



## Donald J. Smith

December 3, 1929 - July 3, 2025

Donald J. Smith peacefully passed away at home surrounded by family after a brief illness on July 3, 2025 at age 95 and a half.

Don was born in Turlock, California on December 3, 1929 to parents James H. "Cantaloupe" Smith and Rose M. Smith. He was to reside in Turlock for the rest of his life.

He was preceded in death by his beloved sister, Marian Smith Palmer. Don was born at a very difficult time in this country during the Great Depression. His father would often remind him of how well he had done financially the year his sister Marian was born in 1923 as compared to almost losing it all the year Don was born in 1929.

Don was a graduate of Turlock High School, class of 1947. He attended Menlo College for two years before transferring to and graduating from College of the Pacific (now University of the Pacific) in 1952 with a degree in Business. It was at COP that Don met the love of his life, Wendy Hammond. The couple were married in 1951 and were together for 68 years until her passing in 2019.

Don is survived by his three children, Stephen (Kathleen) Smith of Turlock, CA, Sally (John) Robinson of Woodside, CA, and Stuart Smith of San Jose,

CA; six grandchildren, Hilary (Neill) Callis of Turlock, Alec (Hillary) Smith of Turlock, Heidi (Tyler) Rosengren of Belvedere, CA, Gretchen (Spencer) Rawles of San Francisco, CA, and Jamie Smith and Julian Smith of Valencia, Spain; eight great-grandchildren, Daniel and Elin Callis, Owen and Beau Smith, Annika and Aksel Rosengren, and Ainsley and Blythe Rawles.

While in college, Don planned to open a men's clothing store when he graduated. When his father became ill and he was needed on the farm, he found his true calling. He spent his career following in his father's footsteps and running the Turlock Fruit Company with his partner, brother-in-law, William "Bill" Palmer, who passed away in 1994. Under their leadership, Turlock Fruit Company established a reputation for quality produce that continues to this day under the management of son, Stephen; grandson, Alec Smith; and grandson-in-law, Neill Callis. The company is over 107 years old.

Don was instrumental in the development of the export market for honeydew melons to Japan, Korea, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. He was known in the trade for his integrity, work ethic, leadership, and for his word being his bond. He was truly happiest when he was touring the farm in Firebaugh, which he did until just days before his passing.

Don was very active in the community as well. He served on the Turlock Joint Union High School Board for 12 years and served on the Board of Regents of his beloved University of the Pacific for 24 years. He was an active member of the First United Methodist Church, past President of the Turlock noon Rotary Club, and a member of Turlock Masonic Lodge F&AM, Stockton Scottish Rite, and Aahmes Shriners.

Don was a respected leader in the produce industry. He was a member of the board of Western Growers Association for many years and served as President in 1964, the youngest person to be elected to that position to this

day. He later served on the board of the United Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Association for several years.

Words like icon, legend, and pioneer do not adequately reflect Don's passion for growing, packing, and shipping high quality produce. He did not enjoy leisure travel or leisure time. He preferred instead to vacation at work on the ranch in Firebaugh. He never grew tired of seeing the miracle of growing delicious food for all to enjoy.

His celebration of life will be held on Saturday, July 12, 2025 at 11:00 a.m. at First United Methodist, Turlock, 1660 Arbor Way, 95380.

Remembrances may be made to: The Michael J Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research, Grand Central Station, P.O. Box 4777, NY, NY 10163; Shriners Children's Northern California, Attn: Shriners Hospitals for Children, P.O. Box 947765, Atlanta, GA. 30394; or a favorite charity.

# Previous Events

## Celebration of Life

JUL 12. 11:00 AM (PT)

First United Methodist Church  
1660 Arbor Way  
Turlock, CA 95380

# Tribute Wall

KV

“ Don when you where on the Board if Regents at UOP, you assisted in getting me into The University of Pacific. I had the qualifications, but needed the transcripts after finals at SJDJC. Due to unforeseen circumstances the finals ended the week before the Monday classes started at UOP. Everything was hastily processed and transferred easily. And made for a great experience at UOP. And a great journey in life began. I thank and appreciate your endeavors.

KVLarson - November 27, 2025 at 02:39 AM

DP

“ Hi Steven, & Family, my condolences . I apologize for not knowing of Don's passing till today. May he rest in peace. Your Dad was truly one of a kind. I loved his stories about the old days , & his keen insight of farming.

David Patnaude - October 01, 2025 at 11:08 AM

DA

“ I think of Mr Don every time I see a King of the West melon in the produce section at my Publix stores in Ocala, Fl. I had the pleasure of doing business Trucking his melons from California to Florida back around 2003 to 2017. Not a lot of gentlemen like Mr Smith left today. RIP Mr Smith

DAVID ALVAREZ - September 20, 2025 at 02:56 PM

RS

“ Robin S. planted a grove of 10 [Memorial Trees](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Donald J. Smith.

Robin S. - July 24, 2025 at 08:42 PM



“Fruit Guy” will be missed at the post office! Your daily greetings and asking what’s going on were always the highlight of our day! There is definitely a void and we miss your kindness. Our condolences to the entire family and Turlock Fruit Co.

Katie Parsons Kindle - July 14, 2025 at 11:26 AM



“Magnificent Life Spray was purchased for the family of Donald J. Smith.



July 10, 2025 at 03:11 PM



“Rich and Carol Rosengren purchased the Basket Full of Wishes for the family of Donald J. Smith.



Rich and Carol Rosengren - July 10, 2025 at 12:38 PM



“Rich and Carol Rosengren planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Donald J. Smith.

Rich and Carol Rosengren - July 10, 2025 at 12:38 PM



“A Gentleman, a nice friend and fortunate to be able to enjoy the fruits of his labor. Bill Daly

William Daly - July 09, 2025 at 10:35 AM

BR

“ Don't was an amazing husband, father and man. He was best friends with my father-in-law Glenn Winans, and spoke at my husband's (Jeff Winans) Celebration of life in April 2013. His wife Wendy was another Angel gone too soon.  
Travis and I send our condolences to Steve, and families. Brandi Winans

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**Brandi** - July 09, 2025 at 10:04 AM

WS

“ Rest Easy Brother Smith, until we meet again. William Bart Sargenti, Secretary Turlock Masonic Lodge #236 F&AM

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**William Sargenti** - July 08, 2025 at 08:25 PM

YC

“ Your friends at HM. Clause purchased the Serene Reflections Bouquet for the family of Donald J. Smith.



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**Your friends at HM. Clause** - July 08, 2025 at 07:27 PM