INTERVIEWEE: ADMIRAL WILLARD J. SMITH

INTERVIEWER: DAVID G. McCOMB

December 10, 1968

M: First to identify the tape, this is an interview with Admiral Willard J. Smith, who is the commandant of the United States Coast Guard, which is a part of the Department of Transportation. The interview is in his office in Washington, D.C. at the Coast Guard headquarters. The date is December 10, 1968; the time is ten-thirty. My name is David McComb.

First of all, Admiral Smith, I'd like to know where you were born and when.

S: I was born in Michigan, northern Michigan, in May of 1910.

M: According to my information, the name of that is Sutton's Bay.

S: Sutton's Bay, Michigan.

M: Is that not in the peninsula or the upper part of Michigan?

S: It's in the northern part of the lower peninsula, up near the Grand Traverse Bay area, about fifty miles south of the Straits of Mackinac on Lake Michigan.

M: Needless to say, that's beautiful country.

S: It's beautiful country, a little cold this time of year.

M: Then you got your college education at the Coast Guard Academy.

S: First I attended the University of Michigan for two years. I entered the Engineering College there and after two years at the University I entered the Coast Guard Academy. I graduated from the Coast Guard Academy in 1933.

M: You got a B.S. degree.

S: Bachelor of Science degree.

M: In engineering?

S: Well, in engineering. We are authorized to give a Bachelor of Science degree at our Academy the same as the other armed forces academies--a Bachelor of Science which is not related directly to engineering but it is in fact basically an engineering program.

M: I see. And then you went into the Coast Guard.

S: Yes.

M: And you have been there ever since.

S: I have been in the Coast Guard since then.

M: That starts in 1933. I assume you served through World War II. Where was your duty then?

S: My first duty was at sea in the Gulf of Mexico. Later I went on to flight training and became an aviator. During World War II, I served on both the west and east coast in anti-submarine patrol in aircraft and spent the better part of one year at intermittent times in Alaska in the summer and fall of 1941 and 1942 while the Japanese were imbedded at Kiska in the Aleutian Islands.

M: And then after the war what did you do?

S: Following the war I commanded one of our air stations, in fact, the air station up at Traverse City, Michigan, and from there I returned to Washington for a short tour of duty and then a tour of duty in the Pacific at Guam, and then again in the Great Lakes area in command of one of our ships there, and then again returned to Washington--this is about my fifth tour of duty in Washington. I'm an old hand at the city but on an intermittent basis.

M: When did you become superintendent of the Academy?

S: In 1962. I was assigned in Seattle at the time and I was selected for the rank of rear admiral in 1962, and my first assignment was at the Coast Guard Academy.

M: How did they happen to select you for that position? That would seem to be somewhat out of the general run of what you had been doing.

S: I had had some experience there. I was there as a tour of duty as commandant of cadets at the Academy from 1957 to 1960, and my assignment was the wish of our then commandant, Admiral Roland, who selected me for whatever reasons he had as the superintendent.

M: According to some information I have, the President, Lyndon Johnson, came to speak, I guess at a commencement in '64 at the Coast Guard Academy. Is that right?

S: Yes, the President gave our commencement address in June of 1964.

M: How did that happen to come about?

S: A little background on that--Assistant Secretary Reed was Assistant Secretary of the Treasury in charge of Coast Guard Activities at that time, and he had persuaded President Kennedy to make this speech, and President Johnson was really honoring President Kennedy's commitment to come up and speak at our graduation. It was a very memorable occasion as far as our Coast Guard Academy is concerned, I think one that gave the President pleasure. I know at the time that he was extremely busy and hard-pressed with the many difficult problems, and I remember particularly well his arrival there. He flew up from Washington and came over from the airport by helicopter and landed at our field and we had an automobile there to take him up to the graduation ceremonies. When he arrived he seemed preoccupied,

and I think he felt that he really had more important things to do, but the day was so beautiful and the occasion was so pleasant that by the time he left he seemed to be thoroughly enjoying himself. He did a thing which I think is most unusual for a President; he not only gave the address and participated in the exercises, but he stayed long enough to personally deliver the commissions to each one of the graduated officers and shake hands with each of them which we really appreciated very much.

M: Is this the first time a President has come for an occasion like that?

S: This is the first time--we have had previous visits from presidents at our academy, but this was the first time that the President had given the commencement address and it was a very special occasion. The President had an opportunity to get off what I felt was a delightful quip that was reported in the New York Times the next day. In congratulating the class he told them he hoped that 1964 would be as kind to him as it had been to them; of course this was the year he was running for reelection.

M: Did he say anything during the commencement that you particularly remember?

S: I do remember his address, not in detail, but after the usual amenities and some encouraging remarks to the young men and a little talk about the Coast Guard, he used the occasion to deliver what was an important speech. This came as quite a surprise to us and a very pleasurable one because we were proud that he had selected that platform to deliver a policy speech relating to some problems that we were having then in the international field. So consequently

his visit there was reported very widely. I am sure if it had been a more routine occasion it wouldn't have been noticed so much, but he used our gathering to deliver what was an important address.

M: Do you think it helped the morale of the Coast Guard for him to do this?

S: Well, I am sure that his visit was greatly appreciated by all of us in the Coast Guard, and I know those young men that graduated that year will never forget the fact that the Commander in Chief personally handed them their commission and shook hands with each one.

M: Have you had much contact with Lyndon Johnson other than that?

S: This was the only personal contact I have had with him except to meet him at some ceremonial or social occasion at the White House since I have been here on this tour of duty.

M: Did you have anything to do with the steps leading to the formation of the Department of Transportation?

