

Richard D. Smith

1933 - 2021



Richard Dean “Dick” Smith was born in Oklahoma City on February 28, 1933. He graduated Wichita East High School 1951 and the University of Kansas in 1955 with a degree in Geology. He was a Lieutenant in the US Navy and later received his Master in Geology from Harvard University in 1959. Dick married Patricia “Pattie” Gillespie in 1954, and she passed in 2004. He married Sondra Langel in 2005.

Mr. Smith founded Range Oil Company, Inc. in 1964 and Range Drilling Company, Inc. in 1977. His companies explored in South Central Kansas, primarily in Butler and Cowley Counties. Mr. Smith, among others, was a discoverer of the DeGraff and Noell fields in northern Butler County, sometimes referred to as the Burns Dome.

People often said Dick Smith was the smartest person in the room. He was a voracious reader and self-taught on everything from ranch management to the Blue Rider movement in German Art. He found professional success in the oil and gas industry, building his own company from the ground up. He later took on land and cattle, eventually owning ranches in Kansas, Wyoming, and Florida. He was

active in politics, making frequent trips to Washington, DC and driving Bob Dole around Wichita when he would visit. An expert angler, many people learned to fly fish with him in Colorado and at his ranch in Wyoming. He loved sailing and driving his motorboat, especially along the coast of Florida. Always curious, he traveled with his family all over the US and Europe.

Sondra Langel was his wife and constant companion for the last 15 years of his life, as they continued to travel, develop their properties and support the Wichita Art Museum and Ulrich Art Museum, among other charities.

Dick once told a reporter that his objective was “To make money and be a gentleman about it.” He was committed to doing the right thing and he’ll be remembered as someone who was always considerate, polite, and hospitable to everyone.

Mr. Smith was the founder and President of Range Oil Co., Inc. in 1964. He served as President of the Kansas Oil and Gas Association (KIOGA), Chairman of the Wichita Chamber of Commerce, Chairman of United Way Wichita, was on the Board of Directors for Coleman Company, 4th Financial Corporation, Kansas Gas and Electric Corporation, Wichita Country Club, and Phi Gamma Delta House Corporation. Mr. Smith was proud to have served for 23 years on the board of Wesley Hospital as its Vice Chair.

SOURCE: <https://www.downingandlahey.com/obituaries/Richard-Dean-Smith?obId=19592066>