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Interviewed

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Robert Blakey
Gary Cornwell
Kenneth Klein
Charlie Mathews
Jim Wolf
Dick Billings
Tina Hutton
Jackie Hess
Cliff Fenton
Mike Ewing
Team #1

Anderson, James

Team #2

King, J.C.

Oberst, Paul

[Redacted]

Team #3

Hannery, James

Droeller, Gerry

~~Team #4~~

~~Team #5~~

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*Lead PWU
Goodpasture, Ann
Bustas, Charlotte*

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MEMORANDUM - May 8, 1978

008279

TO: G. Robert Blakey

FROM: Gaeton Fonzi

RE: Interview with JOSEPH BURKHOLDER SMITH

Background: Joseph Burkholder Smith is a retired officer who served 22 years as a covert action specialist in the Clandestine Services of the Central Intelligence Agency. His duties included service in the Far East Division, stationed in Singapore and Manila, and on the Malaysian desk. He also served in the Western Hemisphere Division as desk chief for Venezuela, as a covert operations officer in Argentina and as chief of the Propaganda Guidance Section of the Covert Action Staff, where he directed David Phillips, chief of the Propaganda Branch of the Cuban task force for the Bay of Pigs operation. Smith has published a book titled: Portrait of a Cold Warrior, subtitled "Second Thoughts of a Top CIA Agent." (G.P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1976)

Smith was interviewed relative to Team Five's CIA Issue.

A preliminary background interview with Smith was conducted by Fonzi and Hardway on October 20, 1977. (See Hardway working memorandum that date.)

Smith was interviewed on April 20, 1978 in his condominium at 1301 S. First Street, Jacksonville, Beach, Florida.

Smith was shown the letter executed by CIA Acting Director Frank C. Carlucci to Committee Chairman Stokes indicating access to information within the secrecy agreement and authorizing individuals bound by such agreements to cooperate with the Committee.

Smith was asked what significance he thought such a letter had in terms of total access to Agency information. He said it had a lot of significance if the Committee were truly getting access to project files. "That's where all the information is," he said. He said, however, that many files may have been destroyed in the CIA's reaction to previous critical attacks on its operations. He said the Agency had a "flap mentality" to criticism and took to organizing "task forces" to protect itself against Congressional investigations.

Smith said that as a result of being asked to do a book review of it, he has had advance copies of former CIA Director William Colby's new book. "The interesting thing to me," he said, "was the beating he was taking inside the Agency for being as

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frank as he was." Smith said that one former chief of station was so upset at Colby's honesty that he raged to a friend: "He's a goddamn Jesuit! He even goes to confession!"

Smith said that Colby's problems within the Agency stemmed largely from the conflict he had with James Angleton, former longtime head of the Agency's Counter-Intelligence Division. Smith said that Colby says in his book: "I frankly didn't know what Angleton was doing." Colby, Smith said, doesn't reveal that he ever found out.

Smith said that despite the stated cooperation expressed by the top administrators of the CIA, there is still the possibility of the Committee's efforts to ~~gather~~ gather information being blocked at lower levels without the knowledge of higher echelons. "But," he said, "if you have access to project files, you have access to the guts of the thing." He suggested reading the cable traffic very carefully, taking note of the euphemistic language employed.

It was pointed out to Smith that there were two possibly conflicting statements in his book. On page 15 he wrote: "One question I could not swallow -- the one about the CIA's killing President Kennedy -- probably because it was part of a romantic myth in American politics I deplored." Later in the book, on page 400, following the death of Martin Luther King, he notes telling a class he is teaching: "What's happening in the United States these days makes us worse than a banana republic.... We're turning into a government by assassination." Smith was asked if he has any second thoughts about the assassination of President Kennedy.

He said no, and, as he said in his book, he had not inside information about it. "The only thing that bothers me now," he said, "is, to come back to what I said before, is Angleton's staff. If Colby can make a statement like this -- and after all he was the Director -- it makes you wonder."

Smith said that Angleton's staff did "strange things." Despite the fact he only had counter-intelligence jurisdiction, Angleton, said Smith, handled all Israeli operations, "based on contacts he had made when he was a young OSS officer in Italy." Smith said he never knew, and Colby doesn't say, who or what these contacts were. "This," said Smith, "had a strange effect on our activities in the Middle East," because unlike in other Divisions where station chiefs kept each other informed, Angleton wouldn't pass information to other stations in the Arab countries unless "he felt like it."

