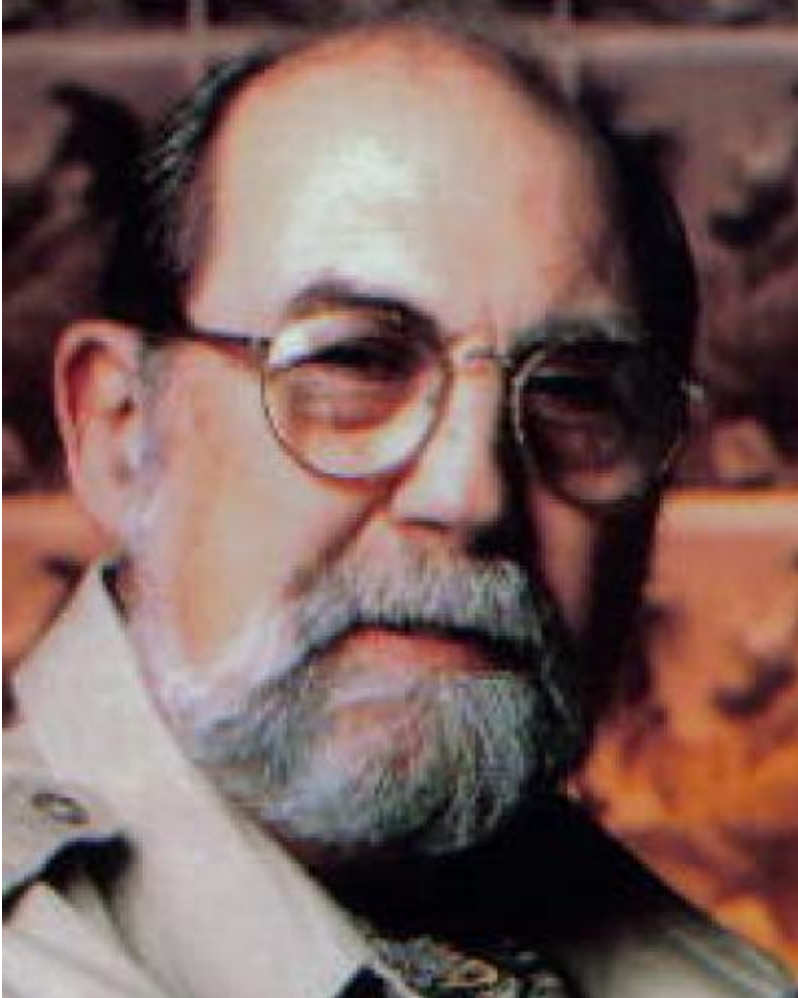


Cuba Pays Homage to U.S. Diplomat Wayne Smith



Havana, December 20 (ACN-RHC)-- Diplomats, poets, biologists and people in general honored U.S. diplomat Wayne Smith, who was the first chief of the U.S. Interests Section in Cuba and has fulfilled one of his dreams: the restoration of diplomatic relations between the two countries.

During a ceremony at the Havana headquarters of the Cuban Institute of Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP), professionals from both countries paid tribute to Smith, who served in that position in 1977, during the U.S. presidency of Jimmy Carter.

Four decades ago, Wayne said that the blockade was a senseless measure and that the U.S. had to close the Guantanamo Naval Base, intellectual Ricardo Alarcón recalled, and stressed that for his statements, the U.S. diplomat was the subject of blackmail, threats and even a fine of thousands of dollars he had to pay for presumed 'defamation.'

Although for a long time he has had no official ties with Cuba, said Alarcon, Wayne

Smith, the creator of the American diplomatic corps in Cuba, has given himself to the defense of a number of causes, such as the return of the anti-terrorist fighters to their families, another of his dreams that have now come true.

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