

VP recommends engineering

By Gregory Gudger

For a number of years, employment forecasters have consistently listed engineering as a field having great promise for Blacks, yet, a few college-bound Blacks seek careers in that area. However, for Oregon State University vice president Clifford Vaughn Smith, Jr., it was the only field he considered.

"I never wanted to be anything else but an engineer because my father was," says the affable Smith, who holds a Ph.D IN Radiological Science and Environmental Engineering from the John Hopkins University, Baltimore, Maryland, coupled with 25 years of private, institutional and civil experience in the field.

Smith's background is indeed impressive. Following in his father's footsteps, the 49-year-old native of Washington, D.C., earned a Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering from the University of Iowa in 1954, then went on to acquire a masters and Ph.d from John Hopkins in 1960 and 1966, respectively.

Vocationally, he has served in management positions with the Pennsylvania Department of Health, Sanitary Engineering Division, and the Ames, Iowa Sanitary Division (1954-1968); as Manager of Sanitary Technology and as a consultant with Dorr-Oliver, Inc. (1968-1970); Deputy Regional Administration for Region I, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (1971-74); Region X Administrator for E.P.A. (1974-76); Executive Engineer for Bechtel, Inc. (1976); Director of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission's Division of Fuel Cycle and Material Safety (1976-77), and Director of NRC's Office of Nuclear Material Safety and Safeguards.

Unlike most positions which could be classified as "garbage jobs," Smith's positions with EPA and NRC involved with nuclear waste afforded him direct access to the highest levels of government and industry both here and abroad.

As an educator, he has held academic appointments at Tufts University, University of Massachusetts, University of Connecticut, City College of New York, and the University of Washington. Additionally, he has lectured at Brooklyn Polytechnic Institute and Northwestern University before coming to OSU in 1978.

Smith's honors and awards are many, including membership in the Blue Key National Honor Fraternity as an honorary faculty member (1980); Tau Beta Pi honorary engineering society as eminent engineer (1979), and Chi Epsilon Sigma Xi Society as honorary civil engineering fraternity (1966). In 1973, he was awarded the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Gold Medal, the highest honor award for exceptional service.

His consultation activities have included stints with the Department of Energy, Rockwell International and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, among others.

In all of his years of experience, he says, "I can count on one hand the number of Black engineers I've worked with...and I think I've only taught two or three." He believes that the conspicuous absence of Black engineers has many potential roots -- from the lack of sufficient role models to the limited portrayal of a variety of Black professionals on TV -- but the traditionally debilitating impact of employment discrimination may not be as impactful today as it once was.

When his father graduated from the University of Iowa in 1925, Clifford senior was lucky to get a job as a bridge-builder because of the nearly insurmountable obstacles posed by a discriminatory society. In fact, "my father was one of the few Black engineers working in the field," he says. Clifford junior, as evidenced by his record, found prospects for qualified Black engineers to be great and, consequently, he ascended to the pinnacle of his profession.

Today's aspiring Black engineers have an excellent chance of "making it," he says. "The opportunities are truly unlimited. They (government and industry) are constantly looking for Black engineers. In the area of nuclear technology for example, Smith feels that opportunities will expand once the United States stop using the nuclear issue as a "political football" and establish a comprehensive federal program as he and other members of the President's Commission's "Interagency

Review Group on Energy" recommended.

Smith claims to be neither a pro or an anti-"nuke," "but it does have a role to play insofar as the energy problems of this nation and the world are concerned."

Although political and institutional problems are besetting the industry, he says the technology exists to handle, for example, the critical issue of nuclear waste disposal, using non-corroding plastics for storage.

Those same problems are causing the U.S. to lose its position as the technical leader in the industry -- a position we can't afford to lose. "France will be the leader in the nuclear industry, and we'll be buying from them." The U.S. job market will be affected because, even now, General Electric and Westinghouse no longer supply equipment and technological needs of other countries. This fall he plans to expound on his philosophy in a course entitled "Nuclear Safeguards and Proliferation Issues."

By the same token, "I don't argue the issues too much, but people have to get a better understanding of the concept of risk," says Smith who, as a pioneer in environmental technology, "was working on saving the air and streams before "Earth Day."

Oregon State, says Smith, is not attracting enough Blacks to enter its programs, however, he sees the potential for greater recruitment developing, coming from the affirmative action office, such as a visitation arranged for students in the Portland Urban League's Engineering Program.

Smith, himself, is agreeable to serving as a resource, noting, "If I were a dean of engineering, and if I had me as a resource to draw on, I'd certainly use me."



Dr. Clifford Vaughn Smith, Jr., Ph.D., P.E. is vice president of Oregon State University in Corvallis.



Dr. and Mrs. Clifford Smith relaxing in their home.

Former nurse enjoys academia

By Kathryn H. Bogle

Enthusiasm for new experiences and new thresholds, and getting the most benefit out of each, is an established pattern for Nina Smith, the wife of the vice president of Oregon State University. The heavy carved wood door of her modified ranch-style home is flung open wide to welcome the visitor and soon the coffee pot is set to perk.

"I've lost count of the number of times we have moved," Mrs. Smith says as she pulls her feet up under her and settles comfortably into the deep softness of her davenport. "This move to Corvallis," she continues, "is just the most recent. There were moves to

Washington, D. C., Philadelphia, Boston, Texas, Iowa, South Carolina and a few other places. No, I don't mind moving frequently because Cliff always helps with the mechanics of it all."

The distaff side of this family, the wife and three daughters of Dr. Clifford Smith, are all beautiful, capable and poised women.

Completing the family constellation in an easy, comfortable traditional manner, roles among the Smiths are well defined, but duties are intermeshed with consideration for each other. At home, this eminent nuclear engineer, respected by some of the greatest minds in the country sometimes prepares the family breakfast, chauffeurs his daughter, and bathes the dog. All of his