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Smith said he didn't know how Angleton "got all his power," but he knew that many of the people who worked for him shared his political views and were "confirmed believers in the world Communist conspiracy theory." He said, "These guys actually believed that the split between the Russians and Chinese was a great deceptive operation. Colby even says something more amazing. He claims that Angleton absolutely believed that all CIA operations were run by the KGB. He says Angleton believed that every top Soviet defector we took in was a plant. I think that's incredible. But I know there were some guys on his staff were his true believers."

As far as the Kennedy assassination goes, said Smith, "The only thing I can say now, and, again I'm quoting Colby, there could have been operations that Angleton staff was running that he wouldn't even tell the Director. Angleton did, however, have a special relationship with Allen Dulles when he was running the Agency."

It was pointed out to Smith that Frank Sturgis has worked with Israeli Intelligence and that Stugis and E. Howard Hunt were associated. Smith was asked of the relationship between Hunt and Angleton. Smith said he thought that Hunt never worked on Angleton's staff, but that Hunt's last job at the Agency as chief of covert operations in the European Division probably put him in contact with Angleton.

Smith brought up the fact that in our previous interview we had asked him about the information in his book relating Frank Fiorini Sturgis to E. Howard Hunt before the Bay of Pigs operation. He said at the time that he couldn't recall where he got the information but felt it was from a printed source and that he would let us know as soon as he discovered it. Now he said he recalled that he got the information from Hunt's book, Give Us This Day. Smith pointed out that Hunt says that Pedro Diaz Lanz and Frank Fiorini dropped leaflets together over Cuba. It was pointed out to Smith, however, Hunt specifically avoids mentioning ever meeting Fiorini at that time although he specifically seeks out Diaz Lanz as a result of that operation, but he, Smith, says in his book: "Hunt relied heavily in his liaison with the exile political leaders on an ex-Marine, Frank Fiorini." And: "Fiorini worked for Hunt in Coral Gables under the name of Frank Sturgis."

Smith appeared confused, said he thought he had gotten it from his "old Cuban notes," is "pretty sure" that David Phillips didn't tell him, but now, again, doesn't remember where he got that specific information. It was pointed out to Smith that writer Andrew St. George, in an early Argosy article, quoted Sturgis as saying he met Hunt before the Bay of Pigs. Smith said he didn't recall that article.

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Smith was shown a newspaper clipping from the Miami Herald dated October 2nd, 1976 and headlined: "Despite Denial by Helms, CIA Eyed Oswald as Source." He was asked for a comment about that. He said, "Well, I gather that a lot of secrecy agreements were honored in the Warren Commission days, but I don't know anything about that."

Smith was asked to be speculative about the situation within the CIA if Oswald had been a deep cover agent for the Agency. Smith said: "If he had been any kind of an asset, obviously he would have worked either for the Soviet Division, which ran operations in the Soviet Union, or the Counter Intelligence staff. He was obviously targeted at the Russians and the Cubans. And there's a possibility he could have been working for the people who handled Cuban matters, too. Because this was the hay-day for the JM/WAVE station in Miami, running those raids on Cuba and a whole host of other things. I guess this was called WH-4. Western Hemisphere. WH-1 was Mexico, WH-2 was the West Coast and WH-4 was Cuba, before JM/WAVE."

Smith pointed out that the assumption was that all of Cuban Intelligence's operations are being run by the Soviets. "I know," said Smith, "that the Counter Intelligence staff was very interested in the Fair Play for Cuba Committee and getting a penetration into it would have been a high priority effort."

Smith was asked if he knew anything relative to the fact that the leaflets Oswald distributed in New Orleans had the address of a building that appeared to house some kind of intelligence operation run by Guy Banister, a former FBI agent.

Smith said he didn't know anything specific, but there were a lot of former FBI men on Angleton's staff and in the old WH Division, run by J.C. King.

Smith was asked about his reference in his book to J.C. King's relationship to "old Batista interests" and "business interests," and whether there was a possibility that the New Orleans intelligence operation headed by Banister was funded by right-wing groups through J.C. King. Smith said: "Oh yes, I should think so. And I do know that the WH Division did have some activities operating out of New Orleans and I think some of these were used as fronts for funding. King's friends were mostly right-wing, certainly."

