, a black candidate. In any case, when we sent our recommendation to Lee, he had the nerve to call me in. No, did he call or say this to me on the phone or in person? I don't suppose it really matters, but, in effect, he wondered just how come we came to that conclusion, how come we hadn't come to some other conclusion. One talked that way in those days, when one was pressing for an affirmative action appointment, and there was a lot of that pressure in the university, and I don't care who hears me say that.

That's my main kind of whistle-blowing thing in my record, is I was always opposed to cheapening the currency in faculty appointments, which is what we did. I don't care. I mean, I think if some genuinely impartial body of experts did a systematic study of affirmative action appointments, I think it could be demonstrated that the average quality of these was lower than was available to the university. Only in a very few cases did it result in real embarrassments, and people turned out to be unfit of some standard. There were very few of those. But there were scores of cases--

[Begin Tape 2, Side B]

Charnley: We were talking about some of the affirmative action appointments, and also the issue of the provost getting involved in the selection of the Honors College director.

Smith: The provost was supposed to be involved. The director of the Honors College reports directly to the provost, or did in those days, and it's appropriate that he take a very close and direct interest. But Lee Winder, along with other provosts, were all engaged in this game of trying to hike the affirmative action statistics, hiring statistics. And Lou Anna [K. Simon], too.

Later, much later. One person who didn't do this with any real enthusiasm, though even he did some of it, was David Scott, and [Lawrence] Larry Boger, I don't know what Larry Boger did. Is he still alive?

Charnley: No. He just died just a couple months ago.

Smith: That's right, I thought I saw it. In that case, I am willing to tell you my anecdote about affirmative action and Larry Boger. When I was academic administrative intern in the provost's office. You know, that was a one-year job. There were several of them, one after another. That was a really plum assignment because you work directly, in my case, with the assistant provost for undergraduate education, had an office up there. Really learned how academic administration works. These were intended to be--it's an affirmative action program, it was intended to get more women into academic administration, is what it was for.

The assistant provost for undergraduate education, Dorothy [unclear], was, herself, probably the highest-ranking woman in the university at the time. She and I became very close friends. Now, what was I going to tell you about the provost's office?

Charnley: And Larry Boger.

Smith: Larry Boger, yes. When I went to the Honors College, when Jim Pickering recruited me to the Honors College, which would have been in '67. Something like that, '67, '68. The sisters raised a stink because they thought it was the wrong appointment. It was one of those which I said where you may have had a person who's technically a woman, but she's not a woman, in terms of where she stands and what she believes and whatnot.

Charnley: Ideology.

Smith: Yes. They had objected to him, who was the provost at the time, and he was a man who was just incredibly good at picking up every bit of gossip there was in the whole universe. He knew everything. He was really a gossip addict. One day, after he'd been appointed to the job in Arizona, and we had just finished a long, contentious academic council session, at which we had both been present--it was a week before he left campus. He said, "Will you give me a lift back to the administration building?"

And I said, "I'd be delighted." Although he usually walked. I always drove, but he usually walked across the bridge. Why did you need a ride? You wanted to know why he needed a ride. Because he wanted to tell me something very confidentially, and in the car, between the international studies program building and the administration building, driving around, past Erickson, he said to me, "The sisters are really after you, and I don't want to alarm you, but just watch your back, will you?" I mean, he meant in academic politics. And this phrase, "Just watch your back." The implication was because he wouldn't be here to watch it for me, you see? So now you have me located, in terms of the political spectrum, or one dimension of the political spectrum. I was always very grateful to him for that.

Charnley: In terms of academic governance, were you involved later on, later in your career?

Smith: Oh, yes. In fact, to refresh my memory, I looked for my vitae and I just couldn't find it. This means I've been retired a long time, because one thinks of that as practically like one's soul or something. I have served on virtually every major committee in the university, both appointed and elected. I served on the Academic Council I don't know how many terms. They had some statute of limitation but because I served first from Madison and then from the Honors College, I sort of got a double dose.

Charnley: You had a familiar seat, or a familiar face.

Smith: What started as the Educational Policies Committee became the Academic Policy Committee, of which I became chairman. This was during the sisterly period, too, because I remember my first--no. Do you want to hear this now or not? We can let it go. But it does demonstrate the kind of things the sisters were worried about. There was a very serious psychologist who represented the college of social science at the meeting, you know, my first chairman session, of the academic policy committee.