S: In a sense after the decisions had been made. When I reported here for duty in 1966 and became the commandant of the Coast Guard as of the first of June of that year, the decision to establish the Department had already been reached, and the elements that were to form the new department had already been located and been put together and the proposed package of legislation. In fact, I came to Washington on a short, temporary duty tour from Cleveland in 1966 to attend the series of briefings at the White House outlining the framework of the new department at which time the President spent a little time with the conferees, personally giving his reasons and support to the establishment of this new department and why

it was necessary. I didn't sit in on the preliminary discussions where the decisions were made as to who would compose it, how it would be put together. But from that point on during the process of carrying through the legislative process, we were actively involved. In fact, after the law had been passed that fall after fairly extensive hearings on the Hill, our assistant commandant of the Coast Guard, Vice Admiral [Paul] Trimble, became the chairman of the interagency task force that actually established the framework of the organizational structure and the procedures of the new department.

M: It was Admiral Roland that was in on the preliminary work.

S: It was Admiral Roland who was here when the preliminary discussions were held.

M: When you were informed of the proposed transfer from Treasury to the Department of Transportation, were you opposed to this or favorable?

S: I think that for, partly perhaps for sentimental reasons and the fact that the association with the Treasury had been such a long one and such a happy one that generally in the Coast Guard the first reaction was one of misgivings. Well, it came as no surprise to me because the idea of the Transportation Department in the federal government was not a new one, and I remember our commandant in a speech over thirty years ago speaking out as to why we should be in the Treasury during peacetime. He said that this would only last as long as there was no department of transportation where important transportation matters were considered. This would be the logical place for the Coast Guard. And I think we all agree with this, that if there is to be a department of transportation, and I think that

with the importance of transportation in our country it certainly is long overdue that we have such a department, then our peacetime duties make us normally, and naturally a part of such an organization.

M: But you have a service that touches on other departments. After all, you are involved with customs enforcement.

S: We still retain this authority for customs enforcement, but our activity in that does not infringe on the basic customs responsibilities. Ours is primarily one of security of our ports and the prevention of the introduction of contraband by sea so that even though we are no longer in the Treasury we still have this responsibility because of the broad authority we have for the enforcement of all our federal laws.

M: Are your Coast Guard officers still Customs officers?

S: They still have this authority, and it is still in the law as such, but even if it wasn't specifically in the laws as far as customs matters are concerned, the authority would still be there in this broader authority that we have for the enforcement of federal laws on the seas and navigable waters.

M: Of course you could also make the case that you might logically be placed in the Department of Defense. Is that possible?

S: Well, traditionally and for as long as I have been in the Coast Guard and I guess for almost all of its history the Coast Guard has become a part of the Navy in times of national emergency or when the President directs it. But the nature of our peacetime duties is such that our programs wouldn't work too well, under the direction of Defense in a peacetime era. And the reason I say that is we are involved in almost everything that deals with marine safety, the

inspection of our ships, the licensing and certificating of our merchant marine personnel, the establishment and operation of our aid to navigation program and search and rescue and so forth. I think that these are civil functions and traditionally and historically the United States has kept its civil functions divorced from the military spectrum at least during a peacetime era.

M: Well, now, the Coast Guard has been somewhat independent as an agency even under the Treasury. Have you been able to maintain that independence of operation in the transfer to the Department of Transportation?

S: Our situation in the Department of Transportation is not at all unlike our position within Treasury. As a matter of fact, the way our new department is organized, in some ways the administrations have more autonomy in a sense than they had before.

The Treasury is operated in the concept of line organization where the authority extends from the Secretary through the Under Secretary to an assistant secretary who is in charge of certain functions of the department. In the Department of Transportation, the assistant secretaries are staff officers to the Secretary, and the line of authority goes from the Secretary to the Under Secretary, directly to the operating administrations so that they take their guidance directly from the Secretary, and the Secretary doesn't propose to deal in any detail with the operations of the administrations whether it is the FAA or the Coast Guard or the Highway. He sets the broad policy and then he leaves the operating element pretty clearly in the hands of the administrator.

M: Well, with the emphasis on the transportation and safety which the

Department of Transportation is noted for, then is it safe to assume that you are perhaps more comfortable here than you were in the Treasury?

S: Well, let me say frankly it's a little early to tell. A new department goes through some very vigorous growing pains in the first few years, and I think all of us who have had some time in the federal government recognize this and we don't expect things to completely change overnight. So it will be a little hard to see how our department finally takes shape because it's too early in its history. I think for the long-range future of the Coast Guard--we are just exactly where we should be as far as the national objectives of the country are concerned in the logical arrangement of its services.

M: Now to get into perhaps some current problems with the programs of the Coast Guard. Have you had an application of this system of analysis that came out of the Defense Department under McNamara, the PPBS system, cost benefit system. Has this been applied to your Coast Guard?

S: I don't think that our systems analysis is in any sense as sophisticated or as highly developed as the thing that we see going on in the Department of Defense. However, as far as the PPBS is concerned, we have been involved in that for a number of years. While we were still in Treasury, Treasury was one of the early departments that began to develop a capability in this line and of course all of us in whatever agency now must deal with it because this is the way the Bureau of the Budget wants programs presented, so that this is nothing new to us. We have, I think, a reasonably good program now after a number of years, and we continue to attempt to refine

it as we go along, but it has been effective certainly within our new department. The Secretary and the assistant secretaries who have had to deal with our programs have generally been complimentary as to our presentations and our analyses of alternatives and costs and needs and justifications of our program.

M: Do you have any problems in gaining new equipment since you are a special part of the Department of Transportation needing special equipment. Is this a problem to you?

