

Dr. Melvin Owen Smith Obt.

A retired Tennessee Tech geology professor long active in numerous civic endeavors here, Dr. Melvin Owen Smith of Cookeville, died yesterday in Cookeville Regional Medical Center from health complications. He was 77.

Memorial services for Dr. Smith will be announced at a later date. Dr. Smith requested cremation.

The family will receive friends from 5-9 p.m. on Friday, Jan. 28, from the chapel of Whitson Funeral Home.

He was born on Oct. 28, 1927, to the late Hallie Smith and Birda Kinmon Smith.

Dr. Smith had a PHD in geology, was a professional geologist and taught geology in the Dept. of Earth Sciences at Tennessee Tech for 18 years, serving under his good friend, Walter L. (Pete) Helton.

Dr. Smith loved geology and being outside while enjoying nature. He especially enjoyed fishing and golf. He worked locally and in other states in the U.S., Canada, Mexico and the Cayman Islands. He also became an emergency medical technician and worked with Putnam County Emergency Medical Services.

Dr. Smith was known locally for his talks to schools about geology and for serving as a gold prospector, sharing how he helped people "pan for gold." He was also known to Cookeville as "Santa."

Once, when asked what makes you feel special, he responded "Knowing I have helped someone in a significant way, like seeing the faces of people through the eyes of 'Santa.'"

He was a Navy veteran (submarine service) from Aug. 23, 1945, to Oct. 22, 1947. In addition to the above, he was a member of the Masons, Putnam County Rescue Squad, Putnam County EMS and the Cookeville Police Dept. Citizen's Academy. He served as Putnam County Medical Examiner Investigator.

After retiring as a TTU geology professor, he became a life-long educator. He was a WT Tarr Award Winner. He was also the first person to graduate from the University of Kentucky without attending high school, for which he was made a "Kentucky Colonel."

His family includes **his wife of 17 years, Martha Gentry Smith** of Cookeville; two sons and daughters-in-law, Dr. Sullivan (Sully) and Rhonda Smith of Cookeville; Dr. Scott and Jan Smith of Huntersville, N.C.; grandchildren, Kellye and Kyle Smith of Huntersville, Skyler and Sullivan Smith of Cookeville, Levi Killom of Nashville and Torey Killom of Cookeville; a sister, Doris Gaines of Owenton, Ky.; three brothers, Kenneth Smith of Elizabethtown, Ky., Jerry Smith of Lawrence, Ind., and Terry Smith of

Pendleton, Ky.; and a host of nieces, nephews, many friends, former students and special grandchildren.

In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by four brothers, Harold, Howard, Bob and Walker Smith.

Memorial donations may be made to the American Heart Assoc., American Diabetes Assoc., Putnam County Rescue Squad, Cookeville Police Dept. or your favorite charity.

Whitson Funeral Home of Cookeville in charge of arrangements.

Published January 27, 2005 10:32 AM CST: Herald Citizen Newspaper, Cookeville, TN

<http://www.ajlambert.com>