



Wilson L. Smith

August 1, 1917 - April 20, 2011

Mr. Wilson L. Smith, 93, of Salisbury, co-founder of Food Town, community leader and philanthropist, passed away Wednesday, April 20, 2011 at Rowan Regional Medical Center.

Mr. Smith was born on August 1, 1917 in Spartanburg, SC to the late Walter Lee and Hattie Belle Cress Smith. He is survived by Margaret "Evelyn" Wyatt Smith, his beloved wife of 67 years, son, Ronnie Smith and daughter-in-law Janis of Salisbury, son, Tim Smith and daughter-in-law Rosemary of Morrisville, grandchildren Ashley Smith McMillan and husband Jimmy of Morrisville and Stuart Smith of St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands, and great-granddaughter, Emerson Rose McMillan. Also surviving are Food Town sons, Ronnie and Donnie Marsh. He was preceded in death by a brother Julian Cress Smith.

Mr. Smith was educated in the Salisbury Public Schools, a 1935 graduate of Boyden High School, a graduate of the U.S. Air Force Command and Staff College, and was awarded the honorary degree of Doctor of Humane Letters from Lenoir-Rhyne University.

A veteran of the U.S. Air Force and WWII, he proudly served his country in Europe during the Normandy invasion and was highly decorated with five combat ribbons and the Bronze Star. He also served as commander of the

local Air Force Reserve with the rank of Major.

Mr. Smith's long and distinguished career in the supermarket industry began in 1925 at the early age of 8 when he first began delivering groceries to neighbors in a little red wagon for the local curb market. He was later associated with friend and mentor Glenn E. Ketner, Sr. and Ketner's Supermarkets.

In 1957 Mr. Smith, Brown and Ralph Ketner founded Food Town, now Food Lion, recognized today as one of the largest supermarket chains in the nation. He served the company as Operations Vice-President, Secretary and member of the board until his retirement in 1984.

Although small in stature, Mr. Smith was a giant of a human being, a Christian gentleman, a very people-oriented and caring person, and a wonderful example to all who knew him. He cared deeply for his church, his family, and his company, and was dedicated to serving them throughout his life.

Among his many community and civic activities, he was a dedicated member of St. John's Lutheran Church, where he held positions on the church council, Sunday School teacher and superintendent, chairman of the Benevolent Foundation, chairman of the Stewardship Committee, member of the Resources Board, Head Usher, Golden Opportunity Club member, and member of the board of Trinity Oaks and Lutheran Services for the Aging.

He was very proud to be a member of the Salisbury Kiwanis Club and numerous other service and volunteer organizations. He was active in the local chapter of Military Officers Association of America, and was a past member of the Merchant's Association, Rowan Rose Society, Salisbury Toastmasters Club, Rowan Regional Medical Center Foundation, and was an advocate and major supporter for many local charitable organizations. Mr.

Smith and his family created the Wilson L. Smith Family Foundation to help support designated medical, educational, religious and humanitarian causes.

Mr. Smith was named the Salisbury Lion's Club Man of the Year, Civitan Club's Citizen of the Year, Rowan County Humanitarian of the Year, and a Kiwanis International George F. Hixson Fellow. He served as Honorary Chairman of Rowan Regional Medical Center's "Partners in Progress" Capital Campaign and was instrumental in helping to establish the Wilson L. Smith Outpatient Center and the Smith Heart and Vascular Center. Catawba College recognized him with their Exemplary Service Medal and the Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary awarded him the Bachman Award for Distinguished Service. He and his wife also established scholarship programs at Lenoir-Rhyne University and Baddour Memorial Center for challenged adults.

Known especially for his artistic talent, he decorated the lives of hundred of friends and organizations with beautifully designed hand-painted signs and banners for birthdays, anniversaries, and special occasions. He also had a special love for animals, including his cats Buster and Goldie.

A service of Thanksgiving, Praise and Celebration of the life of Wilson Smith will be held on Good Friday, April 22, 2011 at 11:00AM at St. John's Lutheran Church with the Rev. Dr. Carl E. Sachtleben, Rev. Rhodes Woolly and Rev. Jan Huntley officiating. Visitation will follow the service in the fellowship hall of the church. A private burial is planned.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests that memorials be made to the Nehemiah Fund of St. John's Lutheran Church, 200 W. Innes Street, Salisbury, NC 28144 or to the Rowan Regional Medical Center Foundation, 130 Mocksville Avenue, Salisbury, NC 28144 or to the donor's choice.

The family wished to thank our wonderful caregivers and the outstanding medical staff at Rowan Regional Medical Center for their dedication and compassionate care shown the family.

Summersett Funeral Home is serving the Smith family. Online condolences may be made at www.summersettfuneralhome.com.

