



Easley Stone Smith

May 16, 1924 - February 2, 2021

Easley Stone Smith, 96, of Blacksburg, VA died on February 2, 2021. He was a resident of the Showalter Center of Warm Hearth. Easley was born May 16, 1924 in Nottoway County VA to Clack Stone and Pearl Easley Smith. He was raised on the family farm and graduated from Crewe High School. He enrolled at Va Tech in 1941 and attended for four quarters prior to enlisting in the U.S. Army Air Corps during World War II. He completed a rigorous training program earning a commission as a 2nd Lieutenant and his wings as a B-24 Liberator pilot at age 19. He commanded a ten-man crew in the 723rd bomber squadron, 450th bomb group of the 15th Air Force on a combat tour based in southern Italy flying daylight bombing missions in support of the Allied war effort. Daylight bombing was exceedingly dangerous work – during the war over 30,000 airmen were killed in combat, over 14,000 wounded and another 33,000 were shot down and captured. He was always thankful that despite witnessing much death and destruction none of his crew members were every injured. He completed a tour of 25 missions as a 1st Lieutenant and flight commander and volunteered to return to the United States for retraining in B-29s and eventual reassignment to the Pacific theater. He landed back in the United States on his 21st birthday in May of 1945. By that time the war in the Pacific was winding down, his retraining was cancelled and did not fly in combat again. He completed his enlistment duty stateside in time to be back at Va Tech for the winter quarter in 1946. Easley graduated from Va Tech in 1948 and began his career as a sales representative for a farm machinery manufacturer. He met Helen Mitchell on a blind date in Richmond and married her in Lynchburg in June of 1951. His career eventually brought him back to Blacksburg and the extension service of Va Tech. He joined the faculty of the department of Agricultural Engineering (now Biological Systems Engineering) in 1956 and earned an MS in Agricultural Engineering in 1960. His specialty was farm machinery and he was instrumental in the development of no-till farming. He always enjoyed working with farmers and students and for years was involved with state and regional 4-H programs. He served as an Associate Professor until his retirement in 1984. After retirement Easley read the newspaper thoroughly every day, maintained a prodigious garden and continued to volunteer in the community. At various times he served as a PTA president, community volunteer on local planning boards, on professional societies, the Lions Club

and on the Session and numerous committees of the Blacksburg Presbyterian Church. He enjoyed travel when he could persuade Helen to go, including trips to Europe and Australia. He particularly enjoyed a 1996 trip back to Manduria Italy to visit the country where he spent one winter 51 years before serving his country. Easley loved his wife and family, his home and church, his country and of course his Hokies. He always aimed to set a good example and he exemplified being a patriot and an active citizen. In addition to his parents Easley was predeceased by his wife Helen, his brothers Randolph W. Smith and R. Lawson Smith, his sister Anne Smith Palazzo and one grandson, Zachery Smith. He is survived by his three sons Blair Smith (Debbie) of Jacksonville, FL, Steve Smith (Jane) of Raleigh, NC, Doug Smith of Charlotte, NC, along with eight grand-children, ten nieces and nephews, and a whole town of admirers.

His family would like to give special thanks to the staff of the Showalter Center of Warm Hearth for enriching his life, especially over the last year during the pandemic. He appreciated the efforts of all of them – housekeeping, dietary and especially the nursing staff who gave him care and comfort over his last years. Anyone considering a memorial contribution to memorialize Easley should consider either the Blacksburg Presbyterian Church or the Warm Hearth Foundation.

Comments



“ We are just finding out about Easely’s passing. We are so sorry to hear the loss of this great man. We pray God will surround the family with His love and peace, and give you strength for the days ahead.

Joe and Susan White - February 10 at 10:44 PM