

# **11. The children and grandchildren of Benjamin Benton Smith Sr and his two wives Lucretia Ann Gilliland and Mary Margaret Wilson**

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**11. Benjamin Benton Smith Sr** 11 SEP 1867 • Pleasanton, TX - 4 NOV 1939 • Silver City, Grant, NM  
 Lucretia Ann Gilliland 31 OCT 1876 • Kimble County, TX - 11 FEB 1962 • Newberg, Yamhill, Oregon  
 Marriage: 30 Mar 1892 • Dona Ana, New Mexico – Divorce 16 Apr 1909  
 Mary Margaret Wilson 23 JAN 1872 • Bosque County, TX - 19 FEB 1939 • Silver City, NM



Photos of Benjamin, Lucretia, and Ben and Mary's gravestone borrowed from FamilySearch.

One of the final two children of Jesse and Elizabeth was Benjamin Benton, the twin brother of Jesse. We don't have birth certificates to know who came first, but they arrived in Pleasanton 12 years before the family's move north to the San Angelo area. I think I stated it wrong earlier, but it appears as though they moved to Runnels County in 1879 and then in 1880 at the time of the Census, they moved to nearby Tom Green County and bought a ranch. Not knowing where they would be when the Census counter arrived, they were actually counted in both places. I guess if you are a twin you need to be double counted.

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**77. Benjamin Benton Smith Jr** 15 JUN 1913 • Clifton, NM - 2 JUN 1990 • Globe, Gila, AZ  
 Thelma Lucille Hill 25 FEB 1918 • Tyronne, NM - 2 APR 2002 • Globe, Gila, AZ  
 Married: 23 May 1939 – Silver City, Grant, NM – no records based on Alvy

I don't have any photos for either of these individuals.

Ben Jr was the final son that Benjamin fathered. It's interesting that he waited until his final son before naming him Junior. It seems more usual that the first son is given this moniker. Ben Jr first appears with his parents, sister and stepsister Bessie in 1920 and then his 2<sup>nd</sup> appearance comes in the 1930 Census living still with his parents at age 17 at 400 Mesquite St, Globe, AZ. We already established that we cannot find that address today. Dad was working as a laborer and Ben Jr was driving a truck. They had a 17-year-old lodger living with them named Lola Martin who was from Texas. I do not know if she was a relative of some sort. They owned their home that was worth \$1200.

## **Children of Benjamin and Thelma Smith**

260	Richard Smith	1938		Benjamin and Thelma Child#1
261	Kenneth Roger Smith	1944	2007	Benjamin and Thelma's child#2

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**260. Richard A. Smith** 20 AUG 1938 • Silver City, NM - Living

#1 Barbara Ann Saum 11 JUN 1936 • Fairfield County, OH - 3 MAR 2014 • Omaha. NB

Marriage: 19 Aug 1961 – Ohio – Divorced Nov 1971 Omaha. NB

#2 Carolyn Ahniwa Coats 19 DEC 1941 • Miami, AZ - Living

Marriage: maybe 1972



Richard from his HS Yearbook and Barbara from her Yearbook. Carolyn from her first Marriage in 1964.

Richard was the first son born to Benton and Thelma Hill Smith. He arrived in Silver City, NM and appears in Western City HS in 1953 and then

has transferred to Globe HS for his senior year in 1956. I'm not certain of what he did between graduating and 1961, but in Aug 1961, he married Barbara Saum. Their wedding gives a few clues.

***Miss Barbara Ann Saum Becomes Bride  
Of Richard A. Smith In Amanda Church***

*A profusion of emerald trees and fan shaped vases filled with white Fujii chrysanthemums were used on the altar of the Amanda Methodist Church on Saturday, August 19 for the wedding of Miss Barbara Ann Saum and Richard A. Smith. Candles in single gold standards, twin seven branch candelabra festooned with greenery and garlanded with white satin bows and long streamers also added to the beauty of the setting. White satin bows and greenery marked the pews.*

*The bride is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Chester Saum, Rt. 2 Lancaster and the bridegroom is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Ben B. Smith, Globe, Arizona. They repeated their nuptial vows to the Rev. A. G. Winkle at 7:30 o'clock. The Rev. Edward Jones assisted at the double ring candlelight service. Mrs. S. Earl Craft of Amanda was organist and Miss Joanne Albright of Bucyrus, sorority sister of the bride, was vocalist. Her numbers were "Hawaiian Wedding Song," "Because," and "O Perfect Love."*

***Gown Of Silk Organza***

*Given in marriage. by her father, the bride wore an exquisite gown of silk organza over tulle and taffeta. The elongated Basque bodice was topped with a large Bertha collar of hand-run Alencon lace sprinkled with pearls and fastened in the back with tiny self-covered buttons. The very bouffant skirt billowed gracefully over a Dior hoop, extending into a wide chapel train. She wore the traditional sorority garter. Her fingertip veil of silk illusion fell from a pointed crown of lace and pearls and her jewelry was a pearl pendant, a gift of the bridegroom. She carried a modern style bouquet of white Sweetheart roses, French illusion and variegated waxed ivy foliage.*