Asked for specifics, Smith said: "I do know that throughout the Bay of Pigs period, King did run and fund some Batista types. I didn't know their true names and I can't remember their cryptograms now." Smith said he learned that Henry Sutton [a false name] and Dave Phillips when he worked with them.

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Smith said that [the fact that King was funding Batista types] bothered some people, including Phillips, since the CIA was supposed to be taking the broad front approach as far as working with Cubans went.

(In speaking of some of the false names he used in the book to protect his CIA associates, Smith pointed out that the fellow he described only as "Paul," the chief of Covert Action on the WH Division staff level, the one who got him to come into the Division, his true name was Paul Oberst. He thinks he retired and may be in California or Arizona.

"Henry" is Henry Sutton, real name unknown.

"Curly" is Foster Collins.)

(Paul Oberst became deputy to David Phillips in Cuban Operations in 1968; in '70 or '71, Phillips went to Brazil and Paul retired.)

Smith said that many of the CIA officers with right-wing political leanings, men such as J.C. King and Howard Hunt, were truly very bitter over the Bay of Pigs operation, even though they may have a part of the responsibility for its failure. And that didn't prevent them from advancing in the Agency because the attitude at the time was that it was best to keep them happy and quiet. Smith said, "Besides, Hunt was very bright in this kind of business, he always had lots of ideas. He was a real dirty trickster and could always be counted on to come up with some clever scheme."

Smith was asked about the relationship between King, Phillips and CIA station chief in Cuba, [redacted]. Did they fit in the same mold? "Yeah," said Smith. "I guess so." Smith said the last he heard of [redacted] was that he was in Florida and perhaps involved in some business with the Tandy Company. Besides being chief of station in Cuba at one time, said Smith, [redacted] had also been deputy chief of the WH Division under J.C. King. He was known as "one of J.C.'s guys." He said King, Phillips and [redacted] were all fairly close.

It was pointed out to Smith that Hunt, in his book, gives the name of "Knight" to Phillips, yet from the information developed in Miami, "Knight" was the name Hunt himself used and the name that Phillips used was "Bishop." Smith said: "Yeah, I think I might have heard that, too, about Phillips and Bishop." Smith said he couldn't recall where he heard that.

Smith wasn't familiar with the name "Doug Gupton," but thinks he might have heard of George Witwer.

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Smith was asked about his knowledge of the Swan Island operation. He said he didn't know much about it because it was set up by the time he got involved in the Cuban operation. He didn't remember the name of the case officer handling it but knew that its operation came under the command of David Phillips.

Smith was asked about Justin McCarthy. He said the name sounded familiar but he couldn't recall it specifically. He believes he was "in the task force somewhere."

In discussing the career of David Phillips and his switch to Cuban Operations in Mexico City in 1963, taking the place of Robert Shaw, Smith said he didn't know precisely what the situation was there at the time. He recalled that Phillips brought up a guy from Bolivia with whom he was very close, a fellow named James Flannery, who took the job as chief of covert action, which Phillips had when he first went to Mexico City. During the Bay of Pigs operation, Flannery was "special assistant" to Richard Bissell. He then became chief of station in Bolivia. Then Phillips went on to be chief of station in Santo Domingo during the Dominican crisis. Flannery later was chief of Dominican operations also. When Phillips became chief of WH Division, he made Flannery his deputy. Smith said he doesn't know where Flannery is now.

Smith was shown the sketch of Maurice Bishop and asked if it reminded him of anyone. He said: "Well, the nose is too thin, but otherwise it reminds me of Dave Phillips." "The eyes are definitely Dave's, and the mouth."

Smith was asked about his recollection during the previous interview when he mentioned a woman who found the photo of Oswald. He said he doesn't recall when he heard the story, whether it was when he got to Mexico City or when he was still in Argentina. He does recall that the discovery of the picture was supposed to have greatly pleased President Johnson and made Mexico City station chief Win Scott "his number one boy." He said the story was that someone remembered seeing Oswald's face somewhere in the photo coverage of the Cuban or Russian embassy, went back through the files and found the picture.

Smith said he heard that story certainly more than once, at least, when he got to Mexico City and perhaps when he first got into the WH Division. The earliest he could have possibly heard that story, he said, was when he was still in Argentina, not too long after the assassination, from someone "coming through." He said, "Dez [Fitzgerald]" might have even mentioned it when he came through, which was in early '64, or Gerry Droller

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might have mentioned it when he came through, talking about how the Mexico City station was helping out during the investigation."

