

MEMORIAL RESOLUTION

STANLEY ASTREDO SMITH (1883 – 1969)

Professor Stanley Astredo Smith was born in San Francisco on October 19, 1883. After attending Sequoia High School in Redwood City, he earned his Bachelor's and Master's degrees at Stanford in 1903 and 1905, respectively. In 1907 he went to Europe where he studied at the Universities of Paris and Madrid. Then came four years (1907-11) as an instructor in French and Italian at the University of Washington, followed by two years at Harvard as a student (1911-12) and instructor (1912-13). After a year as Professor of Romance Languages at Reed College, he came back to the Stanford faculty in 1914 and remained here until his retirement in 1949. Since then most of his time was spent in France. He died in Nice on April 5.

Although Professor Smith's master's thesis dealt with "The Sources and the Composition of the 'Cligès' of Chrétien de Troyes," he was equally expert in the classical period of French literature. Endowed with an unusual gift for languages, he possessed a perfect command of French, Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese. For many years he taught Dante's Divine Comedy in the original Italian.

All those who knew Professor Smith will remember him as an unusual man, a man with a mind of his own, and a man of integrity. Slogans and popular fads never impressed him. Unconcerned with such simplifications as "publish-or-perish," he wrote in his academic report of 1945: "I have published no books and do not regard my ... published articles and reviews of primary importance." For several years he worked on a book on the theater of Giuseppe Giacosa which remained unfinished.

Teaching he considered his primary function and to this he applied his sense of perfection. He insisted on hard work and knowledge of subject matter; for a specialist in French, he felt, everything is relevant that falls within the confines of his field. It is unlikely that every student of his enjoyed his classes, but it is certain that no one ever passed a course given by him without having learned a great deal.

Being a perfectionist, Professor Smith gave the grades that corresponded to his students' performance in the course. It happened occasionally that one of them came to complain to him. Professor Smith would receive him with the grace and courtesy that are the sign of a cultivated and civilized man, but it would take indisputable proof to make him change his mind.

It is not known how many students loved Professor Smith (at least one such case is known, since his wife was a former student of his), but we have no knowledge of a single student who did not respect him.

Professor Smith is survived by his wife Doris; by four children, all Stanford alumni: Mrs. Edward Becks of Palo Alto, Alonso, Humbert, and Benjamin; and by eight grandchildren.

Leo Weinstein, Chairman
Friedrich W. Strothmann
Pauline Newman-Gordon