***The Maid Of Honor***

*Miss Sharee Main of Ostrander, college roommate of the bride was maid of honor and wore an aqua silk organza dress over net and taffeta. The lace bodice was topped with a scoop neckline and the brief sleeves were worn with short white gloves. The full skirt was waltz length. To complete her ensemble, she had a matching petaled hatband with a circular veil and she carried a crescent shaped bouquet of beige Fujii chrysanthemums, accented with gold lemon leaves, touched with silver glitter.*

*Kenneth Smith, Globe, Ariz., served as best man for his brother and ushers were Paul Saum and Ralph Saum, brother and uncle of the bride. For her daughter's wedding, Mrs. Saum chose a deep rose dress of silk chiffon over taffeta with which she wore a petal hat in shades of rose from light to dark. She had a shoulder corsage of white Cymbidium orchids with white satin leaves.*

*Mrs. Smith, mother of the bridegroom, selected a beige dress of silk chiffon and lace, with which she combined brown accessories and a corsage of pink Cymbidium orchids with pink satin leaves.*

### ***Reception Held***

*Following the service, a reception was held in the social room of the church with Mrs. Gilbert Hager, Miss Ellen Hager, aunt and cousin of the bride, Mrs. Paul Saum, a sister-in-law, and Mrs. Jack D. Francis, a classmate as hostesses.*

*Mrs. E. E. Kerns, Mrs. James Ruckman and Mrs. Charles Yost opened the gifts and Miss Julia Crumley presided at the guest book. Each had a corsage of white pompon chrysanthemums and ivy foliage. The buffet table was centered with a four-tier cake, decorated with pink roses and topped with white sugar bells and pink roses. Pink Maytime Sweetheart roses and huckleberry foliage wreathed the cake, which was flanked by tall white twisted tapers.*

### ***To Live In New Mexico***

*Later in the day, the new Mr. and Mrs. Smith departed on a short wedding trip. For traveling, the bride wore a beige and white striped dress, with matching accessories and a corsage of white and gold pompon chrysanthemums.*

*They have established their home in Las Cruces, New Mexico. Mrs. Smith is a graduate of Otterbein College, Westerville and a member of Sigma Zeta National Science Honorary and Theta Nu Social Sorority. She attended New Mexico State University in Las Cruces.*

*Mr. Smith is a senior in College of Civil Engineering at New Mexico State University and present Commander of Eagle Flight, an affiliate of Air Force ROTC.*

*Out-of-town guests at the wedding came from Arizona, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Minnesota, Newark, St. Louisville, Ostrander, Bucyrus. Cleveland, Columbus and Thornville.*

Sorry for the length, but I have very little information about Richard and this gives more than any other I have found. It would seem that after graduating in 1956, Richard headed off to NMSU and got a degree in Civil Engineering. His participation in AF ROTC suggests that he probably later entered the military which may account for my difficulty in tracing him.

Barbara died in 2014 and let's see if her obituary offers any clues.

### ***Barbara Ann (Saum) Smith***

*OMAHA, NE: Barbara Ann (Saum) Smith, age 77, passed away Monday, March 3, 2014 at the Josie Harper Hospice House in Omaha, Nebraska. She was born June 11, 1936 to the late Chester and A. Lucile (Crumley) Saum. Barbara graduated from Amanda High School class of 1954 and Otterbein College in 1958.*

*She obtained her teaching credentials from New Mexico State University. Relocating to Omaha, she taught chemistry primarily at Omaha South High School for 36 years before retiring in 1999. She loved to return to the family farm in Ohio to spend time with her family. Working with her flowers and in her yard were her favorite pastimes.*

*Barbara is survived by her brother Paul (Lois) Saum of Lancaster; nephews David (Robin) Saum, Doug (Amber) Saum; niece Julie (Hector) Feliciano; great nieces and nephews Brandy, Nate, Zac, Chet, Jordan, Eli, Hannah; great-great niece Gracyn; along with an aunt and numerous cousins. Barbara leaves behind many, many special friends in Omaha*

*A grave side service will be held 1:30 p.m. Saturday, March 15, 2014 at Amanda Twp. Cemetery with Rev. Tony Hudson officiating. Friends may call from 6-8 p.m. Friday at the TAYLOR FUNERAL HOME in Amanda.*

*In lieu of flowers, Barbara requested memorials be given to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, 501 St. Jude Place, Memphis, TN or the Amanda Clearcreek Alumni Association Endowment Fund, P.O. Box 275, Amanda, Ohio 43102.*

*Kind notes of condolence may be made at [www.mytaylorfuneralhome.com](http://www.mytaylorfuneralhome.com)*

