

John A. "Jack" Smith, MD was the first Black faculty physician at Riley Hospital for Children and the first Black tenured professor at Indiana University School of Medicine.

Jack was long-time pediatric radiologist at Riley Hospital for Children and professor of radiology at Indiana University School of Medicine. Jack died on March 21, 2015, at the age of 77 years.

Jack grew up in Cincinnati, OH, graduating from Walnut Hills High School in 1955. He 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 his radiology residency in Cincinnati, 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 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. 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.

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. 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.

He loved playing practical tricks on people and these usually worked well. One memorable incident was when he hid his secretary's keys late in the afternoon fully anticipating that she would find them. He left the department. She did not find them and had to take a taxi home. Jack even managed to talk his way out of this situation.

Back in the days when people took lunch breaks, Jack could regularly be found in the lunchroom with a group of radiology 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.

Dr. Eric Yancy, Indiana University School of Medicine Adjunct Clinical Professor of Pediatrics and the first black pediatric resident at Riley Hospital, recalls that “When I arrived at Riley Hospital as a new PL1 (first year of pediatric residency), Dr. Smith immediately contacted me through someone he knew. I met with him in his office, and he advised me on how to keep my cool in any situation and offered his open door for any problem I may have. He then said he would be kind of like my dad in the medical field. From that time on he jokingly called me son and I jokingly called him dad. There were quite a few staff members who thought this was a fact and some would say, "I just spoke to your dad", etc. We always had a good laugh about this. I will always remember his easy smile and his excellence in radiology. A great surrogate "dad" indeed.”

Tribute to Jack Smith, M.D. by Richard B. Gunderman, M.D. and Mervyn D. Cohen, M.D.