S: For a number of years, it was a very serious problem, but in the last six years this situation had been greatly improved. We have been able to gradually replace our aircraft with newer and modern equipment, we are in the process of a shipbuilding program that has replaced our patrol boats, has replaced many of our tenders and now is replacing our larger cutters and our medium endurance cutters. So that I would say that starting about in 1962 or '63 we have improved this situation quite a lot with the support of the administration, with the support of the committees in Congress who were willing to recognize these needs and make provision for appropriations of funds to go ahead with them.

M: Do you suffer any from inter-service rivalry?

S: No, we are really not involved in that. As a practical matter, our principal association with the Department of Defense is with the Navy, and this has been a very good association and one of mutual understanding and they know what our capabilities are and they know that they are available to them and in event of national emergency or when the President sees fit. Our participation in Viet Nam is I think perhaps one of the first times that we have participated in

what you might call contingency action. Ordinarily, we only join the Navy on a full-time basis in times of national emergency. Now, we work with them in a good many programs of joint effort in normal times. In the Antarctic program, for example, we operate the ice breakers.

M: You were given the control of the whole ice-breaking operation from the Navy.

S: Yes, a few years ago all of the Navy ice-breakers were transferred to the Coast Guard to place in one federal agency the total ice-breaking capability of the nation.

M: So if the Navy has an operation and they need ice-breakers, then you cooperate with them.

S: We cooperate with them. That's part of the agreement. These ice-breakers are operated for both purposes, national defense and commercial use and for oceanographic exploration.

M: Now, seemingly, your ice-breaking activities is one of the more exciting programs you have gotten into in the last few years, especially this attempt to go across the Artic ice pack. Is that correct?

S: Yes. In fact, you may know that our department, not only the Coast Guard, but our whole department is very much interested, and I think it is going to take a leading role in this proposed Arctic development, not only at sea but on land as well where it affects transportation. Our Secretary has had many meetings both with industry and with government, with elements of his own organization, and I think is ready to initiate some programs to cooperate with the development of the north slope, particularly in Alaska where we

have this big oil find.

M: What is the primary purpose of your Arctic exploration and the attempt to break through with ice-breakers?

S: Well, we really have only scratched the surface on this. Our principal mission up there in the past has been in support of logistics replenishment of our northern bases to help the ships go in and out and as long as we have ice breakers up there we have also collected as much scientific and oceanographic information as we could. We carried scientists with us on the ships. The new thing that we are talking about now is the possibility of operating tankers in the Arctic.

M: In other words, open up the sea lane?

S: Open up a sea lane at least for parts of the year. Now, this is not just going to be a federal program, this will principally be a program initiated by the oil companies who are anxious to get the oil out of there. But I think that the governments of both the United States and Canada will also be working very closely with them, because this is a tremendous national asset we have in the Arctic now with respect to not only oil but minerals and other things.

M: Did the oil companies originate this idea of trying to open a sea lane through there, or did this come out of the Coast Guard, or where did it come from?

S: Well, actually when they began to get some feeling for the amount of oil that was available there and the rate that it would have to be brought out as the years go on, they looked at all of the alternatives. One, of course, is a pipeline across Alaska; one is the extension of the Alaska Railroad up into the north slope;

and the other avenue would be by sea. So they immediately looked at all three of these. We didn't initiate this concept. But as soon as they looked at the sea they did come to us then to see what experience we had and what we knew about the ice, what kind of ships could operate up there, how many months could they operate; of course, nobody knows the answers to those things; they are going to have to be tested before you really know what you can do.

M: So it was with this that you began your effort into the Arctic in any great seriousness.

Well, now, does it seem that there could be a possible sea lane through that area?

S: It is possible, of course, for ships to go into the Arctic either through the Bering Straits or through the northwest passage from the Atlantic. At certain times of the year we have sent ships through, and we send ships into the Arctic through the Bering Straits every summer, and periodically we have sent ships down through the northwest passage around Canada and this has really, up to this point, been a test because there has been no special reason for us to do this as far as commercial operations are concerned. But the knowledge of the ice in the winter season up there is still really not good enough to know how long you can push big ships through there. The oil companies are going to ice strengthen a tanker in the hope to have it up in that country by next summer, and they will test it actually on the scene. In the meantime they have collected as much information as is available now on ice conditions and what kind of a ship might be able to get through the ice, but they really won't know until they try it.

M: You've got a touchy situation there, too, with the nearness of Russia, don't you? Is there a diplomatic or international problem involved?

S: There are a lot of things that haven't been settled.

M: Not just ice.

S: Not just ice; there are some political questions as to jurisdiction--whether these are the high seas. Russia has taken the position that those seas north of their continent, that they have control of them all the way to the [North] Pole in the shape of a pie. The United States hasn't recognized this; we don't know now just what future developments here will be. We have sent ice breakers along the Siberian coast almost half-way across the top of Siberia in international waters, and they haven't been molested--they have been observed very carefully, both by air and surface craft; we sent them there principally to collect scientific information--weather information, oceanographic information.

M: The voyages of the North Wind.

S: Yes.

M: Where the ship actually was observed by Russian aircraft. So you have an unanswered question there in the Arctic of the freedom in the seas; is that correct?

S: I think that the United States feels quite clear that this is just another ocean and the same customs and traditions prevail there, but I don't think that the Russians agree with that.

M: When you are pushing an ice breaker up through there, do you have to be in constant contact with our State Department to avoid any difficulty?

