

Eulogy honors devoted Smiths

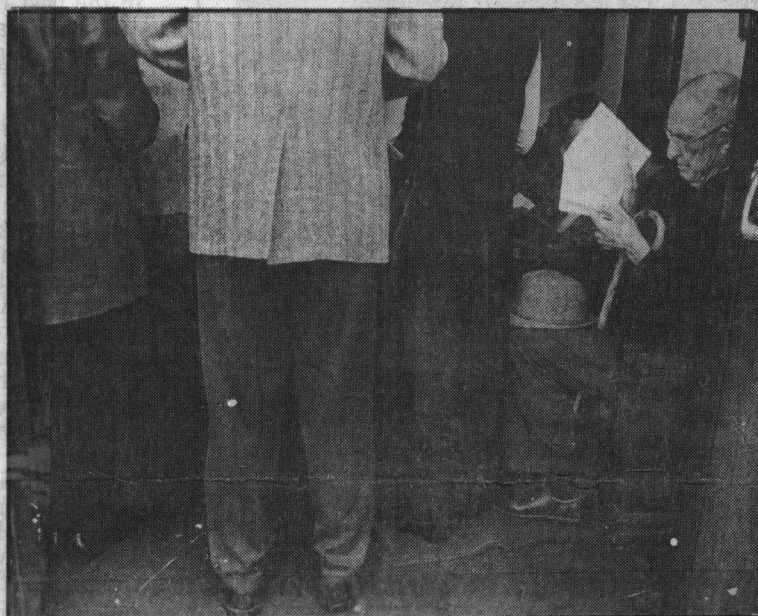


'Page was an extreme idealist. Eloise was earthy and very practical. This was an endless source of strength for the both of them.'

— a family friend



Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel



Top, Page and Eloise Smith pictured in 1942.

Above, An overflow crowd gathered outside the Calvary Episcopal Church during the eulogy.

Left, It was standing room only when nearly 600 attended the service.

Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel

Old friends remember generous stalwarts

By DAN WHITE
Sentinel staff writer
SANTA CRUZ

A young woman sat on the church steps Saturday and cried as she held a flower and a photograph. It showed Page Smith and Eloise Pickard Smith as a young couple gazing into a fireplace as if lost in a trance.

Memories of the Smiths, who died last month, drew nearly 600 mourners to Santa Cruz's Calvary Episcopal Church Saturday. They packed the church so tightly that people spilled onto the sidewalks.

Death ended their love story, but it couldn't separate the lovers. The pair died within 38 hours of each other last month. Historian Page Smith was 77. His wife, the artist Eloise Pickard Smith, was 74.

"Nothing, not even death itself, can destroy what has been created and claimed by love" said the Rev. Wendy Watson, reading during the eulogy.

It was a service fit for two dignitaries. The memorial reunited infantrymen from Page Smith's division in World War II. Former students and colleagues also gathered. There were moments of grief. Every speaker who paid tribute to the Smiths had to fight back tears.

Mary Holmes, an artist and a friend of the Smiths for 40 years, described their spiritual side during a reception after the ceremony.

"They were both whole people, not fragmented," she said. "... Page was an extreme idealist. Eloise was earthy and very practical. This (difference) was an endless source of strength for the both of them. Eloise was able to make the ordinary be sacred, whether it was cooking or arranging her house, or her painting. She had that sense of reverence."

Mourners remembered Page as an inspirational teacher, the founding provost of Cowell College at UCSC and an advocate for the community's homeless. Mary Beth Saffo, a student from UCSC's first freshman class in 1965, came from Arizona to attend the service. "He was my second father, my academic father," Saffo, now a professor, said.

The mourners remembered Eloise as a woman with honesty and wit, who enjoyed gardening, gourmet cooking, museums and art. She was instrumental in the fight to stop a nuclear power plant in Davenport. She started art programs throughout California, including the Prison Arts Project, which helps artists bring their knowledge to prisons. In January, a 50-year retrospective of her art gave county residents a first chance to see her work

UCSC professor John Dizikes was a student of Page Smith's about 30 years ago. In his book, Smith mentioned that Adams died the same day as Thomas Jefferson — 50 years after the Declaration of Independence was signed. Dizikes then compared the Adams-Jefferson deaths to Page and Eloise's deaths.

"This extraordinary occur-

ence," he said during his eulogy, "the joint departure of two presiding spirits unfathomably intermingled, suggested something far beyond mere coincidence."

There were moments of happiness and laughter, too, as mourners told stories of the Smiths' ruggedly independent, playful and contrary natures. At the reception, the guests looked at Eloise Smith's sketch of her husband and some of her paintings. They pored over a display table of Page Smith's books, from a newly published study of Japanese internment camps to "The Chicken Book," a humorous study of poultry "appropriately dedicated to the students in a course on the chicken taught at Cowell College."

Friends portrayed the couple as smart and witty.

"Will could become willfulness, determination, obstinacy" Dizikes said. "Eloise's shrewd amusing comments about things and people, candor that could be crushing, circulated widely. Was

professor — did not get tenure. Lee thought he had seen it all when Page agreed to "lay down his tenure ... but then he topped it by laying down his life for his wife."

Lee still has mixed feelings about Page's resignation. "It was an honor and a burden," he mused. "I wasn't worth it. He tried to save me but it didn't work." Lee said he worries he didn't appreciate the Smiths enough when they were alive. "That's why death is such a kick in the pants," he said.

Page himself prepared the service shortly after his wife died. Little did anyone at the church know they also would be preparing a service for Page.

The service closed on a note that captured the grief and the hope of the moment.

"Death is the great assayer of the sermon, and of the talent," said Dizikes, "Death cancels everything but truth and strips us of everything but genius and virtue."

she surprised that people took offense? Probably not. Was she deterred by this? Certainly not."

Dizikes compared Page's work at Cowell College to a commander on a ship.

That analogy was perfect for Page. In World War II, he commanded 200 men from the C Company 85th Mountain Infantry Regiment of the 10th Mountain Division in Italy. Sixteen men from the company were killed in action and 60 more were wounded. Page himself was seriously hurt after a mine exploded in 1944.

At his memorial, five men from the division, ranging in age from 70 to 86, came to pay their respects. "He was more than a military leader," said Hugh Evans, 71, from Boulder, Colo. "He was our father, and our father confessor sometimes."

The service was bittersweet for Page's former colleague Paul Lee. Page, he said, had resigned from UC Santa Cruz in 1972 to protest that Lee — then an assistant pro-