

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with William & Charlotte Smith

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library
Veterans Remember Oral History project

Interview # VRK-A-L-2010-019

William and Charlotte Smith, a Korean War POW veteran and his wife, were interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Veterans Remember* Oral History project.

Interview dates & location:

Date: Apr 21, 2010 Location: Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield

Interview Format: Digital audio

Interviewer: Mark R. DePue, Director of Oral History, ALPL

Transcription by: Tape Transcription Center, Boston, Massachusetts

Edited by: Marianne Lawrence and Rozanne Flatt, ALPL volunteers

Total Pages: 49 Total Time: 2:18 / 2.3 hrs

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on 9/23/2010.

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

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Abstract

William & Charlotte Smith, *Veterans Remember*, VRK-A-L-2010-019

Biographical Information Overview of Interview: Charlotte Yost (Smith) was born on March 20, 1936 in Bluefield, West Virginia, where she grew up as an only daughter in a coal mining region of the state. William (Bill) Smith was born on August 7th, 1929 in Bennettsville, South Carolina, and grew up on his family's 1,600 acre produce farm near Rockingham, North Carolina. This interview is a continuation of an interview with Bill Smith on his experiences as a POW during the Korean War. The interview focuses on Bill and Charlotte's courtship and marriage, and the struggles they shared together because of Bill's experiences while a POW. The two met shortly after Bill was released from a military hospital and on leave in Bluefield to spend time with a buddy from his POW days. After a brief courtship, Bill and Charlotte married on December 24, 1955, with Charlotte being aware that Bill's time as a POW, and subsequent medical problems would be challenging. She soon learned just how challenging that would be as Bill continued to have medical problems, and lingering behavioral issues that stemmed from his POW experiences. These included persistent nightmares, hoarding food, and reactions to loud noises and confining situations.

The FBI interviewed Bill extensively about his experiences, returning year after year for seventeen years. This was due in part to Bill's remarkable memory, and to the many contacts he recalled while imprisoned. The Smiths had one child, Lisa, and Bill worked for many years before he experienced his first of several heart attacks at age forty-seven. The doctors informed him that he could either continue to work and die at a very young age, or retire. He and Charlotte chose the latter, and have lived on a medical pension since that time. In the mid 1970s they began to attend POW conventions, where Bill had a chance to reconnect with fellow POWs, and Charlotte discovered that she was not alone in her experiences. Bill and Charlotte wrote a book about Bill's wartime experience entitled *A Moment in Time*. Bill passed away on June 17, 2016

Subject Headings/Key Words: Korean War POW; Bluefield, West Virginia; courts-martial of American collaborators (progressives) following the war; FBI questioning of POW experiences; POW Conventions; medical symptoms of ex-POWs; Post Traumatic Stress Disorders of ex-POWs

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