



In Loving Memory

Joe Edward Smith
February 15, 1929 - July 1, 2022

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Joe Edward Smith was born to John and Lillis Smith on February 15, 1929 in the Greenbriar farming community, five miles from Madisonville, Texas. He was the fourth of six children. Joe attended Mitchell Chapel School. The school was named after Joe Mitchell, Joe's maternal grandfather, who donated the land and built the two-room school in 1895 to educate his ten children and others in the community. At age ten, he traveled to Prairie View to participate in a spelling bee. Because of his outstanding academic progress, he was promoted two grades. Joe's father, John, sold the farm and moved the family to Beaumont, Texas in 1944. He attended Charlton Pollard High School where he played football and was the Salutatorian of his graduating class in 1946. Joe attended Prairie View A&M College on a football scholarship. He majored in Chemistry and was elected President of the Junior class. He was instrumental in changing the Miss Prairie View criteria from fund raising to a student body popular vote. Joe was among the top students at Prairie View and was awarded "Best Science Student." He was also voted "Best Dressed Student" by his classmates. He graduated in May of 1950 with a B.S. degree in Chemistry.

Joe was a distinguished military student and was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the United States Army Reserve. In May 1951, he graduated from the Infantry School at Ft. Benning, Georgia. He was ordered to report to the 4th Infantry Division in Germany. Joe served in this capacity as an infantry platoon leader. In 1952, he was relieved from the mandatory active-duty requirements and returned to the United States.

Joe attended graduate school at Prairie A&M University with a major in Public School Administration and began his teaching career as a science teacher and head coach at Lincoln Junior High School on Beaumont, Texas. He was promoted to Assistant Principal after his first year of teaching. In 1966-68,

Joe served as Principal of Booker T. Washington Elementary School in Beaumont.

In 1968-69, Joe served as Director of the Prairie View A&M University Desegregation Institute. It was a multi-cultural program that included teacher groups from Brookshire, Hempstead, Navasota and Waller Independent School Districts. The institute helped schools solve problems following the desegregation of public schools. In 1969-70, Joe served as student teacher supervisor at the University of Houston School of Education. In addition, he completed the residential requirement for the Doctoral Degree Program at the University of Houston.

As a result of the Prairie View Desegregation Institute experiences, Joe was employed as a School Desegregation Specialist for the U.S. Office of Education in Washington, D.C. In 1970, he was subsequently transferred to the regional office in Dallas. Joe and Opal raised their four children in Dallas.

Joe was a passionate golfer who enjoyed playing with golfing buddies and close friends A.T Miller, L.O. Kennedy and Arthur Matherson. He was member of the Pro Duffers Golf Association – Dallas Chapter and often taught young kids in the community the game he loved dearly, including his own children. He attended St. John Baptist Church in Dallas and was a volunteer with the Bethlehem Foundation. Joe was a mason and member of the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity. He loved quotes that were passed down to him by his mother. For example, “If a task is once begun never leave it until it’s done. Be thy labor great or small, do it well or not at all.” Also, “Love many, trust few. Always paddle your own canoe” He was a lifetime member of the PTA and was an advocate for his own children as well as the children of his community. He had high expectations for his children and held teachers and administrators accountable for the proper education of all children.

In 1958, Joe married Opal Johnson. They were married for 62 years. They raised four adult children Dr. Kevin Smith, Dr. Gayle Blair, Stanley Smith, MA and Dr. Cedrick Smith. Joe enjoyed watching sports and news programs and spending time with his wife, children and grandchildren: Kara, Alana, Ryan, Donald III, Dillon, Stanley II, Caleb and Hillary.