Her retirement in 1999 and a 36-year work history suggests that she and Richard must have moved to Omaha in 1963. There is an Offutt AFB in Omaha which might be the reason for that move if Richard entered the Air Force. I found a mention of Lt and Mrs. Richard A. Smith there, and then in 1967 I found this article: vision station: *Richard A. Smith, a New Mexico State University civil engineering graduate, has joined the Lueder Construction Company as an engineer. He was Air Force civil engineer project officer for military construction in Kansas, Missouri and part of Nebraska.*

This confirms my suspicions and details the next step in his career. I then found a notice of a divorce petition in 1971 followed by a finalization in Nov 1972 in Omaha. Alvy suggests that he later married Ahniwa Carolyn Coats. In researching her, I found a Carolyn Ahniwa Coats from Globe, AZ getting married in 1964 to Gary Wayne Brown in Abilene, TX while attending Abilene Christian College. I went on to discover that she was the daughter of Fred and Ahniwa Coats and was born two weeks after Pearl Harbor in Arizona. Her father died in 1994 and his obituary shows Carolyn as Carolyn Smith. *Fred D. Coats, 83, of Safford, a retired building contractor, died May 15, 1994. He was born in Madill, Texas. Survivors include his wife, Ahniwa; daughter, **Carolyn A. Smith**; son, Edwin Darrow Coat; and three grandchildren. Visitation: 5 to 7 p.m. Wednesday, David's Safford Funeral Home. Services: 2 p.m. Thursday, at the funeral home.*

If she and Richard married in 1972, she would have been 30, so there is a possibility that they had a child, or she and her first husband may have had a child. Three grandchildren are mentioned in her father's obituary. Alvy suggests that they had one child, but I never see one mentioned. I did find a McRae Smith born in 1973 in California to a mother with the last name Coates. This may be their child.

This is all of the information that I have been able to find about Richard. This completes the short look into Richard Smith and his two wives. He must be a good guy because we have the same name and we are both civil engineers.

### Child of Richard and Carolyn Coats Smith

647 McRae Smith 1973 Richard and Carolyn's child

**261. Kenneth Roger Smith** 14 APR 1944 • Silver City, AZ - 7 OCT 2007 • Fort Oglethorpe, GA

#1 Helen Kathleen Zaller 1947 • Pennsylvania - Living

Marriage: Feb 1967 • Escambia, FL

#2 Susan K Sims 25 MAR 1948 • Gila, AZ – Living

Married: Jan 1976 – Tucson

#3 Madalyn Frances Heidelberg 2 JAN 1953 – Louisiana – Living

Marriage: Not known



I'm going to do a lot of deferring to Alvy on Kenneth as I cannot document some of it, but I have been found some interesting stories for your enjoyment. Ken and his three reported wives. Alvy also reports two children were born to Ken and Susan (but Madalyn was probably the mother) Timothy Carter Smith, born 13 Feb. 1983, Murray, Calloway Co.,

Ky. and Nicholas Eugene Smith, born 23 Sept. 1984, Murray, Calloway Co., Ky. I then found a third daughter in his obituary named April Smith who was probably born to Susan Sims. I have found the Kentucky birth records for Tim and Nick, but none for April as New Mexico is hard to find recent birth records.

Born in 1944, Ken's only census appearance is as a 6-year-old in 1950 with his parents and his big brother Richard. Alvy suggested that he had three marriages so I go to work looking for documentation.

His first marriage was in 1967 after he had joined the Navy and was a Naval Cadet in Pensacola. That wedding is described below. Kathleen Zaller was the daughter of a Naval Officer, Frank Zaller. That shows a lot of confidence for a young trainee.

***Miss Zaller, Ensign Smith  
Marry in Catholic Ceremony***

*Miss Kathleen Zaller became the bride of Ens. Kenneth R. Smith Saturday at 11 a.m. in Our Lady of Loreto Chapel at NAS. The Rev. Fr. Francis Burke, chaplain, performed the ceremony.*

*Parents of the couple are Cmdr. and Mrs. Frank A. Zaller, 313 Oakfield Drive, and Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin B. Smith of Globe, Ariz. Mrs. John Geist, organist, presented wedding music.*

*Given in marriage by her father, the bride wore a gown of ivory peau de soie and Alencon lace. The bodice featured capelet sleeves and pearled Alencon lace appliques. The slim skirt was enhanced by a lace band at the hemline. Flowing from beneath the capelet was a square, chapel length train. A mantilla of lace and illusion complemented her attire. She carried a missal topped with an arrangement of orchids.*

*Miss Margaret Zaller, sister of the bride, was maid of honor. Miss Barbara Ann Ziner was bridesmaid. They were attired in floor length gowns of aqua linen featuring necklines and A-line skirts. They wore demi-hats with triple veils of illusion and carried nosegays of yellow carnations. Christopher Jerome Zaller was ring bearer. Capt. Richard A. Smith (USAF), brother of the bridegroom, was best man. Groomsman was 2nd Lt. Richard R. Ceresko.*

*Mrs. Joseph Ziner attended the guest book during a reception in the home of the bride's parents. Following a wedding trip to New Orleans, La., the couple will reside in San Diego, Calif.*

From this we learn that Ken was in the Navy and we get confirmation about his brother being in the Air Force.

