



CLAUDE EARLE SMITH, JR.
1922–1987

On the evening of October 19, 1987, Professor C. E. Smith, Jr., left for his evening seminar at the University of Alabama. He was killed in an automobile accident 10 minutes later. With his death, our discipline lost a talented archaeoethnobotanist, our university lost one of its most productive scholars, and our department lost a highly valued member. He was a demanding scholar,

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a stickler for carefully collected evidence, evidence thoroughly understood, and evidence cogently presented. He was the senior scholar we all turned to for carefully considered and mature judgements in both personal and professional matters.

Smitty, as he preferred to be called, was born in Boston in 1922. Florida, however, was where he and his brother Morgan grew up, and it was Florida he considered home. To judge by Smitty's reminiscences, the Florida years were happy and adventure filled. He graduated from St. Petersburg High School in June of 1940 and enrolled at Harvard the next fall. He began a long, dedicated, and wide-ranging commitment to fieldwork the summer of his freshman year when he joined a Harvard-sponsored expedition to South America. Eventually he would do field research in the United States, Europe, the U.S.S.R., South and Central America, Southeast Asia, Africa, the Pacific, and Australia. He fully intended to return to Harvard after his first South American fieldwork, but World War II intervened and Smitty enlisted. From 1941 to 1945 he served as a pharmacist's mate in the U.S. Navy, first in China, then at Patuxent Naval Air Station where he met Roberta Jean Klages, his wife to be. After mustering out of military service in 1945, Smitty immediately reenrolled at Harvard, where he took his A.B. cum laude in the spring of 1949. He and Roberta were married in June of his junior year at Harvard and, as Smitty often mused, "spent their honeymoon surrounded by the field crew and the guano at Bat Cave." He earned an A.M. at Harvard in 1951 on the way to his Ph.D., a study of New World species of *Sloanea* (Elaeocarpaceae) which he completed in 1953.

In the course of a distinguished early career Smitty served as a botanist for Gray Herbarium from 1946 to 1953, as director of Taylor Memorial Arboretum from 1953 to 1958, as associate curator of botany for the Chicago Field Museum from 1959 to 1961, and as a senior research botanist for the United States Department of Agriculture from 1962 to 1969. He began his tenure at the University of Alabama in 1970 with a joint appointment in Biology and Anthropology. By this time his field and laboratory work had gained him international recognition. He was, for example, invited to speak at 14 international symposia. He especially was admired by those archaeologists whose plant remains he analyzed. Many of our colleagues appreciated the willing, quiet, and timely manner in which he accomplished his tasks. Most admired the rigor, caution, and competence of his results. He was, in effect, the most active and acclaimed scholar in the young but rapidly growing field of archaeoethnobotany—a discipline in which he may be justly counted as a founding father.

Shortly after arriving at Alabama Smitty created and began attracting Ph.D. students to a specialized program in anthropology and botany. While there were only seven of them over the next 17 years, all did cogently designed field and laboratory research; all of them were exceedingly well trained. In many respects their performance is and will be as great a legacy as his published works. He reluctantly agreed to serve as interim chair of the anthropology department in 1982. His worst fears were, however, realized. At the department's unanimous urging, his interim appointment ran for five years. In 1986, at Smitty's insistence, the department sought and hired a new chair, and he returned to the work he loved most, the field and laboratory analysis of archaeologically derived botanical specimens. It was this work he pursued diligently, despite some physical difficulty, until his untimely death. Smitty left behind a wife, a brother, four children, and a host of professional admirers. We will all miss him. He did a lot of work with and for us, but most of all he made us think.

RICHARD A. KRAUSE

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