



A VERY SPECIAL ORDINARY MAN.....

David Earl Smith

March 23, 1919 – May 2, 2005

David Smith was just an ordinary man.....but not so ordinary to me. I thought he was something special.

In 1919, the deadly Asian flu left its mark on an innocent newborn. By the time he was three years old, David was discovered to be deaf and “somewhat slow.” But, in later years, most people couldn’t tell because he spoke so well.

Born in Missoula, Montana in 1919, David’s family moved to Seattle, Washington so that he could attend a special school for the deaf. He finally settled in north Long Beach where he resided for over 30 years. David embarked on his last journey on May 2, 2005.

In the days when David was a teenager, most deaf people learned a trade. Higher education was considered a waste for them. David became an accomplished upholsterer—tuck and roll and diamond tufting were his specialty. He had a gift for creativity and for crafting things with his hands. With old-fashioned values, despite his disabilities, he was hard working and honest and did his best to provide for his family.

Retirement years found him tirelessly pouring through documents and genealogical records, writing an endless stream of letters, and traveling across the country in search of long lost relatives. His all-consuming passion focused on completing an extensive family tree.

A tall man at 6’4”, David was lean and lanky. He had the appearance of a white-haired Abe Lincoln with sparkling blue eyes. I always looked up to him until recent years when I would see him curled up in his bed at the nursing home, further crippled by Alzheimer’s and multiple strokes. At the age of 86, he had metamorphosed into a shadow of his former self.

David and I had a certain special bond. I know he was proud of me, of this grown woman that he lovingly introduced as his “little brat.” We communicated in American Sign Language.

The greatest legacy he left me was the ability to speak with my hands, to listen with my eyes, and to think with my heart.

Yes, David Smith was a very special ordinary man—he was my father.