IN MEMORIAM
ALFRED G. SMITH

Alfred G. Smith, professor emeritus at The University of Texas at Austin, died on December 3, 2004, at age 83. He held academic appointments at Antioch College (1953-56) and the University of Oregon (1962-1973) prior to his employment at The University of Texas in 1973. He retired in 1984. Smith came to UT to spearhead the Center for Communication Research and held academic appointments in the Department of Anthropology and the Department of Speech Communication. In addition, he worked closely with the School of Law on a National Science Foundation grant which examined future trajectories of the legal profession and factors which might predict success in law school. His book, Cognitive Styles in Law Schools (1979), was an outgrowth of this grant and was published by The University of Texas Press.

Fred, as he was known to his colleagues, was a premier scholar who helped guide the emerging field of communication during a time of rapid interdisciplinary growth. He was known as an expert in communication theory and his book, Communication and Culture (1966), was an important early contribution to the area of study now known as intercultural communication. His thinking and the courses he taught were wide-ranging and had titles like “Economics of Communication,” “Information Theory and Cybernetics,” “The Practice of Communication Scholarship,” and “Contemporary Communication Theory.” His published scholarship can be found in a wide range of journals including the American Anthropologist, Law and Human Behavior, Health Communications and Informatics, and the Journal of Communication.

Fred’s intellectual abilities were recognized throughout his career. His B.A. degree from the University of Michigan in 1943 was accompanied by honors in philosophy, honors in liberal arts, and distinction in oriental languages. He did post graduate work in foreign languages at Princeton and Yale before getting his M.A. in philosophy and anthropology from the University of Wisconsin in 1947. His Ph.D. in anthropology was also awarded by the University of Wisconsin in 1956. His proficiency in languages served him and his country well during and following World War II. He was a First Lieutenant in the U.S. Army in the Office of Strategic Services from 1942-45. From 1945-46, he was a Far East analyst with the Department of State, Office of Research and Intelligence, and from 1950-53, he served in the Department of Interior, Office of Territories, as a Pacific Island Specialist. When he became president of the International Communication Association (ICA) in 1973, he translated the entire conference program into French when the association met in Montreal. As president of ICA, he presided over the transfer of the Journal of Communication to the Annenberg School of Communication, University of Pennsylvania, and he also helped launch what is now the association’s premier journal, Human Communication Research.

Fred’s scholarly accomplishments and keen mind were recognized in many ways. He was a member of several honorary societies, a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and a fellow of the American Anthropological Association. He was the recipient of more than twenty grants and served as a consultant to the National Science Foundation, the National Institutes of Health, the Department of State, the U.S. Information Agency, the Peace Corps, and the Bureau of Census among others. Private corporations like Exxon, CBS, and the public relations firm Hill and Knowlton also sought his advice and counsel.
His professional accomplishments were outstanding, but Fred was a man of many talents who drew high praise from executives and academicians alike. In 1973, IBM executive Darrell Piersol said this about Smith in a letter of recommendation:

Dr. Smith is that rare combination of brilliant scholar and practical leader. He is able to organize work effectively and to lead a group toward challenging objectives without ruffling the feelings of his professional associates. ...Although he is an unassuming type of person, his dedication and sincerity make an impact that earns him the respect of his associates.

Another 1973 letter from Malcolm McLean, then director of the University of Iowa School of Journalism offered this about the man:

I consider Fred to be one of the finest research scholars in our field. He has wide-ranging interests in diverse facets of communication. ...His writing is stark in its apparent simplicity, yet profound in its implications. In that sense, he is a finer reporter than most of the professional journalists I know. He is concerned that what he does, in research or teaching or whatever, hold real promise of paying off, at least eventually, in terms of human well-being. ...Individually, he has a high sense of personal integrity. ...He is imaginative and creative, yet quite sensible. He is a man of fine character.

He was a devoted and loving husband of fifty-eight years to his wife Britta Helen Bonazzi.

This memorial resolution was prepared by a special committee consisting of Professors Mark L. Knapp (chair) and Larry D. Browning and Mr. Robert L. Cox, past Executive Director of the International Communication Association.

Distributed to the dean of the College of Communication, the executive vice president and provost, and the president on April 1, 2005. Copies are available on request from the Office of the General Faculty, FAC 22, F9500. This resolution is posted under "Memorials" at: http://www.utexas.edu/faculty/council/.