

Dale Elwood Smith

November 23, 1925 - February 27, 2013



Ever generous with his time and expertise and unwavering in his commitment to excellence, Dale Elwood Smith, 87, died peacefully at his Lake Forest Park, WA, home on Feb. 27, 2013.

As a professor of prosthodontics at the University of Washington School of Dentistry, Dr. Smith had a profound impact on his students and peers. At the same time, he was a devoted husband, father and grandfather who continued helping friends and family even late in life.

He was born on Nov. 23, 1925, in Blain, PA, to Charles R. and Margaret A. (Ritter) Smith. His father, a high school principal, and his mother, a teacher and homemaker, also had two younger daughters. He was only 16 when his father died suddenly of a heart attack.

Graduating from Blain High School in 1943 as valedictorian of his class, he was inducted into the U.S. Army later that year. He served as a military police officer in the 10th Mountain Division in Italy during World War II and was awarded the Bronze Star.

Soon after coming home, he married the love of his life, Rhobie Charlotte Stambaugh, in Blain on Christmas day in 1946.

He attended Shippensburg State College, Pennsylvania State University, and the University of Pittsburgh School of Dentistry, where he graduated cum laude with his DDS degree in 1952.

Later that year, he joined the U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS) as a dental intern in Staten Island, NY. There, he and Rhobie had the first and second of their four children, daughter Laurie and son Jerry. In 1954, the family moved to Indiana, PA, where he practiced general dentistry for two years and daughter Gretchen was born.

Rejoining the Public Health Service in 1956, Dr. Smith and family moved to New Orleans, LA, where they welcomed daughter Jennifer. In New Orleans, Dr. Smith practiced prosthodontics and taught at Loyola University.

The family came to Seattle in 1960, when Dr. Smith began a residency in prosthodontics at the USPHS Hospital on Beacon Hill. Two years later, he earned his MSD degree from the University of Washington (UW).

Dr. Smith served at the USPHS Hospital for 20 years, receiving the Commendation Medal for Outstanding Service in the Commissioned Corps, attaining the rank of captain and retiring as its Dental Director.

He held faculty appointments at the UW starting in 1960 and continuing through 1992. He was a full-time professor of prosthodontics from 1978 to 1988, serving as director of prosthodontics research and the graduate program, and a visiting professor at the University of Toronto in 1987. He retired in 1993 as a professor emeritus. Many of his former students credit him with setting their careers on the right path.

In 2009, the Pacific Coast Society for Prosthodontics honored Dr. Smith with its Fred Gulick Distinguished Life Member Award.

He formed many longstanding friendships along the way. He loved fly fishing and golf and traveled far and wide in pursuit of big fish and challenging courses. He was also an ardent fan of baseball, football and basketball. Year in and year out, he cheered on the UW Huskies from the stands at Husky Stadium and Hec Edmundson Pavilion.

In recent years, he became active in the 10th Mountain Association's Mount Rainier Chapter and edited the organization's newsletter, The Avalanche. He was a past president of the Pacific Coast Society, the Academy for Prosthodontics and the 10th Mountain Association's Rainier Chapter.

He and Rhobie remained very much in love throughout their 61-year marriage. She died in January 2008, and daughter Gretchen passed away in August 2010.

Survivors include three children and their spouses, Laurie Smith of Lake Forest Park, Jerry Smith and Sherry Wartelle of Redmond, Jennifer and Daniel Vradenburg of Issaquah; five grandchildren, Emily and Lindsey Smith of Redmond, Nicholas and Alison Vradenburg of Issaquah and Kimberly Newman of Bellevue; and several nieces and nephews.