

SNAME BIOGRAPHY

Roger Hunter Compton

Upon graduation from Webb institute of Naval Architecture with a BS in Naval Architecture and Marine Engineering in June of 1961, he worked briefly in yacht design at MacLear & Harris in Manhattan before starting as a naval architect at Electric Boat in Groton, Connecticut, in August of that same year. When, after about six months, he answered an ad to join EB's research department, they answered "Come back when you have a master's degree." At about that same time, he got a piece of mail from Webb announcing a new two-year graduate program with a halftime research appointment. He applied and, despite his mediocre record as an undergraduate, he was accepted into the program. He got his MS in Naval Architecture in 1964. He stayed on at Webb as a Research Associate with two major responsibilities: (1) to be responsible for experimental work, and (2) to be responsible for computer work. After training at IBM Headquarters in Manhattan, Dr. Otto Karst asked him to teach several sessions of FORTRAN programming to his mathematics classes. He liked it. After seeing an ad in an ASEE journal for an assistant professor of naval architecture at the U.S. Naval Academy, he applied and joined the USNA faculty in 1966.

About one year into his USNA faculty career, he was informed that, (oh by the way) to keep the job, he had to earn a doctorate which he did in Ocean Engineering at the Catholic University of America in 1974. He was a key member of the three man team that developed the conceptual design for the Naval Academy's 120 foot and 380 foot towing tanks including their data acquisition systems. From 1966 to 1998, Dr. Compton was a faculty member at U.S. Naval Academy where he served as Director of the Hydromechanics Laboratory from 1987 to 1996 and as Chair of the NAOME Department from 1996 to 1998. During his service at the academy he directed and supported at least 68 midshipmen in research projects and served as faculty adviser for another five midshipmen in their preparation of Trident Scholar projects. 13 of the research projects were presented as papers before technical groups including ASNE and SNAME. Four of these papers were awarded undergraduate paper honor prizes by SNAME. Three of the Trident Scholar projects were presented as technical papers at annual meetings of SNAME and several were recognized as the most outstanding midshipman projects developed at the Academy among all departments. He was designated Professor Emeritus at the U.S. Naval Academy in 2000.

In 1998, Dr. Compton returned to Webb Institute as Academic Dean and Professor of Naval Architecture, a position he held for 13 years. During his tenure as Dean, he directed significant changes to the Webb curriculum and contributed to the quality of life at Webb, especially with the creation of the Webb Family Singers. He redefined the first of the three design courses at Webb to be team-based and externally judged. He instigated the freshman competition in which teams of freshmen design and construct a small boat starting on the first day of orientation and culminating with an on-the-water performance contest during Parents Weekend in late September. Significantly, his wife, Jill, directed the school's first (and, so far, only) full-scale musical in 2010 (which involved roughly half of the Webb student body) while Roger organized and conducted a 12 piece pit band. Before he left Webb, the Comptons established "The Jill and Roger Compton Endowment for the Performing Arts" to support the ongoing direction of the Webb Family Singers and the Webb Campus Players. Upon his retirement from Webb in June 2011 – the 50th anniversary of his first Webb graduation – he was designated Dean Emeritus of Webb Institute.

SNAME recognized him with its Distinguished Service Award in 1991, with the VADM E.L. Cochrane Award in 1998, named him an SNAME Fellow in 1999, and made him an Honorary Member in 2007. He served as Chairman of the Chesapeake Section of SNAME in 1993-1994 and as SNAME President in 2005-2006. Other awards included Meritorious Civilian Service awards in 1994 and 1996 and a Superior Civilian Service award in 1998. In 1996 he was presented the ASNE Solberg Award for Research Excellence. In 2002 the Webb Institute Alumni Association selected Dean Compton for its highest honor, the William Selkirk Owen award, recognizing his "personal charm, wise counsel, unfailing enthusiasm, and devoted loyalty to Webb." In 2007 SNAME awarded him the William H. Webb Medal "for outstanding contributions to education in naval architecture and marine/ocean engineering." In 2010 he was designated the first "Shirley N. and Stephen R. Towne Professor of Ship Design" at Webb Institute.

In June 2011, Jill and Roger returned to their home on the Eastern Shore of Maryland and have been catching up on homeowner chores that had been neglected for 13 years. They have returned to their favorite avocations – community theater and choral music – in the Annapolis area and have taken up golf to fill their spare time. They continue to enjoy sailing their Mystic 20 catboat and entertaining their six grandkids on their power boat. They hope to complete the missing segments of a world cruise.

With three colleagues from the Naval Academy, he is coauthoring an undergraduate textbook, "Practical Naval Architecture", which, hopefully, will serve to tie together undergraduate courses over the four years of a normal naval architecture program. With frequent and, where possible, Internet-based references for the details of specific naval architecture specialties, and problem sets to exercise basic concepts, they hope to summarize and combine many years of course notes across the full scope of undergraduate naval architecture.

Rogers bucket list still includes (1) learning to play the piano, and (2) getting back to oil painting. Life is good! It was all made possible by William H. Webb.