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# Info-FIAV

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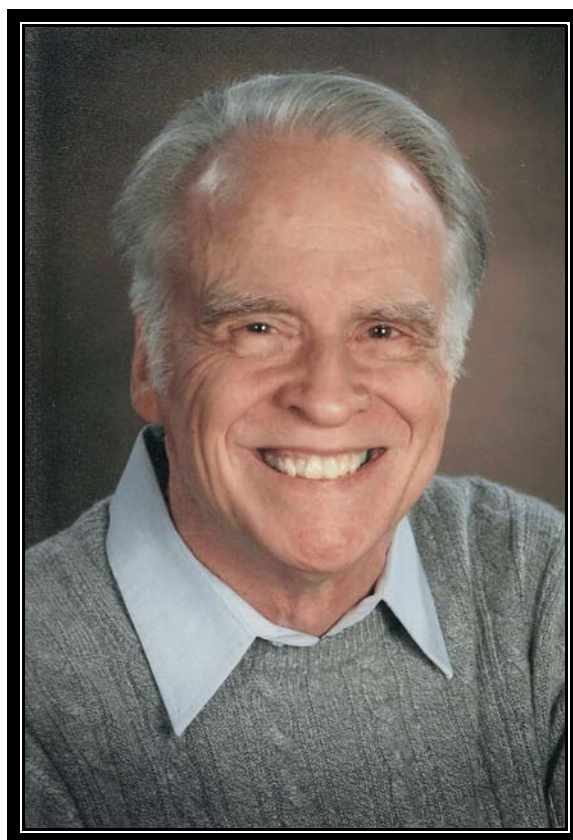
Fédération internationale  
des associations vexillologiques

Federación Internacional de Asociaciones Vexilológicas  
International Federation of Vexillological Associations  
Internationale Föderation Vexillologischer Gesellschaften

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## WHITNEY SMITH

PHD LF FF WSF FFI FVAST  
FEBRUARY 26, 1940 – NOVEMBER 17, 2016

Photo courtesy of Sybil Smith

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Dr. Whitney Smith, a founder, Secretary-General Emeritus, Laureate, and Fellow of FIAV, the founder of The Flag Research Center and the North American Vexillological Association-Association nord-américaine de vexillologie (NAVA), editor-in-chief of *The Flag Bulletin*, the creator of the word “vexillology,” and beloved mentor and friend to so many vexillologists all over the world, died on November 17, 2016 in Peabody, Massachusetts USA, aged 76. Dr. Smith is survived by his sons Adrian and Austin of Seattle, Washington, grandson Aaron Blu of Vancouver, Washington, and sisters Sybil Smith and Lynne Hartwell of Billerica and Gloucester, Massachusetts. FIAV has lost the last of its three founders, NAVA has lost its founder, and vexillology has lost its chief herald. All who knew him will mourn the death of a friend.

A memorial service for family and invited friends was held on December 3, 2016 at the Winchester Unitarian Society in Winchester, Massachusetts. Vexillologists who attended were FIAV Secretary-General Charles Spain, FIAV Secretary-General Emeritus Ralph Bartlett, Flag Heritage Foundation President Kirby Baker, and James Croft.

The Smith family has conveyed Dr. Smith’s request that Secretary-General Spain conduct public memorial services, which will be held in conjunction with ICV 27 in London and NAVA 51 in Boston. Selected remarks and remembrances will be published in *Info-FIAV* after ICV 27.

The following obituaries and memorial have appeared:

“In Memoriam: Whitney Smith,” *The Flag Bulletin* 234, Nov. 17, 2017, <https://perma.cc/9CRH-WVZ8>.

“Whitney Smith, Vexillologist, Died on November 17th, The World’s Greatest Expert on Flags Was 76,” *The Economist* Dec. 13, 2016, <https://perma.cc/697Y-ZHLJ>.

“Whitney Smith: Vexillologist Who Dedicated His Life to Researching Flags and Coined the Name for Their Study,” *The Times* (London) Dec. 13, 2016, <https://perma.cc/67QT-QSZ6>, <https://perma.cc/68BR-MPM6>.

Al Gentile, “Former Lexingtonian, Creator of Vexillology Passes Away,” *Lexington Minuteman* (Massachusetts) Nov. 29, 2016, <https://perma.cc/6LHP-GK82>.

Al Gentile, “Former Winchester Resident, Creator of Vexillology Passes Away,” *The Winchester Star* (Massachusetts) Nov. 29, 2016, <https://perma.cc/G5Q5-DCMK>.

William Grimes, “Whitney Smith, Whose Passion for Flags Became a Career, Dies at 76,” *The New York Times* Nov. 22, 2016, <https://perma.cc/GKX6-KDPU>.

Bryan Marquard, “Whitney Smith, 76; Coined Term for Scholarly Study of Flags,” *The Boston Globe* Nov. 29, 2016, <https://perma.cc/P58D-2A9Y>.

The Senate of the State of Texas, Proclamation No. 976: In Memory of Whitney Smith Jr., <https://perma.cc/JZ2E-6U7T>.

The FIAV Board extends its deep sympathy to Dr. Smith's family and to NAVA.



Winchester Unitarian Society, Winchester, Massachusetts  
Photo courtesy of Charles Spain

Comment by Secretary-General Charles Spain on the day of Dr. Smith's memorial service in Winchester, Massachusetts, December 3, 2016

Much has been said in the last two weeks about my good friend and mentor, Whitney Smith.