We next find Ken getting married to Susan Sims back in Tucson in 1976. All I have to document this is a marriage license announcement in the Arizona newspaper. Susan was an Arizona girl and the daughter of Eugene and Jean Beedle Sims. She was about 4 years younger than Ken and seems to have attended the University of Arizona. Based on the date of their marriage and the ages of Ken's oldest child April, it is likely that Susan was the mother but I cannot state that definitively.

Alvy had suggested that his 2<sup>nd</sup> marriage was to Madalyn Heidelberg, but my conclusion is that she was his final marriage as she is mentioned in his obituary which I will publish at the end. Madalyn was the daughter of Stephen and Madeline Phillips Heidelberg from Lafayette, LA. She married first in 1973 to Sidney Fournet whose father Sidney "Frenchy" Fournet had been the first All-American Football player for LSU in 15 years when he was so named in 1954. The description of their wedding is over the top. Madalyn's mother was a doctor. Her father had died in 1970, so he missed the wedding. Her mother later remarried and died in 2017 and at that time Madalyn was married to Ken. Madalyn and her first husband appear to have had some children together as we will find in Ken's obituary.

I also found an interview from 2003 that sheds a lot of light on Ken's life. It follows below:  
*Ken Smith has been teaching creative writing at the University of Tennessee, Chattanooga over 20 years now; he's been a writer for a much longer period of time.*

*I spent an evening with Ken meandering through some of the highlights of his life spent as a writer and a teacher leading others into one of the most unpredictable and competitive of vocations.*

*Ken has published many short stories over the years that include two complete collections of those stories. He is consistently at the center of the Meacham Writer's Workshop that takes place twice a year at Chattanooga State. Ken's collections include: "Decoys and Other Stories" and "Angels and Others." Both books are available at the UTC bookstore or by e-mailing Ken at Kenneth-Smith@utc.edu.*

*Interview: Mouton:*

*So, Ken Smith, tell me all about your past.*

*Smith: I appreciate that you seem to want to know a great deal about my memories, my past as a writer. I have to tell you that until I was 17 or 18, I was certain that I was going to be second baseman for some major league team.*

*Mouton: You were a ballplayer?*

*Smith: Writing was not a priority. (Ken and I both share a laugh over the more athletic beginning of his life as a writer)*

*Mouton: A glimpse into your first memories of creativity to come?*

*Smith: My cousin Bobby and I started using an 8mm camera to film these plays we would write and we would force our parents to watch them. Heros and villains, that sort of thing. At the time I was living in Globe, Arizona. My brother and I had a horse which was stabled near our home and we would use the horse in these movies. We would use ketchup and one of us, or a friend would ride by and we'd shoot with our rifles. Someone would be dressed like an Indian, somebody might be an outlaw. The Indian or outlaw would be riding this horse, get shot, and then fall off. Then we would use a slow-motion camera shot to show all the blood and guts and.*

*Mouton: So, this was a form of telling a story for you?*

*Smith: Right. But, at that time, it never occurred to me to be a writer. I had went on to college. I became a journalist.*

*Mouton: When did you go to college?*

*Smith: I attended college for 2 1/2 years and then volunteered for the Navy and spent 5 years in the service. I finished my undergraduate degree when I got out. The college gave me some credit for my Navy time and I went to work for a newspaper while I was finishing up my BA. It's a great job.*

*Mouton: The newspaper work?*

*Smith: Right. It was a good experience for a young man. Here, at the University, you write a story or a piece of nonfiction, even if you're lucky enough to get it accepted with the first editor you send it to it's going to be a year before it sees print. In the news business, you write this really interesting line about a bartender who took this shotgun away from a would-be robber--anything--and when you do a good job it's in next day's paper with your byline.*

*Mouton: Instant gratification?*

*Smith: Yeah. It's great. It's a really interesting job.*

*Mouton: You're from New Mexico?*

*Smith: Yes, I was born there. Silver City. I lived there until I was 9. All of my aunts, uncles, cousins still live around there.*

*Mouton: You lived in the Southwest until you went into the Navy?*

*Smith: Oh yeah, up until the Navy.*

*Mouton: A great deal of younger writers, and readers for that matter, like to know where a writer grew up. Maybe what images, social customs, all that stuff. They want to know how it may have affected the writer and his work.*

*Smith: I was born in Silver City, but I consider myself from Globe, about 3 hours distant. My grandparents lived there so we were all pretty close. Our ties.*

*Mouton: Close family?*

*Smith: Yeah. Very close.*

*Mouton: Did you have any family members that were, say creative? Writers? Artists?*