So we sat around the table. It was always a Noah's Ark committee. One from every single college and one or two spares. She said, this psychology professor, "Well, now that we at last have a woman as chairman, let's get rid of this chairman bit, and let's change the language in the minutes of the official statements of the committee to `chairperson.'"

I said, "I'm not doing it. I'm not a chairperson, I'm a chairman, just like any other chairman, and anybody who understands the way the English language involves knows that the term `chairman' can be perfectly well applied to a female as to a male, and if you insist on having a chairperson, you'll have to find somebody else," and I went right on being a chairman. But this is the kind of nonsense that went on all the time.

Oh, on the affirmative action thing, I want to tell you an anecdote about Wharton. I got to know him reasonably well because--well, he was interested in my field, development economics. He was a very important Ford Foundation--

Charnley: In Southeast Asia.

Smith: In Southeast Asia, which was my geographic area, and in agricultural economics. And in fact, I had him once or twice as a guest speaker to my classes in Madison. But we had common interests. Of course, he knew me from the Academic Council because I was not exactly a silent

member. He once called on me in the Academic Council and said, "Ms. Smith," and I went and spoke and so on. Then I sent him a note, in which I said what I used to say to people all the time who insisted on making an "Ms." out of me. I sent a note saying, "Since I am nearing a motorship nor a manuscript, I do not answer to Ms." "And in any case," said I--and now playing a joke on the sort of compulsively statistical game one plays in politics, proving everything with statistics of dubious [unclear]--and I said, "In any case, I'm sure you will find (this was in my note to Wharton--friendly, you know, we were friendly) that ninety-nine point, one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight ever-married women preferred to be called Mrs.," and I sent him the thing.

I got a note back, and he said, "I wouldn't think of calling you Ms., not intentionally." And then he said, "It must be my Brer Rabbit patch." He sort of said something about rubbing his darkie head, about it must have been his Southern darkie accent that made him sound like the thing, which was a very funny reply.

Six months later, and this sounds really uncanny, which is why it makes such a wonderful anecdote--six months later he sent me a little bitty clipping from the *Chicago Tribune*, which said something like, "Ninety three point twenty-five percent of all women who have ever been married prefer to be called Mrs." It happened. I sent it as a gag, he took it as a gag, and then six months later, he sent me this note saying, "It wasn't a gag."

Charnley: You were right on your statistic.

Smith: So that was Wharton, but why were we talking about presidents?

Charnley: You were mentioning affirmative action, and then you mentioned the statement of President Wharton. When did you retire?

Smith: '89. '89. I was sixty-seven when I retired. Yes, that figures, because I was born in '22. So the arithmetic seems to work. In those days we had those lush retirement consultantships, which were really sinecures. Although I did, it turned out, have a very stressful and serious job, but that hadn't been part of the deal. It happened later. I'll tell you about that in a minute. But anyway, I retired, yes, in '89, at sixty-seven. I wouldn't have retired--no, that's a different story. That's another one of my big issues. One is affirmative action and the other one is people who think they own their jobs, what I consider misuse of tenure. But we'll talk about that another time. Well, I don't know.

What time is it? It's twelve o'clock. Now, what was it that came up that I said I wouldn't-

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Charnley: It was something involved in your consultantship, or the issue of age of retirement.

Smith: The consultantship put me under absolutely no obligation. It was really a year's pay without a year's work. But I hadn't been gone a month before David Scott called--and David Scott was one of these real manipulators. He could get anything out of you he wanted. Just oodles of charm. Anyway, he was one of my favorite provosts.

In any case, he didn't call me in the daytime. He called at nine o'clock at night, to make it sure of how seriously he was taking--you know, I would realize how seriously he took this. He asked me to the provost's representative on the Academic Policy Committee while it was redoing the catalog. This was a very serious political job. After the change to semesters, when many, many courses, of course, had to change because they were the wrong length, and very often the subject matter had to be rejiggered to fit the semester form, and that meant that all the catalog descriptions were being rewritten, and there's a lot of politics that goes into that.

I won't enlarge on this now, but, again, the sisters were at it. Everything was supposed to be gender-free, and you're not supposed to have annotations, course descriptions, that use the

word "he" or "she" unless you made it both. And then there were the religious fanatics, or the Third World fanatics, who didn't think that B.C. was a permissible description of a date. So now they say B.C.E., but in those days, I don't know what they said. We said something really weird. So the rewriting of the catalog involved a lot of this political symbolism that was so rife among various interest groups. Oh, not to mention the special education people who had the unbelievable circumlocutions that were used. You couldn't say "retarded" people. "Challenged." This was when the word "challenged" first became a euphemism for retarded. Anyway, there were other political issues. There were many of them.