Many, many people in the flag world knew him, and tens of millions of people know the word he coined, vexillology. Such is the power of pop culture with the likes of Dr. Sheldon Cooper on television's *The Big Bang Theory*.

I can only speak for myself, but this transition has been very sad. I'm happy for Whitney, because he had a life that was a bit larger than most. But I am sad.

Not many people know it, but Whitney was a big fan of Buddy Holly, a son of Lubbock, Texas. This was but one of a number of small things that connected Whitney, the proud Bostonian, to far-off Texas, including his 1966 meeting with President Lyndon B. Johnson at The White House. The relationship steadily grew, and in 2008 the governor commissioned Whitney as an Honorary Texan. Whitney's life work, The Flag Research Center Collection, is now at The University of Texas at Austin, available to the world's scholars.

For me, a sentimental way to sum up how I feel today is to say it's raining in my heart. I suspect it's raining in the hearts of many vexillologists.

But this feeling will pass. What will not pass is Whitney's legacy. Truly the eyes of Texas—and many non-Texans—are upon him.

Felice Bryant and Boudleaux Bryant, "Raining in My Heart (Buddy Holly)," released Jan. 5, 1959 (Coral Records), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ILeZof1wGps>.

#### IN MEMORIAM

FIAV notes with sorrow the deaths of the following vexillologists:

William C. Spangler (NAVA), Cumberland, Tennessee, USA (NAVA)	April 11, 2004
Harold A. Diceman, Fallbrook, Ontario, Canada (NAVA)	September 5, 2009
Jirí Louda, Olomou, Moravia, Czech Republic	September 1, 2015
Emmet V. Mittlebeeler, Washington, District of Columbia, USA (NAVA)	October 28, 2015
Truman G. Pope, Oxford, Ohio, USA (NAVA and GWAV)	May 24, 2016
Pascal Vagnat, Strasbourg, France	May 30, 2016
Peter J. Orenski, New Milford, Connecticut, USA (NAVA)	August 13, 2016
Whitney Smith, Peabody, Massachusetts, USA (FRC, NAVA)	November 17, 2016
K.V. Singh, New Delhi, Delhi, India	November 18, 2016

## **CORRESPONDENCE FROM WHITNEY SMITH TO CHARLES SPAIN REGARDING THE ORIGINS OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONGRESSES OF VEXILLOLOGY**

[April 16, 2007]

Dear Kin,

Following our conversation I did research in my old correspondence to trace quotes relevant to the history of our ICVs.

In his 21 December 1961 letter Klaes Sierksma wrote me:

We [i.e. he and Karl Fachinger] correspond on flags already 7 years and we never met till now!

Sierksma was referring here to a train trip he was to make to Germany to see Fachinger's collection. He sees this as extraordinary and never mentions the concept of getting vexillologists to hold a conference.

In my 29 August 1963 letter to Karl Fachinger I said:

Is there any possibility that you might be visiting the United States? Mr. Grahl and I should like very much to meet you and we could gather in New York or Washington if you could not come to Boston (where our Library and most of our files are kept). Incidentally, I am hoping to be able to visit Europe in 1964-65 (Oct.-May) and if so I will certainly plan to see you. I even have hopes that we might hold a "Vexillological Congress" to bring together you, [Klaes] Sierksma, [I.O.] Evans, [Roger] Harmignies, [P.] Bissuel, [Georges] Pasch, [Ottfried] Neubecker, [Arnold] Rabbow, [Preben] Kannik, [?] Couret, myself and others interested in the subject.

This, to my knowledge, was the very first time anyone ever raised the idea of an International Congress of Vexillology.

On 1 October 1963 I sent this message to Klaes Sierksma:

My PhD. exams are next spring and then, if I can secure the money, my family and I will go to Belgium (Oct.-May 1964-65) and Rwanda (May-Oct.1965) for me to work on my dissertation. There will also be time for visits to you and other vexillologists in Europe . . . .

On 10 October 1963 Klaes Sierksma responded:

Wouldn't there be a possibility to have organized a congress of banistic-interested people in Europe during the time of your being over here? I think it will be possible and interesting to meet one another e.g. at Brussels or The Hague. Me thinks we can reckon with an assistance of 50 or 60 men. Mr Karl Fachinger wrote to me about your planning such a congress. If I can help you -- I have some experience with congresses of 50 - 3000 men!

In my 27 October 1963 letter to Klaes Sierksma I said:

I certainly hope there will be an opportunity for an International Congress of Vexillology and your offer of help is welcome. I do not know if there would be more than 20 people in all (not counting wives), but it would be very valuable for us to meet at least once.

That is all the surviving correspondence on the 1st ICV I have, although there is extensive documentation concerning the development of FIAV and, of course, on each subsequent ICV.

Best regards,

Whitney

### ***INFO-FIAV'S THIRTIETH ANNIVERSARY***

FIAV's newsletter, *Info-FIAV*, first appeared in May 1987. It is authorized by FIAV Constitution article 23(b), and it took over official publication of FIAV news from *The Flag Bulletin*. *Info-FIAV* is published by the Permanent Secretariat of FIAV and has been edited by the following Secretaries-General:

Whitney Smith+	May 1987 to July 1991	Issues 1-3
Emil Dreyer	July 1991 to August 1997	Issues 4-10
Charles A. Spain	August 1997 to present	Issues 11 to present

All previous issues of *Info-FIAV* are available at FIAV's website, [www.FIAV.org](http://www.FIAV.org).