*Smith: Sure. Yeah, I've an aunt who was an excellent artist. I wish she'd have painted more. My father was an amazing carpenter which is an art in itself.*

*Mouton: Do you think of creativity as being handed down? Like biologically? DNA?*



*Smith: I don't know. (Ken is shaking his head a little) I don't know about that. I do know that my father was a great reader. He read all the time. Jay, he could take the blueprint for a fairly good-sized house. I don't mean just straight beams of wood, but the nooks and valleys of a house. Take a couple of saw-horses and a piece of plywood and plan and cut every rafter on that house. You've got to be able to see things upside-down to do that. Then he would hand up the pieces and my brother and I would nail them into place. It was amazing to me.*

*Mouton: Father and mother influence of creativity, then?*

*Smith: Sure.*

*Mouton: Did you major in English? Writing?*

*Smith: Oh, I changed majors several times.*

*Mouton: So, what was your first major?*

*Smith: Well, it finally occurred to me that I wanted to write and the only thing that I felt I could make a living from was journalism. So, I switched my major to journalism.*

*Mouton: From what major? (Ken is grinning at me)*

*Smith: Animal Husbandry. (Much laughter from my area of operation and Ken is smiling at my surprise) I'm not laughing at you, I'm laughing with you, Ken. (I've regained some composure)*

*Mouton: So, did you read a Hemingway story? What moved you to try to get a job writing for a newspaper?*

*Smith: Well, I read a great deal. When I was just about ready to graduate, I took an introduction to creative writing course, similar to the one we have here (UTC). I really liked it so I decided I wanted to pursue that. Well, the University of Arizona was much smaller then than it is today so I applied to the MFA program in creative writing. Well, the powers that be said "We don't want this guy in here, he's the unwashed and his degrees in journalism." So, they found me "deficient" and they wanted to have me make up 18 hours in literature courses. I was admitted "conditionally." Well, it seems that I had read, virtually, everything they offered in the literature course work in every class I took. So, after 12 hours of straight A work in the literature courses they waived the remaining credit hours and admitted me, without "deficiency" into the program.*

*Mouton: How old were you when you attended the MFA program?*

*Smith: I was 32 years old.*

*Mouton: This must have been sometime around the end of the Vietnam War?*

*Smith: Yes. I was in the Navy. I was serving off the coast of Vietnam on a Navel Carrier involved in Search and Rescue operations. Basically, combat support. I was a pilot. My job might be to fly a priest out to a destroyer to say a mass. Or maybe pick up some kid off one of the ships that might need to see a doctor or dentist. It was an interesting experience to say the least.*

*Mouton: When you were back in the states and attending college were you writing?*

*Smith: Oh yeah, the entire time.*

*Mouton: Did you publish while still in school?*

*Smith: I had a story accepted by Tri-Quarterly. It was big deal to me as there was a great deal of competition. I felt a good deal of the competition was damaging to a degree, but the best thing about the program was that I was surrounded by people that were just as compassionate about writing as I was. And, I learned more from the students--as in most good programs.*

*Mouton: Any names I might recognize? Writers that studied with you?*

*Smith: Let's see, a number of writers and teachers of writing. Steven Schwartz, Kevin McLeroy. A Pulitzer Prize winner this year, Richard Russo. I'll admit to being a little envious (Ken is smiling). We all attended the program around the same time.*

*Mouton: So, you received a good deal of experience while attending this program?*

*Smith: Sure. The acceptance of the story at Tri-Quarterly won me a chance to teach two classes in creative writing while I was still attending my MFA program. It was my last Spring Semester and instead of teaching*

*composition classes I taught the creative writing students. I enjoyed it, gained some valuable experience and it looked good on my record.*

*Mouton: Was your first published story reviewed?*

*Smith: I don't remember reading any reviews on that single story. Reviews tend to follow the publication of book length works. Short story collections.*

*Mouton: First story published, you've wrapped up your MFA, and then?*

*Smith: I did not end up in teaching immediately. I worked just over a year as a tutor for athletes at the University. I was barely subsisting at this time working with these student athletes with their writing in the writing lab. My first academic job came along at a University in Kentucky. I landed a position as assistant professor. I had two classes of freshman composition and two classes of creative writing. I was there 4 years.*

*Mouton: Did you continue to publish while you were teaching in Kentucky?*

*Smith: My first collection of short stories was published during my time there. "Decoys and Other Stories."*

*Mouton: Decent reviews?*

*Smith: It's been such a long time, well over 20 years. As I recall a number of the reviews were fairly good. My life didn't change a whole lot. Nobody made a movie out of the book, not quite like a novel. I was writing a good deal at the time and, like most writers, experiencing my share of rejections. You might be amazed at the persistence it takes. A good friend of mine that attended the program with me told me along the time my second book came out, "It's good to know a man that has more ass than the publishing industry has teeth." (laughter from the two of us) I do know that nobody is going to publish your stories if you don't ask them to. A writer has to submit his work.*