S: No, it would only be if something unusual happened. These trips of the North Wind have been pretty routine. As long as she stays in international waters--we haven't had any problem with her travels up in those waters. The Russians have not, as far as I know, I might be wrong about this, but as far as I know they haven't sent their ice breakers across the top of Alaska or the Canadian Arctic, but their ships may be in there sometime further offshore and I wouldn't know about it. They would be observed, I think, and kept under surveillance if they did come into those waters.

M: This breaking through the Arctic ice pack takes the Coast Guard away from our coast to a certain extent.

S: We have been operating up there for a hundred years. The Coast Guard's history is very closely associated with the development of the territory of Alaska. We have had ships in Alaska since way before the days of the Gold Rush, not long after Mr. Seward bought it for the United States. At one time our ships furnished the only law outside the principal communities, carried the U.S. marshals--our command officers were deputized so that we have cruised in these waters for a very long time up as far as Point Barrow on the north coast of Alaska, but it has only been now when they see the potential for the development up there that we must come to grips with this transportation problem. This hadn't even really been a serious consideration.

M: Have you got any new ideas, new innovations, that will help you in ice-breaking?

S: Not anything dramatic. We have been in the process of designing a new ice-breaker, and in this process we have learned a good many

things about the shape of the hull, the shape of the bow, the importance of a power plant, but we haven't found any dramatic breakthrough that changes the fact that if you are going to work in ice, it's the combination of mass and power that you need to move.

M: I see. Now, the Coast Guard works apparently far beyond our own shores. I've discovered that you have some operations, for example, in Germany. Is that correct?

S: We have a loran station in Germany. One of the things that we do overseas that is of interest is the operation of these long-range aid to navigation stations. Now, these are scattered throughout the Pacific all the way to the Philippines and Japan and Southeast Asia and in the Atlantic all the way across the north Atlantic to the Mediterranean, and they provide long-range aid to navigation services for our defense forces and also for commercial use by airlines and surface ships.

M: This brings up the question of those famous cases having to do with navigation. What about the Pueblo? Did the Coast Guard have anything to do with that?

S: We had nothing to do with that at all. And I can't say what type of navigation services she was using right there because we had a chain of loran stations in that area during the Korean War, but after the war they were disestablished and turned over to the Japanese who operate them with coverage in the Sea of Japan, but I don't know whether they cover that part of the coast with this service or not.

M: You also have been in activities in Viet Nam. For some reason the figure twenty-six ships stands in my mind. I don't know if that is

correct or not.

S: We have twenty-six patrol boats over there--eighty-two-foot patrol boats--there is a patrol boats--there is a picture of one of them on that wall.

M: These are about how long?

S: Eight-two feet.

M: For coastal patrol?

S: They are for the coastal patrol; they are in the Marketime Operation. The Navy has a little smaller boat. This Marketime Operation of course is to prevent the introduction of men and ammunition by sea from the north into South Viet Nam. We sent out first boats over there in 1965.

M: These are manned by Coast Guard personnel?

S: These are manned by Coast Guard personnel. And in addition to the twenty-six patrol boats we also have five of our larger ships that are over there that are also participating in this same operation, Marketime Operation.

M: What's the rational basis for using the Coast Guard in such a situation? Why not just Navy?

S: The first boats went over there as a practical matter when the need was discovered, when they found out that the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese were beginning to use trawlers and junks to come down the coast and make a landing on the coast with men and war supplies. The Navy found themselves in a position where right at the moment they didn't have in their inventory ready to go a small boat that was suitable for this use, and Admiral McDonald who was then the Chief of Naval Operations discussed this with Admiral Roland and we had these

eighty-two footers that were operating and could be brought over there in the period of a month of six weeks. The Navy through our Secretary asked that the Coast Guard do this, so we went ahead with it. And in the meantime the Navy started a program to develop a boat suitable for this use and they have a large number of them over there now--the swift boat, which is a fifty-foot boat.

M: Well, then, will your ships be phased out of that?

S: Not that we see right now. I think that they will probably continue to participate in thie Marketime Operation as long as there is a need for it. They fill a slightly different need than the Navy boats. They are a little bit larger, can manage a little bit better in rough weather; they complement one another--the Navy boats are faster and can operate a little closer on the coast, ours being a little larger and a little tougher can survive the bad weather, so it makes a good team combination.

M: Is the command, then, in these Coast Guard boats under the Navy personnel there in the area?

S: Yes, there is a Navy commander of this force, but we have an officer on his staff. In one division down at An Thoi in the south Meking Delta, our Goast Guard commander there actually commands that particular sector, including the Coast Guard, Navy, and the Vietnamese. In the other places our boast operate, there is a Naval local commander, but they are all commanded by the Navy command in Viet Nam.

M: Do your Coast Guard people work on any of the inland waters, the rivers?

S: Only at the mouth of the rivers. These boats are a little too

large to penetrate very far except in larger rivers, and they are not part of the riverine forces. I think this is what you are thinking about.

M: Yes. Now, you have also had something to do with the patroling around Cuba. Is this true?

S: Yes. We still keep a patrol there; it's principally to keep track of these people who are coming out of Cuba--

M: Refugees?

S: Refugees. And also to just keep an eye on any incidents in those waters that the United States should be aware of or interested in. We keep both an air patrol and a surface patrol, not continuous, but often enough so that we know what is going on in this area between Florida and Cuba.

M: When the newspapers come out with refugees in small boats being picked up, they are usually picked up by a Coast Guard cutter or something like that.

S: Yes.

M: So this would be part of your surveillance?

S: This is part of the surveillance. Whenever we run across these people, and we run across quite a few of them in trouble, we pick them up and bring them on in.

M: Do you also patrol for submarines and that sort of thing?

