

John A. ‘Jack’ Smith, MD (Aug. 25, 1937–March 21, 2015)

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John Arthur “Jack” Smith, long-time pediatric radiologist at Riley Hospital for Children and professor of radiology at Indiana University School of Medicine, died on March 21, 2015, at the age of 77 years. He grew up in Cincinnati, OH,

graduating from Walnut Hills High School in 1955. When he was young he wanted to be a minister, but the example of Nobel laureate and medical missionary Albert Schweitzer led him to pursue a medical career.

Jack attended Miami University of Ohio, where he became the first black resident assistant. He then attended the University of Cincinnati College of Medicine, graduating with honors in 1964 and becoming the first black in the history of the school to be elected to membership in Alpha Omega Alpha Honor Medical Society. He completed a rotating internship at the University of Iowa, then returned to Cincinnati to complete his radiology residency, serving as chief resident with Dr. Ben Felson.

In 1968 Jack was drafted and served at the U.S. Air Force Hospital in Ankara, Turkey, as the chief of radiology for the Middle East. After completing his tour of duty, he took a fellowship in pediatric radiology with Dr. Herb Kaufman at the Kinderspital in Basel, Switzerland. This led him to a career in academic medicine, first at Downstate Hospital in Brooklyn, NY, and then beginning in 1972 as assistant professor at Riley Hospital and Indiana University.

At Indiana, Jack progressed rapidly up the ranks, becoming associate professor in 1976, professor in 1983, and director of pediatric radiology in 1996. He was the first black tenured professor at the Indiana University School of Medicine. Before he retired from Indiana in 2001, he completed two sabbaticals, one at Boston Children’s Hospital in 1979 and the other at University Hospital of the West Indies in Kingston, Jamaica, in 1991.

Author and co-author of more than 60 refereed articles, Jack’s scientific presentation on the MRI appearance of blood and blood products, co-authored with Mervyn Cohen and David Cory, received the Caffey Award of the Society for Pediatric Radiology in 1986. His scientific exhibits received certificates of merit from

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the American Roentgen Ray Society in 1976, 1982 and 1984, and cum laude citations from the Radiological Society of North America in 1981 and 1984.

Active in professional service, Jack was president of the Hoosier State Medical Society in 1978. He served as an examiner for the American Board of Radiology from 1985 to 1996 and as an examiner for the certificate of added qualification in pediatric radiology in 1995. He was also very active in community service. He served on the boards of the Sickle Cell Anemia Foundation, the Boys Club and the Ensemble Music Society, and he served as president of the National Junior Tennis League.

Jack enjoyed driving sports cars, listening to jazz music, and making peach and lemon meringue pies. A big sports fan, he followed racing, tennis, golf and skiing especially closely, and he was for decades a season ticket holder for the Indiana University basketball team. He was also a world traveler and was known among friends and family as “Mapquest before there was Mapquest,” possessing an eidetic memory for every place he had ever visited.

Jack was a people person. He was genuinely curious about others and made friends with people from every walk of life. A natural networker, he helped to create many connections, both professional and personal, between people. He seemed to know everyone, including their kids’ names and their dogs’ names. He was also remarkably easy-going and seemed to never get flustered, which helped to build a friendly, cohesive radiology department.

Back in the days when people took lunch breaks, Jack could regularly be found in the lunchroom with a group of technologists, catching up on the soap operas “Days of Our Lives” and “The Young and the Restless.” He was the person technologists and other staff came to with personal problems, because everyone knew that he was genuinely interested in them, would give them his full attention for as long as it took, and would offer wise words of counsel.

Jack will be missed by all who knew him. He is survived by his wife, Donna; his four daughters, Ann, Janis, Gwen, and Jill; and five grandchildren, Anna, River, Jonathan, Jackson, and Julian.