



Dr. George Martin Smerk Jr.

July 8, 1933 - August 12, 2023

Dr. George Martin Smerk Jr., age 90, of Bloomington, IN, passed away Saturday, August 12, 2023, at Stonecroft Health Campus of natural causes. George was born July 8, 1933, to George and Alice Smerk in Philadelphia, PA. It was there that his love for public transportation was born – a suburban trolley line ran just behind his childhood home.

After graduating from Haverford Township High School in 1951, he went on to study at Bradley University in Peoria, Illinois, where he earned a Business Administration degree in 1955. It was there that he met his future wife Mary Ann White while participating in theater productions. While serving a two-year enlistment in the Army, he earned an MBA from Bradley University (1957) and married Mary Ann on July 6, 1957. While George was working in the Illinois Central Railroad freight traffic office in Chicago, they had their daughter Caroline Mary Smerk in September 1959. In 1960, the family moved to Bloomington, Indiana, where he went on to earn his DBA at Indiana University in 1963. While working at the University of Maryland, George and Mary Ann adopted their son Paul in 1964. In 1966, the family moved back to Bloomington where George was a professor in the IU School of Business until he retired from teaching in 2003 at age 70. Mary Ann played a significant role as an editor and sounding board throughout his career.

George's passion for all things transportation was reflected in the classes he

taught, the books and articles he wrote, the countless talks and speeches he gave, and the hours he spent mentoring former students. He founded the Institute for Urban Transportation at Indiana University (1969-2005), which was later designated a Center for Transit Research and Management Development by the Federal Transit Administration. In 1972 he helped create Bloomington Transit. He was an integral part of saving the Chicago South Shore and South Bend Railroad (the last electric interurban line) and served as the governor's sole appointee on the board of its governing body: the Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District. Later in his career he was executive director of Indiana University's Transportation Services and also editor of the Railroads Past and Present series at Indiana University Press. A highlight among his numerous awards was being named "Sagamore of the Wabash" (the highest award an individual can receive for service to the state of Indiana) by both Governor Otis Bowen (1980) and Governor Robert Orr (1988).

Although his work in the field of transportation is widely respected, it was George's enthusiasm in the classroom that created one of his greatest legacies: the scores of respected transit professionals working across the United States fondly known as "Smerkies". While receiving the American Public Transportation Association's Lifetime of Academic Distinction award, George proudly reflected "One of the joys of teaching has been to see my students grow into public transit colleagues. I've always felt that I was one of the luckiest people in the world."

George also had passions that extended beyond transportation and his family. He was an active member of St. Charles Catholic church for over 60 years. He loved to read and collected thousands of books that covered a wide range of topics including art, railroads, architecture, streetcars, movies, buses, history, subways, cartoons, cable cars, and politics. (OK, so perhaps these other passions often back to transportation.) He was also known for his love of

old movies, musicals, and radio shows. His family always thoroughly enjoyed the one of a kind hand-drawn winter and holiday themed cartoon gift tags he created for each holiday gift he wrapped.

George was preceded in death by his wife of 54 years Mary Ann (White), daughter Caroline, sister Alene Smerk, mother Alice W. Smerk, and father George M. Smerk Sr. He is survived by his son Paul and daughter-in-law Wendy (Bloomington, IN).

A celebration of life gathering will be held from 4:00pm to 8:00pm. With a celebration of life service at 6:00pm. On Friday November 10, 2023 at the Woolery Mill 2250 W. Sunstone Dr. Bloomington.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to the American Public Transportation Foundation's Dr. George M. Smerk Scholarship fund. <https://www.aptf.org/smerk>

George's family would like to express their thanks to the many friends and caregivers who supported him in his later years. Special gratitude goes to his physical therapy angel, personal aides, and the extended family of back porch club members (a.k.a. "the liar's club").

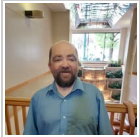
Allen Funeral Home and Crematory, 4155 South Old State Road 37 in Bloomington have been entrusted with arrangements. Online condolences, photos and memories may be shared with family and friends at www.allencare.com

Tribute Wall

DO

“ I am just coming upon this now and I am saddened by it! Dr. Smerk was simply the best and I want to also echo others here in sending my heartfelt thank you to his family for such a humble, kind and gentle soul! I was not a business major but yet Dr. Smerk treated me with all due respect for the that I will be forever grateful! He was indeed one of my greatest mentors/heroes! His memory will stay with me forever! David Eric Owen IU '91

David Eric Owen - December 19, 2023 at 12:56 PM



“ Remember George from kelley school of business he was one of my favorites I worked as the mailman at kelley for almost 15 years George was a special man

Jeremy Williams

Jeremy Williams - November 05, 2023 at 11:35 AM

EC

“ Dear Paul and Wendy, I was so saddened to read of your father’s passing. I was George’s student from 1974-79 as an undergraduate and doctoral student. I worked with him at the Institute for Urban Transportation in 1975-76. He was such a wonderful teacher and a wonderful man. I enjoyed studying with him and working with him. He was a dissertation adviser to me. My dissertation was titled ‘Institution Building in European Mass Transit.’ He had such a wonderful sense of humor and such a kind heart. He will be missed. Ellen Foster Curtis

Ellen Foster Curtis - August 22, 2023 at 06:42 PM

BM

“ *Giants come in all shapes and sizes. George Smerk was a giant in the public transportation field and in my career as well. May he rest in peace.*

Bill Millar

Bill Millar - August 20, 2023 at 09:26 PM

CH

“ *Dear George- You were one of the kindest and humble people I've ever known. It was an honor and pleasure to work with you. You were one of a kind and will be truly missed.*

Cheryl - August 16, 2023 at 06:08 PM