S: Our larger vessels are equipped for ASW operations, but they are so heavily involved in our own programs that unless they are called on for a special case they are not routinely engaged.

M: Is there a growing problem in private submarines?

S: Yes, there is. We see this coming down--we have been talking to the

Navy about it, and we are in the process of introducing legislation to clarify our authority as far as the safety standards for these new commercial subs are concerned, and we are also concerned, as is the Navy, with the underwater navigation because as we get more of these little submarines out there in the water it is going to present some real difficult and new problems as far as the safety and the movement of the subs.

M: So you have safety difficulties, that is, having these submersibles being efficiently operated so that they won't get into trouble. This would, I suppose, involve you in possible rescue operations.

S: This is the next thing we see now, and we have a very limited capability with respect to this, but it's one we expect that we are going to have to improve as time goes on.

M: In other words, you cooperate with the Navy, and certainly they have done more of this than you have.

S: Yes. In fact, the Navy right now are the only people that have a real capability to assist disabled undersea craft, and they are perfectly willing to help out with this, but they are not anxious to become involved with going out to look for these little commercial or recreational subs, and they are anxious for us to gradually take this over as quickly as we can. It is part of our statutory responsibility, so we are going ahead with this.

M: So you are going to have to set up safety regulations, and to enforce this you are going to have to have licensing, is that right?

S: Yes.

M: And then you may have an identification problem. If your ship comes across an undersea craft, you are going to have to identify it.

S: There are a number of problems that are going to come up here. The undersea navigation thing is going to be one of the difficult ones so that we don't have collisions, and the Navy is concerned about this. Their submarines transiting or exiting or coming in our harbors, they want to be sure that they are not going to run into somebody that's out there in a small submarine. There aren't enough up to this point where it is a problem, but we want to be able to find some solution to these problems before we have an accident or a problem.

M: Does the three-mile limit give you any problem? Would you prefer a twelve-mile or a fifteen-mile limit for your activities?

S: As far as we are concerned, the three-mile limit does not present us with any special problems. We have jurisdiction beyond that as far as U.S. vessels are concerned, and we also have jurisdiction as far as the fisheries are concerned because two years ago, as you know, the Congress extended our jurisdiction for fisheries out to twelve miles, so that as far as the foreign fishing vessels operating on our coast, they have to stay outside the twelve-mile limit now rather than the three-mile limit. This hasn't offered any special problems.

M: What do you do about Russian trawlers which may or may not be fishing vessels?

S: Are you talking about, perhaps, some of the electronic-equipped--?

M: Yes.

S: We only keep an eye out to see that they don't violate the United States laws. The Navy knows where some of these are all the time, and there is no secret that the Russians keep one off some of our

ports out in international waters where they are clear and legal. The trawlers in their fishing fleets, we boarded a great number of them. I don't question but what some of them have some special equipment that they can do some snooping with, but generally these people are so involved with fishing that we don't believe that they are too much engaged in electronic listening activities. They have some good oceanographic equipment on some of them, so they are finding out quite a bit about our waters as far as the charting and the temperatures and all the things that they like to know about the fishing. We boarded their ships on the West Coast at their invitation, and we have helped them out a number of times when they have an injury or a sick man and we bring him in the hospitalize him with the approval of our State Department. And so in turn they have invited our people to come and look at their ships. They are very modern and very effective fishermen, there is no question about that, and they are taking a very large quantity of fish now in both the Atlantic and Pacific.

M: What about enforcement of conservation laws, such as pelagic ceiling?

S: Nobody has tried to do much poaching there lately. We still have this responsibility, but it hasn't presented much of a problem now for years. At one time poaching was a pretty popular business, but they made the penalties so strict that in recent years this has been a pretty routine operation; nobody has bothered the seals in a good while.

M: Is this fully a United States' responsibility to protect the Pribilof Islands?

S: Yes. Of course, those are possessions, so we have a vested interest

in those, and the seal herd happily has gotten larger and larger as the years go on and the harvest is quite extensive now each year.

M: That must be comforting. Well, there was a danger at one time that the seals might be killed off.

S: They almost were, and the sea otters were very near to being exterminated. I think they finally got down in the Aleutian Islands to one small colony of not more than about thirty or forty. But the conservation laws again here have been made so vigorous that not only are people now reluctant when their purpose is to shoot them because if you do kill one you can't sell the pelt. If a sea otter pelt shows up, whoever has it is suspected right away. So happily they are coming back, too, in the Aleutian Islands.

M: Well, now, akin to this, apparently the Coast Guard is getting into an increasing problem of water pollution such as oil being discharged from ships through disables vessels.

S: You really have two problems here: one is a real emergency, a crisis, where a vessel goes aground or there is a collision and there is a massive spill of oil such as of Torrey Canyon of Great Britain and the Ocean Eagle. The other is the routine day to day business of prevention of the contamination at sea by oil. We are working on both of them. If we do have a casuality, the Coast Guard has a duty to respond on the basis on its responsibility for safety, of life and property at sea, but we are also working through the international bodies, such as the inter-governmentae maritime consultative organizatinn in London, in improvement of the conventions for anti-pollution purposes. And actually in 1954 convention went a long way toward

cutting back the casual contamination of the sea by oil. You still can't keep an eye on every tanker that crosses the ocean. Most of the big companies are alert to this now and they have taken measures to cut down this indiscriminate dumping of waste and cleaning tanks and so forth at sea. There is a convention that prohibits it, and if the people are caught they deal with them quite severely.