Tribute Wall



“ Ronnie:

We just wanted to give you and your family our deepest sympathy during this time. May God Bless each of you.##imported-begin##The Broadway Family##imported-end##

April 25, 2011 at 12:17 PM



“ Mr Smith,

*What a blessing he was to so many.
One of the most pleasant souls you would ever meet.*

Lord Bless each of you.

Joey Spry (Former Food Lion SM)##imported-begin##Pastor Joey Spry##imported-end##

April 24, 2011 at 01:56 AM



“ Ronnie and Janis,

We are so sorry to hear about your dad. He was such a classy gentleman. His generosity to RRMC will be remembered always. Our thoughts and prayers are with all of you at this time.

Kathy & Don Bailey##imported-begin##Kathy & Don Bailey##imported-end##

April 22, 2011 at 04:30 PM



“ *##imported-begin##The McMillan Family##imported-end##*

April 22, 2011 at 09:08 AM



“ *Ronnie,
I am so sorry for your loss. Your dad was a very special man. We will all miss him very much. I pray that God will give you comfort and peace during this difficult time. What a legacy Mr. Smith leaves behind though! He has impacted so many lives in a positive way and has been such a blessing to me.*

*Love,
Bonnie VanderElst
Wachovia
Salisbury West##imported-begin##Bonnie VanderElst##imported-end##*

April 22, 2011 at 06:42 AM



“ *Mrs. Smith, Ronnie and Tim, We are so sorry to hear of your husband and father's death. He was truly a nice person and will be missed.##imported-begin##Bill and Susan Linn##imported-end##*

April 21, 2011 at 10:39 PM



“ Our sincere sympathy on the loss of your dear father. When I was a young man working for Food Town, he made a very positive impression on me, and I have thought highly of him ever since. May God give you peace at this very difficult time.

Wayne and Robin Hager###imported-begin##Wayne Hager###imported-end##

April 21, 2011 at 08:19 PM



“ *Smith Family*
Wilson was always kind and would always ask how we were. When I worked for him he was helpful and respectful to me and help me acheive the goals I was trying to attain. I will always miss his smiling face and kind words.

Ronnie###imported-begin##Ronnie&Linda Rinehart###imported-end##

April 21, 2011 at 07:42 PM



“ *Ronnie,*
I am so sorry to hear about you Dad. He was truly a great man with a heart of gold. From the 1st time I met him (when I worked and Food Lion #10)I have always had the greatest respect for him. He was very committed to his job and personal values. It was not unusual for me to see him bagging groceries or helping stock shelves. I have missed his presence at Food Lion since his retirement. I know you will miss him, but I also know you have many great memories of his love for you and your family. May God bless your family and give you comfort.###imported-begin##Vickie Pinkston Dry###imported-end##

April 21, 2011 at 01:50 PM



“ How blessed I am to be able to call Mr. Smith my friend. He means so much to me and has influenced my life in a positive way. I will truly miss his smiling face.##imported-begin##cindy compton##imported-end##

April 21, 2011 at 11:21 AM



“ I am so sorry to hear of your loss. You probably long to experience the joy of being reunited with a dead loved one. Be assured that God feels for you. Jesus' empathy for a grieving widow reflected God's own compassion because Jesus perfectly mirrored his Father's personality. (John 14:9) The Bible teaches us that God yearns to bring back to life the dead who are preserved in his memory. (Job 14:14, 15) His Word, the Bible, gives us a wonderful hope, the hope of living in a paradise on earth and seeing the resurrection of our dead loved ones. (Luke 23:43; John 5:28, 29)##imported-begin##Renee##imported-end##

April 21, 2011 at 10:45 AM



“ Sincere sympathy to the Smith family. Know that even in death his memories, good deeds and generosity live on.

He was a giant among men and will be greatly missed by this community.

My prayers are with you.##imported-begin##Shirley Wilks##imported-end##

April 21, 2011 at 02:06 AM



“ I have such wonderful memories of Pop Pop, and how much he warmed my heart Nd so many others. He was generous, kind, and loving. He was a fabulous and talented artist and I smile whenever I come across his Christmas cards, he always spelled my name as Scharley, and I loved it. Heaven gained an amazing man today, and the earths a bit bleaker because of it, but God knows best. He lived a long life on earth...I know he's celebrating in heaven. My heart, hugs, and prayers to you all. With my love, Sharli Anne###imported-begin##Sharli###imported-end##

April 20, 2011 at 11:08 PM



“ We have all lost a wonderful gentleman who was always kind and caring and who made a tremendous difference in the lives of so many people.

Ronnie and family, our thoughts and prayers are with you in the days and months ahead.###imported-begin##Jim and Margarete Peeler###imported-end##

April 20, 2011 at 08:10 PM