*Mouton: Is this about the time you arrived at UTC?*

*Smith: Maybe a year or so after my first book was published. I believe this was in 1986. Then it was 6 more years before I published another book. I kept submitting work and getting stories published during this time. I was working in the novel form as well.*

*Mouton: Do you do any readings of your work, Ken?*

*Smith: When asked, I do. I'm going to be 59 this year and I don't travel as well as I used to. So, I don't go as much as I used to go. I've given a number of readings at colleges and universities primarily in the South. A couple of more recent might be the Bread Loaf Writer's Conference, I gave a reading at Vanderbilt, and, of course, the Meacham Writer's Workshop. I suspect I may allow more time for readings after I retire, but at this time I've been devoting to writing, teaching and the like.*

*Mouton: Is fiction your primary interest as a writer? I know that you are currently teaching a creative nonfiction class. You've mentioned you believe this to be a growing field of interest. How about your interest?*

*Smith: Oh yes, right.*

*Mouton: Do you apply any standard of rules for your writing? Like a particular time you write? Do you wait for "the muse?"*

*Smith: Right. I do, but it gets messed up sometimes.*

*Mouton: Real Life enters the picture? What about the kinds of stories you write? Any particular type of fiction? Mainstream? I've read a couple of your stories, let's see... "Meat," was one. Another about a young marine having a drink at a bar off base and he meets up with this woman that is with another man, but she seems to enjoy the role of a flirt--I liked that one as well. What about your fiction?*

*Smith: I would say most of my stories take place in the part of the country that I grew up in. I've been working on a novel about the old west. I would say most of my stories take place in contemporary times, but I've a few that take place a number of years ago. One during The Depression, that's a few years back. Somebody, somebody in an article a few years ago called me a "Meat and Potatoes" kind of writer. I took it as a compliment.*



*Mouton: That's a good definition, I believe that was a compliment.*

*Smith: Now, in my latest collection, "Angels and Others" the stories are set from about the Korean War on. In fact, that one does contain the story set during The Depression.*

*Mouton: So, would you call yourself a liar or a fiction writer?*

*Smith: Both. (laughter from both of us) Yes, I suppose my writing would be considered contemporary in content.*

*Mouton: I heard you quote Robert Frost a couple of months ago. Something about no writer writes a poem for practice. He writes the poem and if it does not work, then it's an exercise? What about you? What about when you write?*

*Smith: Yeah, I tend to agree with that. Writing is hard work. One has life to contend with away from and apart from the writing. I don't spend time Practicing writing--I write.*

*Mouton: That's great advice. Can I steal that quote from you? Would that make me a writer who is a liar and a thief?*

*Smith: T.S. Elliot says that's ok, too. (much laughter)*

*Mouton: Ken, do you consider writing a pleasurable activity? I don't know, when you get "in the zone?"*

*Smith: Oh, sure! You get so lost in the story. In fact, I think one reason I've been working with the novel is that it's so seductive Every day, or at least every writing day, I get to go back into that different world. Short stories don't last that long. I've spent 6 years working on this novel. The western. I get so lost in the story, the adventure of it. I'm not sure I would call it pleasure--it's damn hard work, but, again the element of seduction.*

*Mouton: What about revision of work? You are an advocate of intensive revision, right?*

*Smith: Right. And, that's changed over the years. When I was a very, young writer I just hated revision. But it is necessary and it allows the writer to make a story better than "ok." Take a sentence that's just "ok" and make it shine.*

*Mouton: Do you feel some writers might fall into a habit of over revising? Taking too much of the essence of a story out of it with too much attention to grammar, structure and the like?*

*Smith: I don't really see that as a problem. Most writers have a sense about that. I suppose it can be developed to a degree. I don't see a lot of students revising the heart, the life out of a story--it just doesn't happen. With most students I would have to say that the revision process virtually always improves from the initial work.*

*Mouton: Any students you've worked with out there publishing now?*

*Smith: Sure, that's a nice thing about teaching and keeping up with some of your students. Phil Deaver, teaching down in Florida, recently won a Flannery O'Conner award. LuAnne Smith, recently published a chapbook of her work. Sandy Moore, a writer here in Tennessee, published a novel called "Private Woods" about a woman's take on things during the Vietnam War. I've been very blessed in that a number of my students have gone on to become writers and accomplished writers at that.*

*Mouton: Any preference between writing and teaching?*

*Smith: Well, I really like teaching and I hope that shows. I was also the beneficiary of some excellent teaching at both the undergraduate and graduate level. It's very necessary. I might not call it teaching as much as simply allowing the student to learn what he or she wants to. People do ask, "if you wrote a Bestseller would you continue to teach?" My answer is yes, but not nearly as much.*

*Mouton: Was there ever a time that you simply thought to yourself, "Now, I'm a Writer?"*