M: Was the Torrey Canyon spill a turning point in this? Did this make you realize--

S: The Torrey Canyon just alerted everybody to the danger, what can happen. The convention, of course, goes back to 1954. Oil pollution is not a new problem. Right after the war we had a dreadful problem on the Coast of Florida where the tankers were coming up and just cleaning tanks all the way up there and messing up the beaches dreadfully, so Admiral Shepheard was then our principal officer here in Washington for this purpose. He went down one time, and made a flight in one of our planes and sighted one or two of these tankers in this process, right in the Gulf stream. We couldn't bring him to court, because you need more evidence than you can get from an airplane, but he wrote a letter to the President of the company and said that he had some pictures of this incident and while we didn't propose to take any legal action, he was going to make a little press release because he thought the papers would be interested in what the tankers were doing. This went through the industry like wildfire, and it was only a month or two and there was very little oil on the beaches in Florida. This is not a new thing we are talking about. But when we have a casualty like the Torrey Canyon, it makes everybody sit up and take notice, so there

have been several international meetings on this to try to devise ways to at least minimize the chance of a recurrence of such an accident. You will never find a completely fool-proof system as long as you move oil by sea there is always going to be some possibility of a casualty, but through international agreements now we hope to reduce this possibility.

M: Are there any other forms of pollution that you are going to be involved with?

S: Well, we are quite concerned about pollution from some of the new exotic cargos that are being handled by water, particularly in the inland waterways in the western rivers.

M: Such as?

S: Some of the petrochemicals, some of these things--well, take one example, chlorine, that's carried in large quantity. And if you sink a chlorine barge and it is pierced, what's going to happen to the river, what's going to happen to the people around there? We had one incident a few years ago, you may remember, in the Mississippi River. This is just an example, and there are a number of other cargos of a similar nature that we have to be concerned with and particularly when they are carried by barges on our intercoastal waterways and our rivers where they are very close to great numbers of people and in confined waters. A lot of these cargos are now being carried by inter-ocean shipping in specially designed vessels. We have to be concerned with the actual design of the ship, for example. And we perhaps even stretch our authority just a little bit sometimes of the good many European ships and shipowners who are bringing some of these dangerous cargoes into our

ports, and we asked to see the plans of those ships before they are permitted to enter our ports and discharge, to see that they have what we consider reasonable safety requirements so that they don't come into a port and have a casualty which would result in a disaster.

M: If you find a ship that violates your standards, you can turn it back?

S: We have taken that position. Happily, the ship owners have been quite cooperative about this, and they have followed our suggestions that if we have any that they should make some changes in the way they are handling this cargo.

M: Now, related to this somewhat, you are apparently in the process of developing sea lanes for commercial vessels. Now, is this fairly recent? Is this just in the past few years that you have started this?

S: Within the past two years. The first lanes were approved for the entrances to New York Harbor about two years, and this came about as the result of a joint Coast Guard-industry series of meetings to try to devise ways to reduce the possibility of collision in these very congested waters leading into the port areas. One of the interesting follow-ups on this is that we presented a paper to the IMCO organization in London on these sea lanes, and after the Torrey Canyon [incident] the navigation committee of IMCO have devised and have had approved by the countries involved a number of sea lane concepts throughout the world--in the English Channel, out as far as Singapore, the Minorcan Straits off the coast of Spain, to provide at least recommended tracts so that ships going in opposite

directions are not heading right toward one another but they have some separation.

M: Is the cause of this recent development due to increased traffic on the seas?

S: The traffic is increasing, but there are some other things that have to be considered, too, and I think these are more important. Ships are getting bigger and faster so that this has increased the potential of having a serious disaster.

M: And this has served as a catalyst for the development of the sea way concept?

S: Yes.

M: Now, just a mechanical problem here, do you develop a one-way sea lane or a two-way sea lane? What do you do about that?

S: We have some new names now; we call them traffic lanes and between the traffic lanes there will be a separation zone. Let's compare it to an interstate highway. The traffic on one side will move in one direction; on the other side, the other direction; and between them there will be what we call a separation zone; they call a buffer in the highways. And this is the concept of the sea lane process.

M: And will these sea lanes extend all the way across the ocean or just within with confines of the harbor?

S: Generally, the sea lanes themselves will only be in waters where traffic converges where they become congested. Actually, as far as the ocean crossings are concerned, I think that what we have right now in the north Atlantic, for example, recommended tracks for seasons--these are seasonal things--and they are primarily for keeping vessels from being involved in ice that comes down from

Labrador and Greenland in the summertime. I think that it would be very possible to carry this a step further and have recommended tracks that would be different for east bound-west bound vessels. The United States has been using this for a long time on the Great Lakes, and it has provided a great safety factor, where these can't be enforced as far as law is concerned, but they are recommended, they are laid out in the chart, and a master is very reluctant, I think, to not comply with them because if he did have an accident and the court discovered he was not complying with these recommended safety practices, they would take notice of it even though it was not a legal violation.

M: In this work, you have the responsibility of maintaining buoys and light houses and what not.

S: Yes, we maintain the whole aids to navigation system.

M: Have there been any great changes in aids to navigation in the past few years?

S: Well, I think the change we see coming now is the emergence of an electronic aids system which will probably gradually cut way back on the need for visual and sound aids of a large nature. Many of our lighthouses that used to be manned by four of five people, we have now made unattended, we have automated them, and just made the light an automatic light that didn't need the presence of people all the time. We can see one step further on this, that we improve our electronics capability and as more boats of all types get the receiving equipment that they need to use it, we can probably cut out some of these major lights and fog signals completely. We will still need the buoys, I am sure, to mark the channels and the

congested water, but I think that electronics and its various different concept both passive and active, perhaps the use of more radar, the use of beacons, the use of electronic signals to help you in position-fixing, will gradually change the concept of the aids to navigation.

