

**Memorial Resolution**  
**George M. Smerk**  
**(July 8, 1933 -- August 13, 2023)**

Dr. George Martin Smerk Jr., aged 90, passed away August 13, 2023, in Bloomington, IN. He was born July 8, 1933, to George and Alice Smerk. As a boy, George Smerk, like many young children, loved trains and trolleys. George was fortunate to have been able to carry this love with him through his life and to have a career that allowed him to nurture and develop this love. Perhaps, the real accomplishment was that George passed on this love to many others who now hold executive positions with railroads, bus lines, government, and other sectors of the transportation arena.

George was born and raised in the Philadelphia area. There, he had the opportunity to watch and ride the city buses, suburban trolleys, and rail passenger trains which helped to shape his future academic research and teaching. He received a bachelor's degree in business administration in 1955 from Bradley University in Peoria, Illinois. He met his future wife Mary Ann White while participating in theater productions at the university. During a two-year enlistment service in the army, he earned an M.B.A. from Bradley in 1957 and married Mary Ann the same year. While George was working in the Illinois Central Railroad freight traffic office in Chicago, they had a daughter, Caroline Mary Smerk, in September 1959. In 1960, George was accepted into the D.B.A. program at Indiana University and moved to Bloomington. He completed his doctoral degree in 1963 in transportation business administration and accepted a position as assistant professor of transportation at the University of Maryland. While working in Maryland, George and Mary Ann adopted their son Paul in 1964.

In 1966 George returned to the Indiana University school of business as an associate professor of transportation. George was appointed to full professor in 1969. He taught transportation courses at the undergraduate, master's, and doctoral levels until his retirement in 2003 at the age of 70. His specific areas of interest were the management of urban passenger transportation systems and the study of public policy on transportation. He created several undergraduate level courses in the business school that explored these aspects of transportation.

George founded the Institute for Urban Transportation at Indiana University in 1969 to promote research on public transportation and to provide training for public transit managers. He was appointed director of Indiana University campus transportation in 1992. During George's tenure in this position, Indiana University constructed several parking structures, rehabilitated other parking facilities, and implemented the Universal Bus Pass program for students on the Bloomington campus. In 1972 he helped create Bloomington Transit. He was also 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.

George had an extensive list of publications on various aspects of transportation and public policy. He authored several textbooks and numerous journal articles in the field and served as an editor and columnist for several periodicals. He was the editor for the "Railroads Past and Present" series from Indiana University Press for more than 20 years. Mary Ann played a significant role as an editor and sounding board throughout his career.

George was active with the Transportation Research Board, a division of the National Research Council, which serves as an independent adviser to the federal government and others, where he served and chaired a number of committees. He edited *Newsline*, their newsletter on mass transit research for twenty-four years, and, in recognition of his outstanding achievement in the field of transportation research in 1992, George received their Roy W. Crum Award.

George continued to influence those who run railroads, local transit systems, truck lines and more through personal contact. His writings after retirement, including regular columns in *Bus Ride* and *Railfan and Railroad* magazines, also continued to inspire. He worked as editor of a railroad encyclopedia for Indiana University Press. His contributions have not gone unnoticed as, in addition to numerous other honors, he received the coveted *Sagamore of the Wabash* award from two different governors of the state of Indiana: Governor Otis Bowen in 1980 and Governor Robert Orr in 1988. This is the highest award an individual can receive for service to the state of Indiana.

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. He was also known for his love of old movies, musicals, and radio shows.

George was preceded in death by his mother, father, wife, daughter, and sister. He is survived by his son Paul and daughter-in-law Wendy.

Beyond academics and family, George was a great friend. Even after he retired, he was faithful in making appointments for coffee with those who still teach as well as other retired friends. George M. Smerk leaves a legacy within Indiana University of publications, achievements, operations, successful students, and solid friendships.

This memorial resolution will become part of the minutes of the Bloomington Faculty Council. Copies will be sent to Paul Smerk, 8056 S Victor Pike, Bloomington, IN 47403

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