*Smith: I would say that thought was more gradual for me. I suffer the same fears every other writer suffers that attempts a writing career--I don't even like the word "career." I'm not sure I'm a writer yet, but that feeling when you get published, sure, it's a great feeling. You've got to remember that most writers are going to experience a great deal of rejections. That's part of the writing life. There are very few writers out*

*there that have virtually everything they submit accepted and published. The Joyce Carol Oates and John Irving's are few. Very few places are going to publish things that are "not good," and we all write things that are "not good." Sometimes we don't see it, but it happens.*

*Mouton: You've been teaching well over 20 years now. Do you find any trends occurring out in the academic setting that concerns the growth of creative writing? Genre's?*

*Smith: One thing that's going to affect the way one teaches is the way one is taught in the first place. I'm a firm believer that people who say workshops only produce "workshop stories" are missing something. I believe the workshop method is effective and can help promote some good writers and some good work. I think an element of workshop application might be in teaching or showing a student how not to write. If I can teach you how not to write, I believe that I'm on the right track, if I'm trying to teach you how to write, you'd best be on guard.*

*Mouton: Well put. How do you feel about the growing interest in creative nonfiction?*

*Smith: I'm pleased, very pleased. While the short story, as a form, is still very popular, I'm observing that trend in creative nonfiction. Just check out the Fiction Writer's Market and you can see the hundreds of magazines seeking short fiction. More and more of those very magazines are looking for creative nonfiction pieces. The novel is still popular and will likely be for a long time to come.*

*Mouton: Any of your stories that you might term favorites? (Ken is grinning as he ponders)*

*Smith: That's a really tough question. I published some short stories when I was younger that were quite weak, but I'm not ashamed of them because they were the best that I could do at that point. If I had not thought them the best I could do at the time I wouldn't have sent them around. I wouldn't have submitted them. But there are still a few that I'm very fond of. My theory on short story collections is that there is a sort of sameness about them. The books cohere, stories speak to each other in ways that my work simply doesn't do. I don't see a collection of short stories as having to go or fit together. I think a lot of poetry collections are presented that way. Presented with a common thread. My feelings are that in the best collections, and I'll add my feelings toward my own collections, each story will stand out as distinct from another. Different. I would say that if you read one of my short stories and really liked it, and then bought one of my books, you might be disappointed--hopefully not, but the possibility is there. Each story stands on its own.*

*Mouton: Anything you might find interesting about the actual "sit down and write" aspect of the writing life?*

*Smith: I would say it's pretty ritualistic. I always work in my office at home. It's a basement office. There are no windows, no distractions, no phone. I'm, pretty much, lost in my little cave. The isolation is important to me while I'm writing. I've been using a computer for a number of years now, since about 1986. I was writer in residence at Vanderbilt for a semester and the only thing I could find to write on was an old, electric typewriter so I suppose I reverted back to that for a short time. I actually finished the last couple of stories for my last book on that big, old typewriter. Hugh. It was huge. When I came back home, I had to re-learn writing on my computer. It was really hard to adapt to writing first drafts of work on the computer. It took about a year. The computer is a great tool for revision. I can't say enough for them concerning revision. My revision process is simple in the basic technique. I print out a copy of a first draft and start my revisions on that copy with pen and then get back on the computer and get busy with that. So I'll recommend the computer as a writing tool for anyone, it's an important aid in my writing. The computer does something else I find important. It lets you take chances. I'm working on a draft of a story and page 6 of a 20-page story a new sentence, a new image comes to my mind. The image is new, I'm not sure I can trust it. I can put it in, and if I decide tomorrow that I don't like it, I can go back to page 6 and retype it. The computer allows me to put that change in, and then wake up the next morning and zap it if I want to and it doesn't take any time at all. I believe it allows us to take more of those creative chances and we do not have to do as much of that hard work of retyping a whole story. Back to what you asked me earlier*

*about revising "too much?" Well, I believe that that's less likely to occur if the writer can take a look at the work--read it out loud. Hear the story. Of course, it's a great help with construction, with fixing grammatical aspects of the work.*

*Mouton: When is a writer ready to publish?*

*Smith: Again, it's a great rush, a great feeling to see that first story in print, Lord knows we will receive enough rejection. Acceptance is always nice. Publication tells the writer, "You matter."*

*Mouton: Ken, are most of your friends writers?*

*Smith: Some. I've friends here, writers. Absolutely friends from all walks. Chris Buckley, one of my greatest friends. He teaches out in Santa Barbara. He's a poet. I met him at Murray when I was in Kentucky. Earl Braggs, right here at UTC--an excellent poet--we've become very, close friends and our families are close. I still have an excellent friendship with a friend from high school, Frank Sanchez. We call each other "Hermano," which means brother--we're still very close.*

*Mouton: What are you working on at this time? A novel.*

*Smith: Most of my current work is with creative nonfiction at this time, I really enjoy it.*

*Mouton: I can't end my talk with you and not ask you what you like to read.*

*Smith: Oh, plenty of things. Articles a great deal. I like The Atlantic, Newsweek, Playboy has some good articles. Novels, more novels than short stories. All kinds of things.*