M: I see. Is it conceivable that an electronic devise would ever be devised to actually guide a ship into a harbor without a pilot?

S: This is within the realm of the art. It would be very costly, but technologically this is feasible. I think this is a long ways away. I think there are many steps that are going to happen before this. In Europe now some of the ports they have what they call haber advisory services, where they have a system of radar stations to pick the ships up and tells the master where he is and when he can go on to the next point in the channel. This is for operation under reduced visibility conditions which is a thing we are very much interested in because these slowdowns are costly to our shipping if we have to keep the ships anchored or waiting to enter for a long time. We are starting two projects right now, one in San Francisco, and one we are involved in in the Delaware River that both point in this direction, to assist so that the master will know precisely where he is and he can get advisory information from some shore station that will help keep the traffic moving in reduced visibility.

M: Is the Coast Guard the one that licenses pilots? Do you do that?

S: Yes, we license all Merchant Marine personnel--the masters, the mates, the engineers, and we give papers to the unlicenses personnel; we give them their examinations and set up their qualifications.

M: Is there any difficulty in regard to that? There is some criticism, for example, that pilots are forming sort of a small closed union,

and it's so difficult for a man to get to be a pilot.

S: This is true.

M: They are forcing wages up and so forth.

S: And I think this is inherent in our pilot system. There is only one place where the pilots are under the jurisdiction of the federal government as far as their operation is concerned, and that is the Great Lakes pilots, and they do come under jurisdiction of the federal government although they are still private entrepreneurs, but we have some control there. But the other pilot associations are state pilot associations so that while we license them and we also proceed against their licenses in case of accidents if they are operating a vessel under a federal license, but we have no control over how you get to be a pilot, the employment practices, and we know that the American pilots are a very close association. In fact, in some places it has become sort of a father and son situation. The apprenticeship is very long and very tedious and very difficult, but the goal is a very attractive one once you've become a full-fledged pilot. The pay is attractive and I think it is a fascinating job for people who enjoy the sea.

M: Do you think the Coast Guard should have greater control over pilots?

S: As far as their professional skill and their efficiency is concerned, we can't find very much fault, not that they are perfect, but nobody is perfect in every element, but we think they are a highly skilled and very professional group. They meet the qualifications for their licenses very well so that as far as their ability to get the job done, we can find no fault.

M: Now, of all your activities, what do you spend the most time dealing with?

S: We have, generally speaking, in peacetime, we have two broad areas of responsibility; one is in marine safety and the other one is in military readiness. In the military readiness area we conduct training exercises to keep our vessels in condition that they can operate effectively with the Navy. And in the marine safety area it's spread up down into three or four broad programs. One is search and rescue--this takes quite a large part of our resources and this is an important part of our job. The second one is the operation of the aids to navigation system; a third one is our merchant marine safety program, which includes the inspection of vessels, we approve of plans, licensing and certificating of personnel, the safety of ports, for example, these are the broad areas where our money goes.

M: Just offhand, I would say that the greatest nuisance would be the trouble with private recreational craft.

S: This, of course, has grown so rapidly in the last ten or fifteen years that we have devoted a good deal of our time to this. Now, when you talk about this particular client that's calling, he uses these things I just mentioned. He's a safety problem, we have to go and look for him quite frequently, he uses our aids to navigation system, if he is carrying passengers for hire, of course he has to have an operator's license and have his boat inspected, but the sheer numbers of these crafts have presented a special problem as far as safety is concerned, and we have been working on this for the last fifteen years quite vigorously. I think one of the important things that we have done is gotten the states to participate with us, because we feel that this is a thing that the federal government cannot

or should not do by itself. It would just be too costly a federal program, where the states, by working jointly with the federal government, can take care of a good deal of a program within their own capabilities and their own forces. In addition to that, we have looked to our Coast Guard Auxiliary to pursue just as vigorously as they can a public education program which we think is very useful. They teach classes and they lecture and they give voluntary courtesy examinations and all these things, I think, help contribute to the safety of the individual boater. This year we are proposing to introduce some changes to the boating laws that would give our secretary authority to go a little further than we have gone in the past in establishing some safety standards for the boat itself. Of course, we are thinking here of the fuel system, the ignition system, possibly some standards for floatation, to just increase the basic safety of the boat.

M: Does your responsibility go into inland waters on this?

S: It goes to all the water where there is federal jurisdiction. Now, these can be inland waters. A great many of our inland waters, including all of our western rivers, the Great Lakes, and many of the large dams are federal waters. But our jurisdiction does not go to those waters that are purely state waters, and although there is no precise definition of this, I generally say that waters that do not have some sort of access to the sea or are not on the borders of two states where interstate commerce can be conducted, will generally be state waters and a great deal of the boating occurs on these state waters, and again this is why it is so important for the states also to have an active program in this.

M: In other words, a man makes a fool of himself in state waters and you can't do much about it.

S: No. We get excellent reports on this, and this part of our statistics, we look into these accidents, if there is a loss of life, at any rate to find out what the cause was. But we have no jurisdiction in these waters as far as enforcing the federal requirements are concerned.

M: Is there any particular kind of private craft, sailboat versus power boat, for example, that gives you trouble?

S: I don't think that we have identified this except one interesting thing we have found from our statistical analysis and that is the incidents of accidents among sailboats is lower than power boats. And we don't know why this is, whether it is because a sailboat is inherently safer or because anybody that has a sailboat is a better sailor or whether they operate in waters that are not subject to getting into some kind of difficulty. But we have noticed that. It's not a big difference, but a sailboat in a little bit safer statistically.

M: Now, what is the relationship between you and the Maritime Administration?