Smith was asked if the name of Charlotte Bustos was familiar. He said yes, that she was at the Mexico City station when he was there. She was a Counter Intelligence research analyst, under WH Division. He described her as a "very severe person and very diligent and very much the Counter Intelligence mentality I mentioned before."

He was also asked about Ann Goodpasture. Smith said he knew her, too. "Annie was another one of Win Scott's case officers. She was in Mexico City for about 14 years. Annie was what we called the 'resource person.' Annie knew everything."

Smith said Scott also had another very knowledgeable woman who worked with Goodpasture whose name was Leach or Lynch. She was the woman, Smith said, who was associated with discovering the photo of Oswald.

Smith was asked if he had any recollection of Bustos being associated with finding the photo of Oswald. He said, "It could very well have been, and Annie, too. But I thought it was this other girl, Lynch. But no, I don't think I ever heard specifically who found the damn picture. I guess by the time I got there I didn't care."

Smith said that he heard Leach or Lynch might be in Acapulco, but a directory of Federal employees he had didn't have her listed, he said.

It was pointed out to Smith that in his book (page 337), he writes of Phillips telling him of assets he had "for his own direct use." Smith said he had, for instance, the use of Radio Swan and three or four people who had been radio or newspaper men in Cuba. He couldn't recall their names, but, he said, the Wise and Ross book (The Invisible Government) mentioned the name of a public relations man who helped him in New York. He did confirm that Conte-Aguerra, when mentioned, was one of Phillips' assets.

Smith was asked if he was familiar with a CIA agent named David Morales, known as "El Indio," who was training guerilla warfare troops in the Florida Keys. He said he never heard the name. Neither did he ever hear the name of Cesar Diosdato.

Smith was asked again about the nature of "unvouchered funds." He said that all of the funds destined for clandestine operations are unvouchered funds. The salary of clandestine officers, he said, come from such unvouchered funds. Such funds, he said,

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are not really "unvouchered" in the true sense of the word, since they are strictly accounted for within the Agency, but that term is meant only to differentiate them from funds spent on overt operations. The moneys that paid project activities, he said, are unvouchered funds.

However, he pointed out, the Division chiefs had their own funds from which they could finance what he called "hip pocket operations," which usually only were accounted for between the Division chief and the Deputy Director of Plans.

Smith was asked about the allegation in Hunt's book that William Harvey got transferred and demoted by Robert Kennedy because he had a poster on his wall which said, "The tree of liberty is watered with the blood of patriots." Smith said he had never heard that and didn't know much about Harvey, had never met him, knew only that Ted Shackley had replaced him in the JM/WAVE station in Miami. He remembered that he heard that Harvey was a short guy who had his desk elevated on a platform so he could look down on his visitors.

Smith said he also didn't know much about the John Planck, mentioned in Hunt's book, from Harvard, only that he was considered the top Latin affairs expert at one time.

Smith recalled that Des Fitzgerald replaced J.C. King as chief of the WH Division in early 1964. "They sort of ganged up on King, formed this special Cuban Group and put Fitzgerald in charge of it. Left old J.C. sitting there with the most important activity in his areanno longer his responsibility." Smith said, however, when Fitzgerald visited him in Argentina he expressed disappointment that President Johnson wasn't as interested in Cuba as Kennedy had been.

Smith expressed unfamiliarity with "back channel" communications, but said that highly classified messages could have a sensitivity indicator which could be limited to as few as five people. Whether such communications would be retained for the record in the message center, he wouldn't know.

He said he is unfamiliar with the organization known as CUSA. When told of the details of it, he said: "In the early '50s there were quite a few ties with the professional anti-Communist types, but, again, given the kind of thinking that Angleton and some of his people did about those things, they could have organized something like that without any problem."

Smith also said he wouldn't be surprised if Angleton knew of Frank Sturgis's operations with Israeli Intelligence, "if it wasn't one of his operations."

Smith said hadn't heard of the association of Manuel Artime

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with the Opus Dei organization. He said he first heard of Opus Dei while in Mexico City and it was described to him as a world wide organization of super-liberal Catholics perhaps being controlled by the Communists.

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