*Mouton: Favorite writers?*

*Smith: Again, plenty of writers I enjoy and admire. Ford Maddox Ford. James Smiley. A good deal of Larry McMurtry's earlier stuff--"The Last Picture Show." I loved Tim O'Brian's "The Things They Carried." I just completed a list for my creative nonfiction class as a few students had inquired about the same thing. I believe there were well over a hundred books listed on that.*

*Mouton: New works published? Where can others read some of your stories?*

*Smith: More recent publications? The Atlantic. Tri-Quarterly. I had a story that was included in Crazy Horse last year--The Best of 2002.*

*Mouton: Any last words? Well, last comments for the readers, that is...*

*Smith: Well, I suppose this is just another irony of life. I don't want it to sound like bs, but every once in a while, just before giving a reading I will be reading a portion of one of my stories. We all want to think our writing is good and our writing keeps improving. We sometimes read a favorite author and think we'll never be that good. But, now and then. Every once in that while, I'll read a sentence or two of my work and I'll think to myself, "that's pretty, damn good."*

Kenneth died in 2007 and his obituary reads:

**Smith, Kenneth Roger  
Taught Literature and Creative Writing at UTC For 20 Years  
Tuesday, October 9, 2007**

*Kenneth Roger Smith, 63, of Ringgold, died on Sunday, October 7, 2007 at a local hospital.*

*A native of Silver City, N.M., he had lived in the North Georgia/Chattanooga area for the past 21 years. Kenneth was a veteran of the U.S. Navy where he served two tours of duty during the Vietnam War. During the war he piloted rescue helicopters and earned a Navy Commendation Medal, Four Strike/Flight Air Medals, Five Bronze Stars, Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal (Korea), Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal with Device, Navy Achievement Medal with Combat "V" and Award Citation.*

*Over the years he had worked as a ranch hand, a copper miner and a journalist (crime beat reporter for a Tucson newspaper). In 1980 he received an M.F.A. from the University of Arizona. An accomplished writer, he published two collections of short fiction as well as several works of creative non-fiction, the*

most recent appearing in the *Southern Indiana Review* and *Puerto del Sol*. Other writings have appeared in a variety of magazines including *The Atlantic*, *Crazyhorse*, *Sonora Review* and *TriQuarterly*. He taught creative writing and literature at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga for the past 20 years.

He is preceded in death by his parents, Benjamin and Thelma Hill Smith. He is survived by his wife, Madalyn Heidelberg Smith of Ringgold; two sons and daughter-in-law, Timothy and April Trussell-Smith of Chattanooga, and Nicholas Smith of Atlanta; one step-daughter and son-in-law, Ashley Fournet and Domenick Doran of Atlanta; one stepson and daughter-in-law, Sidney and Stephanie Fournet of Chattanooga; one brother, Richard Smith of Woodland Park, Co.; three grandchildren, Victoria Dial, Tristan Fournet and Logan Fournet, all of Chattanooga; and several nieces and nephews.

Funeral services will be held at 11:30 a.m. on Friday at Patten Chapel at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga with his son Timothy Trussell-Smith officiating the service. Interment will follow at the Chattanooga National Cemetery.

The family will receive friends Wednesday from 5-9 p.m., all day Thursday, and Friday from 8 a.m. until 10:30 a.m. at the funeral home.

Arrangements are by Wilson Funeral Home Wallis-Stewart Chapel Ringgold, Georgia. Online register book at [www.wilsonfuneralhome.com](http://www.wilsonfuneralhome.com).

This obituary confirms that Kenneth had three children, April, Timothy, and Nicholas. It also confirms that Madalyn had two children from her first marriage Ashley (married to Domenick Doran) and Sidney (married to Stephanie). I am a little confused why April and Timothy are referred to as Trussell-Smith.

#### **Children of Kenneth Smith and his wives**

648	April Trussell-Smith	1979	Kenneth and Susan's child
649	Timothy Trussell-Smith	1983	Kenneth and Madalyn's child#1
650	Nicholas Eugene Smith	1984	XXXX Kenneth and Madalyn's child#2

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As amazing as it seems, Kenneth is the last person in my parent's generation. He was born after my oldest cousin. The first of this generation was born in 1893 and there were actually 7 others born after Kenneth with the youngest being Laura Falvo born in 1958. That is a span of 65 years! The children of this group begin in 1913 with the youngest being born in 1984 a span of 71 years. That means my oldest "cousin" arrived 38 before me. Quite a legacy for Jesse Richard and Elizabeth Harrison.

While I have done significant research on my generation, I will forego writing about them in the detail that have done up until now. My final publication in this branch of the family will be a brief discussion of my generation and a listing of everyone that I have found on my list.

I look forward to hearing from you at [rbills\\_houston.com](http://rbills_houston.com). Any additions, feedback, corrections would be appreciated. Rich