S: The Maritime Administration, of course, handles the building, the subsidy programs, both the building and operating subsidies. They also have some cognizance over our state maritime academy as far as the support of the academy is concerned financially. We review the curriculums of these schools to see that they are in keeping with our professional standards for merchant marine licensed personnel so that I would say our relationships with them is one of mutual interest in merchant marine, and we work very closely together with them on a

number of programs. But our responsibilities are clearly enough defined so that there is no conflict or overlapping or anything like that. Of course, we were much disappointed that the Maritime Administration did not become part of the new department. We think this was a mistake because this was one of the essential elements. It was in the original bill, and Congress removed it from the bill before the bill was passed.

M: Do you have responsibility for inspecting accidents within your realm of jurisdiction?

S: Yes. In fact, we have not only the authority but we do have the responsibility to review all marine casualities, and if it is a serious one, where there is a loss of life we have a formal board; for the less serious ones where there is only a moderate amount of property damage, we have a one-man board investigate. But we investigate each one of them, and this is the way we discover things that might be improved as far as safety measures are concerned. This is the purpose of our investigation really, is to find out what happened, to determine the facts and see if we can find some things that can be improved to avoid repeating this accident.

M: What is your relationship to the National Transportation Safety Board?

S: They, of course, are within the umbrella of our department but are not responsible to the Secretary; they are a completely independent board, and they review the important accidents of all of the administrations, whether it be rail or highway or aviation or Coast Guard. And the law isn't exactly specific on this as to just where you draw the line, but in the arrangements between the Board and the various administrations--what they have asked from us is a review

of all of our major marine boards, so when we have a marine board where there is a loss of life or a major casualty, after we have finished with it and arrived at our conclusions and recommendations, we then submit it to the National Transportation Safety Board to review it, and either agree with our recommendations or make other recommendations which they then send back to us for our consideration. They do not have the authority to direct us to take certain actions, but they can recommend to us certain actions and then we have to tell them why we will or why we don't feel we should take the action that they recommend.

M: Is this a nuisance or is it a help?

S: I think in the long run the Board is going to be a help. I think in this first year or so we are just feeling our way along. I think that their purpose, of course, is to give them a very impartial and objective overview of transportation safety matters, and they should keep their operation at a fairly high level. I don't think they have the time or the inclination to go down and look at every detail of every accident, but they certainly are interested in trends, they are certainly interested in the large picture. I think one of the tings they are having some difficulty dealing with is the highway safety. This is a very serious problem in our department and the Highway Administration works on it constantly and I'm sure that the Board would like to have a little better way to come to grips with this particular problem.

M: I have come to the point where I have exhausted my questions. But I want to give you an open-ended question. Is there anything that I should have asked you about that I didn't, or any comments you wish

to make? Is there, for example, any improvements that should be made in the Department of Transportation?

S: I think we've covered the field of the Coast Guard fairly well, and I'm just trying to think here for a minute whether there is any other item that might be of interest. I might say, since our conversation here has been to deal with a little bit of what's going on in this administration, that President Johnson took an active personal interest in the passenger ship fire safety problem that we had a few years ago. You may recall when the Yarmouth Castle burned. [Nov. 13, 1965] And we then went again to the IMCO, the Inter-governmental Maritime Consultative Organization, asking for a special meeting, and the President took a personal interest in this; he sent Ambassador Harriman over to appear at one meeting of the safety committee, and made some contacts with the governments of the other countries, and out of this came what we think is a very successful conclusion where we got, without forcing it, an agreement from the other countries to upgrade their passenger ship fire safety requirements to meet what we thought were good safe conditions because so many of their ships now are plying from our ports carrying almost entirely U.S. nationals. We have some fifty or sixty cruise ships that have almost all of their business out of the United States ports, and when the Yarmouth Castle burned, this became a very serious matter as far as we were concerned, and then when the Viking Princess, just a few months later, also burned, it was time that we took a look at some of these very old ships that had been relegated to this cruise trade, and that our people were sailing in and not being aware that they were in a ship that if it

did have a problem it was going to be just a fire trap and there would be no way of stopping it. Well, this came out very successfully.

Now, are far as our department is concerned, I think that Secretary Boyd has found changes just in the last year and a half that he has gradually made in the way we conduct our procedures and the assignment of specific responsibilities, even though the preliminary work that was done as far as the organizational structure was concerned was a very good job, I think nevertheless you have to be in operation for awhile to see just how this thing falls together and whether you have covered everything and whether the relationships between the various elements are reasonable. So he has made some adjustments, some improvements, and I think these will have to continue to be made and thought out. Of course, our department isn't even staffed up to this point the way it should be some day or must be. And this is understandable, too. You don't do this overnight. You have to find not only the numbers of peoples that you need but also the qualifications and the gaining of experience because we are dealing with a lot of new problems, you might say, in a new department, and the Secretary has had to find people, some who had extensive background in transportation, some who perhaps didn't have so much background but who had the ability to grasp these problems, and it takes a while for these things to come together and start to be a working organization. I'm sure that as we go along from here, we are going to find other adjustments that have to be made, but the main structure has not been disturbed from the beginning. In fact, we have got almost all of the secretarial officers with us who started the department with the single exception of Under Secretary Hutchinson

who resigned last spring. I think the rest of them are all the same ones who came in in the beginning which is quite remarkable in itself. There aren't many departments that keep even that much continuity these days. So we think it has gotten off to a good start, but we also are quite sure that there are going to be many new things that are going to be happening in the next few years.

M: I thank you for the time for the interview.

S: I enjoyed it. I hope it is helpful.

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By Willard J. Smith

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