David Scott, very ingeniously--I mean, again, I don't know this, but I believe that this is the way a talented administrator works. He knew that I was no shrinking violet. He knew exactly what my views were on a lot of these issues because we were friendly. He knew that if I was there, I would really put up a good fight no matter how heavily biased the distribution of opinion was on some other side. And he knew most of all that being retired, I had no career to protect, and therefore, if he wanted somebody who would say things he couldn't say, and who could take the consequences, because there was no professional reason for ducking. And so I spent a very bloody year on the committee, fighting all manner of things.

This was not the only one, the one about the catalog. There were other major decisions that were being made, and so I worked very hard for a year during this last year, 1989. Oh, I had another provost that stuck me in a job outside, representing the provost.

That was Larry Boger, when they were searching for a new dean of the College of Agriculture, which in this university, as you know, is a very important job. I mean, that dean, politically, may be the most important dean of all. You know, when it comes to the legislature and the public out there. The College of Agriculture has bylaws, under which, in addition to the properly constituted group within the college, which included Extension agents. There's also to be a provost representative. Now, Larry Boger was the provost, so it was his colleagues that were searching for a dean.

But I was the academic administrative intern--oh, that's how I got off the subject--up there in the provost's office, and he, with a straight face, simply appointed me as his representative on the dean's search committee, which took seven months. Now I've forgotten the name of the dean we came up with. I'm sure that a record of the university would show.

Charnley: Was it James Ash?

Smith: Yes. He's the one that had the deaf child. Yes, it was. Yes, right.

Charnley: He preceded Fred Polson.

Smith: Yes, it was. Yes, that's who it was, right. It took us seven months. I still think he was a good choice, even though he ran afoul. The political mill in this university has ground up many good administrators. I mean, they do get--I don't know whether still, but historically, a number of very good administrators got destroyed by the political meat grinder in the university. I'd forgotten, one of my favorite provosts who was a case in point. Boy, I'm not going to make myself popular with a lot of people. With luck, by the time this happens, they'll be dead and I'll be dead, and then we won't care.

I forgot about [John] Cantlon, another one of these lovely, saintly men. Just an unbelievably decent, warm-hearted man, and a serious policy science expert. He was a good man. But anyway, he got destroyed by political pressures, but they then sort of, instead of just grinding him up to nothing, he then became graduate research dean, and he had many years of youthful service in that role.

Okay, I was getting off onto provosts and their political skills. I know what I was saying. They need political skills. You can't fault them for being highly political animals, because if you're not political enough, you get your throat cut. Don't you want to stop?

Charnley: Let me just ask kind of a concluding question. In looking back on your career here at Michigan State, is there anything that comes to mind as being most important? You're a scholar with a background from international background and a classically trained intellectual. In looking at the history of Michigan State while you were here, anything comes to mind as being most important that you've seen?

Smith: This will sound a P.R. release for the university, but I think the university's mission is enormously important and worthy, and that is to bring not just job skills, but education to the masses. I used to call this the people's university, as against Ann Arbor. In a way, I'm much more at home at Ann Arbor, but the home I really cherish is this. I mean, it's partly my socialist past, you know, that I believe that the common people are trainable and teachable and should be able to rise to the highest position, and that they should enjoy the finer things of life.

In the old days, when the university was in its heyday, we had half of our students, when I was, at that time, very active, half of our students were the first in their family to go to college. I thought that was magnificent and I thought they ought to--I wanted them to get as much of what I had as possible, and they did. That is the great thing about this university. It has always been respectful, in the past, at least, respectful both of the dignity and promise of the common man, and also respectful and genuinely devoted to highly intellectual, cultural, scientific things. It was genuinely devoted to the higher learning, and it was genuinely devoted to mediating that higher learning, to people who didn't even know what they were missing. They thought they were here so they could get a good job, but I knew they were here, that I had a few years in which I wise them up to the really interesting and good things in life. And this business of bootlegging culture and civilized behavior and intellectual interests into a vocational institution, that is what, to me, was the really outstanding and lovable and wonderful thing about Michigan State.

Charnley: Interesting perspective. I want to thank you on behalf of the project, and I appreciate the time you've spent and also your insight.

Smith: Thank you. It was a pleasure.

[End of interview]

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