



Howard W. Smith, D.M.D., M.D.
1983-84

"Howard Smith came in at a time of turmoil, when we were moving ahead with a definition of who we were. Howard Smith had done his homework. He had tried to think ahead in terms of what his responsibilities were and what the consequences might be. He was a very thoughtful person in setting forth an outline of what should take place. He also was a man who would speak his mind. Howard Smith was very good at handling some of the personal interactions about leadership and the direction in which things should be moving."

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It is a long way from northern Vermont to Yale University School of Medicine—not geographically, per-

come a facial plastic surgeon. Born September 10, 1919, Smith grew up in Brunswick, Vermont, a tiny town with just thirty two voters, give or take a few, far from major highways, big cities, or even a regular school. In fact, Smith attended school across the state line in New Hampshire, brushing shoulders with a lot of farmers and small-town folk who had never considered college, much less shared his lofty dream of medical school. It was a dream that seemed too large even for Smith's shoulders for a time.

"I went down to the University of Vermont and looked around at all the big buildings and decided this might be too tough," Smith recalls. "I grew up on farmland and didn't have much feeling for a city. Burlington seemed like a pretty big city to me. So I decided to go to teachers college in southern New Hampshire [Keene Teacher's College] and enrolled in the fall of 1938."

While in college, however, the idea of medical school kept resurfacing in Smith's mind, but he could not decide if he would rather be a dentist or a doctor. Dental school won out, and he enrolled at Tufts Dental College in the summer of 1942, but while serving a sub-internship in oral surgery at Yale New Haven Hospital in 1945, he realized he was going to have to specialize. From there it was on to his third matriculation, this time at Yale University School of Medicine, from which he graduated in 1953. Following a year's residency in otorhinolaryngology with John A. Kirchner at Yale, Smith was appointed chief of otolaryngology at Andrews Air Force Base.

Stationed for two years at Andrews Air Force Base in Washington, D.C., he spent time working with the chief of the ear, nose and throat service there and became interested in facial plastic surgery. "This is where my interest in facial plastic surgery really grew," comments Smith. "One of my first patients was the son of a five star general who was in charge of the whole military air transport service system. I did a reasonably

practice six days a week." In 1980, Smith served as chairman of the Alpine Medical Committee for the Winter Olympics at Lake Placid, New York. He also represented the AAFPRS on the American College of Surgeons Board of Governors.

In his spare time, he skis regularly (flying his own plane to and from Lake Placid, N.Y.); refinishes antique furniture, including antique mahogany boats; and collects Chinese porcelain paintings of the

ply man, and that's how I got hold of the special instruments I needed for facial plastic surgery.

"There might have been objections to the kind of surgery I was doing had I not worked on his son but as it was, I was able to go ahead and do a lot of facial plastic surgery in the service."

Smith explains that he was inspired to go to Andrews Air Force Base in the first place by a General Wilfred Hall, a friend of Kirchner, who had come to Yale on a recruiting mission. Soon after Smith's arrival at the base, Hall became chief medical officer of NATO, and Smith inherited his private practice as well—literally becoming the ear, nose, and throat doctor for the Air Force in Washington, D.C. He also took courses from Maurice Cottle at this time, further honing his rhinoplasty skills. Additional training in facial plastic surgery was obtained by working five successive summers with Eric Peet, professor and chairman of the Department of Plastic Surgery at Radcliffe Infirmary, Oxford University, England.

Smith first became active in the AAFPRS at the request of William Wright, M.D., when he agreed to work on the credentials committee, a particularly time-consuming and important committee. From that post he moved up to a regional vice presidency and took over a leadership role even there, organizing the vice presidents to run regional meetings, getting involved in credentialing, and recruiting new members.

As president of the AAFPRS in 1983, one of Smith's primary concerns was to make sure that the AAFPRS was an autonomous, independent entity and not treated as just a stepchild of the AAO-HNS. He pushed to have the offices moved upstairs and away from the AAO-HNS and worked with Lee VanBremen both in consolidating records in a central office and in purchasing a computer system.

Meanwhile, his own busy career had maintained momentum. Appointed to the faculty at Yale University School of Medicine as clin-

ical professor, he also conducted a private practice and founded the New Haven ENT and Facial Plastic Surgery Group as well as serving as director of the New Haven Cleft Palate Center. "I had three full-time jobs," he points out. "I managed a large specialty group with seven offices, eight doctors, and 70 employees. At the same time I had a university job where I ran the ENT program at one of Yale University's affiliated hospitals. And I car-

antique furniture. He also has done a considerable amount of woodworking and spends time at photography, using cameras he built in his machine shop.

Retirement came at the end of 1988. For Dr. Smith, this meant moving from New Haven to New York City where he now teaches facial plastic surgery gratis at Columbia University three days a week. "It was an offer they just couldn't refuse," he concludes.