

## OBITUARY

Ralph Anson Smith, a Navy engineer who helped build the world's first nuclear submarine, the USS Nautilus, and later worked in the physics department at Sacramento City College, died Monday. He was 93. He died of natural causes, said his daughter, Marguerite Oates.

With degrees from the Naval Academy and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Mr. Smith played a vital role in stockpiling the U.S. "arsenal of democracy" during World War II and the Cold War. He spent more than 20 years in the Navy, building ships and submarines at shipyards from Mare Island to Portsmouth, N.H. He also spied in Germany during the last days of World War II, working to secure plans for a new type of submarine before the information fell into the hands of Soviet troops, said his son-in-law, Tom Oates.

In the early 1950s, Mr. Smith was tapped by Navy Capt. Hyman G. Rickover to help build the first nuclear-powered submarine. He joined engineers who designed the USS Nautilus and was on board when the historic vessel took its maiden voyage in 1955.

"He said it was one of the scariest moments of his life because they'd never tried anything like it before," his daughter said.

He left the Navy as a captain in 1959 and worked on missiles and other defense programs for Lockheed Corp. until retiring in 1976 and moving to Sacramento. To stay active, he quietly took a parttime job cleaning the lab and building shelves in the physics department at Sacramento City College.

When surprised professors learned of his professional background and experience, he was asked to run the lab and tutor students, his family said.

"He later said he couldn't have done anything more exciting than being a teacher," Marguerite Oates said. "He loved working with young people."

Mr. Smith was born in 1914 in Easton, Pa., and raised in Hackettstown, N.J. He was one of seven children who worked in the family's mom-and-pop grocery store, his daughter said. A brilliant student, he attended Stevens Institute of Technology after high school and won an appointment to the Naval Academy. He also excelled in sports and was named All-American in lacrosse at Annapolis before graduating in 1937.

He earned a master's degree in naval architecture and marine engineering from MIT and married Amy Wolfskill in 1940. The couple raised five children, including a son who died in 2005.

Mr. Smith enjoyed golfing, bowling, skiing and traveling. He was a kind and gentle man who loved spending time with family Sunday drives and "being silly," his daughter said.

The Sacramento Bee, Sacramento, California: May 10, 2007

NAME: Ralph Anson Smith

DATE OF DEATH: May 7, 2007