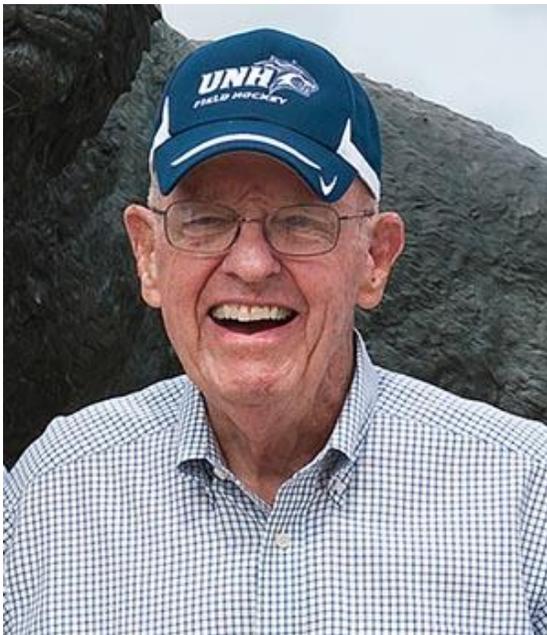


In Memoriam: Jack Smith '50

Helping out was a way of life

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Born in Clifton, New Jersey, to a homemaker mother and a father who owned an electrical contracting business, Jack Smith grew up during the Great Depression. For many in his generation, growing up in those turbulent times imprinted forever the importance of serving others, helping out strangers in need and giving back when you can. For Jack, that might explain why, when it came to his alma mater, his “helping out” never seemed to stop.

After completing his first semester at UNH, he applied for and was accepted into the V-12 Navy College Training Program at Dartmouth College. He completed a B.A. at Dartmouth and was commissioned by the Navy during World War II, serving in the Pacific as a gunnery officer aboard a destroyer minesweeper. After the war, he returned

to UNH on the GI Bill, where he earned a degree in mechanical engineering from the College of Engineering and Physical Sciences (CEPS) and coached freshman football and lacrosse. He began his career as an engineer and manager, eventually co-founding Portland Valve Incorporated, which designed and made valves for nuclear submarines. He married his first love, Joan, in 1955, and the pair raised a family. When Joan became ill, Jack took a step back from his career to care for her.

Jack's son, Dave, worked at Portland Valve for 18 years. He says his father was a taskmaster at work but could also easily separate work life and home life. "He had high expectations, but by the same token, I learned a lot about being focused from him. He was a true role model for me. How he got along with people, what he's done for people and how he treated them . . . those are the traits I really try to emulate now."

Matt Carlyon '97 got to know Jack when the latter approached the UNH Foundation about giving back to his alma mater. "Jack was not born with a silver spoon in his mouth," he says. "He worked hard, served our country and took care of his family. Then in the twilight of his life, he reflected on the people and places that propelled him and helped him achieve a well-balanced life and success. And he returned the favor."

Jack established half a dozen scholarships at UNH in CEPS and athletics that have had a profound impact on students and programs alike. Longtime field hockey coach Robin Balducci '85 says the endowed field hockey scholarship he established to honor companion Barbara Bridle Peyser '50, with whom he reconnected after both of their spouses had passed away, was a significant turning point in the program. "It's not always typical for women's sports to have alumni step up and endow scholarships," Balducci says.

Jack's philanthropy and volunteer efforts were recognized with university awards that included the CEPS Alumni Society Distinguished Alumni Award, the Alumni Meritorious Service Award, Athletics' Joan Leitzel Award and the Hubbard Award. "I wouldn't say he was shy, but he was understated when it came to being recognized for being a philanthropist," says CEPS professor and former associate dean Robert Henry, who worked with Jack on the CEPS alumni board for many years. Henry fondly recalls the unlikely start of their friendship — he ran out of gas on the way to meet Jack in Portland, a gaffe Jack jokingly never let him forget — and the two would meet occasionally for hockey games and lunches.

Northeast Passage Director Jill Gravink '86, '07G says she'll always remember seeing Jack on the sidelines or in seats in the Whittemore Center, ready to take in a game. "The cool thing about Jack is that he made no differential between our wheelchair rugby or our sled hockey programs and any other athletic team," she says. "If it was a UNH-related team, he was going to be there to support it — and cheer as loud as anybody else in the stands."

Director of athletics Marty Scarano recalls Jack getting emotional when he received the Leitzel Award, a "lifetime achievement" award recognizing his support of UNH athletics. Scarano echoes others who noted that Jack never sought out the limelight but was a quiet force behind so many of UNH's successes. "To those of us who knew him...he

was so beloved by all of us. But to the average fan, he was anonymous — which is exactly how he wanted it,” says Scarano.

Jack died Sept. 9, 2018, in Maine, at the age of 92.

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