



William Smeester

March 15, 2010

KINGSFORD - William Thomas Smeester Sr., 71, of Kingsford and Astor, Fla., went to eternal rest on Monday, March 15, 2010, at Dickinson County Memorial Hospital after an extended illness.

He was born on May 10 1938, in Amberg, Wis., son of that late Jule and Fay Smeester.

At an early age, while attending school in Amberg, "Billy Tom" as he was known to all, and his four older brothers, were all taught the merits of hard work by their father who dealt in buying and selling livestock. In 1955, he joined the U.S. Marine Corp. and after his military service, returned to Amberg.

Bill worked for Smeester Oil Co. and also whitewashed barns throughout Wisconsin and Upper Michigan. In the early 1960s he moved his family to Iron Mountain, the "gold mine" for finding jobs. The first five years, he carried multiple jobs at a time, often working three jobs at once. These jobs included, painting the exterior of houses and businesses, Grede Foundries, Smeester Brothers Trucking, Culligan, construction (including the Cummins building and Groveland Mine), Dynavac duct cleaning, delivery of the Milwaukee Journal/Sentinel from Iron Mountain to Escanaba to name a few.

In the mid 1960s he established the bus service in the Iron Mountain area known as the Iron Mountain-Kingsford Transit and also bus services for the cities of Marinette and Menominee. He and his brother Charles teamed up and formed Smeester Contracting during that same period and obtained contracts with the U.S. Postal Service to shuttle mail between post offices throughout the U.P. and Northern Wisconsin. When these runs were phased out, Bill branched out on his own, obtaining the airmail postal contract between the airport and the Iron Mountain post office. Being at the airport 8-10 times a day, he was then asked by North Central Airlines if he would deliver the air freight coming in to the various businesses in the community. This led to establishing U.P. Special Delivery in the mid-1970s.

In 1976, Bill married the former JoAnn Lantagne in De Pere, Wis. Together they also owned and operated the Montgomery Wards Catalog Sales Agency.

Although he enjoyed an occasional round of golf, one of his main passions in life was establishing new businesses. He was a true entrepreneur. Whenever his family heard the words "you know what guy should do" they knew a business was about to be born. Those businesses included; in 1982, the formation of National Business Information Systems (NBIS), a computerized information service designed to computerize the many phases of the airfreight business. During this same period of time, a truckload division was formed called JITCO (just-in-time transportation and warehousing company).

Bill loved his employees and they loved him. He was very proud to be able to provide for a "family" of employees. He enjoyed being a mentor and helping others. In 1991 as a "hobby" he decided to raise bison. From seven animals the hobby grew to a herd of 242. This meant a better way of feeding them had to be available. Bill designed and patented a computerized feeding system that was sold and used by various bison ranchers.

Bill's other passion was his children. As youngsters, they always had animals including goats, chickens, geese, turkey and pheasant. He immersed himself in their activities, whether it was raising racing pigeons, taking young ski jumpers to their meets, model airplanes or car racing. Improptu trips with all six children were common. Camping played a big role in their early years. In addition to being a member of numerous trucking and business organizations, Bill was also a member of the Chippewa Club.

He is survived by his wife of 33 years, JoAnn; his children, William Smeester Jr. of Kingsford, Julia Peterson of Kingsford, Lynne (Terry) Reed of Breitung Township, Brian (Lorrie) Smeester of Kingsford, Daniel (Debra) Lantagne of Kingsford and Jule (Tara) Smeester of Iron Mountain; his brothers, Basil Smeester of Kingsford, Charles (Karen) Smeester of Breitung Township, Joseph (Delores) Smeester of Kingsford and Loren (Dorothy) Smeester of Baldwin, Wis.; his grandchildren, Christina Allen, Blaine Smeester, Pamela Peterson, Robert Peterson, Johnathon Reed, Storm, Summer and Jack Smeester, Trevor Lantagne and Tayler Smeester; seven great-grandchildren; and many nieces and nephews.

Bill was preceded in death by a sister, Fay Adora Swanson; his granddaughter, Alaina Smeester; his grandson, Jason Reed; and his first wife, Doris Monroe-Viens.

Visitation will be Friday from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. at the Erickson-Rochon & Nash Funeral Home.

Funeral services will be held on Friday at 6 p.m. at the funeral home. Rev. Lee Liverance will officiate.

Burial will be in Cemetery Park.

Condolences to the family of William Smeester can be expressed online at www.ernashfuneralhomes.com.

The family has entrusted the Erickson-Rochon & Nash Funeral Home of Iron Mountain with the funeral arrangements.

Tribute Wall

MM

“ JoAnn and family, I believe that hope survives, love prevails, tears cleanse, memories comfort, faith soothes good thoughts reassure. I received these words of comfort some years ago and have read them many times. I hope that they will help you and the family in your time of need. Sorry I can not be there to say good bye but, know that I am thinking of you and remembering the many years that we worked together. My thoughts and prayers are with you.

Mary Maki - March 18, 2010 at 12:00 AM

S(

“ To the family of William Smeester, my condolences for the loss of your husband, father and more.....I know he was a great man and the obituary that was written was BEAUTIFUL..He would have been proud of it.....God be with you all during this time of mourning.....

hugs to you all.....

sandy ecker (k.k.) - March 18, 2010 at 12:00 AM

RY

“ I JUST WANTED TO SAY THANK YOU MR.SMEESTER FOR GIVING ME THE HONOR OF DRIVING FOR YOUR COMPANY ,I WILL ALWAYS CHERISH THE GREAT MEMORY OF WORKING WITH MANY OF THE GREAT PEOPLE I'VE MET THERE ALSO.REST IN PEACE SIR .

rex young - March 18, 2010 at 12:00 AM

GQ

“ JoAnn & Family, Sorry to hear about Bill - You have our sympathy and prayers. Pat & Garry Quas

Garry & Pat Quas - March 18, 2010 at 12:00 AM

PM

“ My heart goes out to your family. Bill has been a part of our lives here in Florida. He was a special man. This always touched me,

When we loose someone we love they become memories now those memories become treasures.

So treasure those memories .

Peggy & Doug Magsam

Astor, FL.

Peggy & Doug Magsam - March 18, 2010 at 12:00 AM

BD

“ So sorry to hear of your loss, Lynne and Terry. My thoughts are with you and your family.

Bud Duke - March 17, 2010 at 12:00 AM

K(

“ I am so sorry to hear of your loss. I think of you all often. You will be in my prayers during this difficult time.

Kim Stamper (Hunt) - March 17, 2010 at 12:00 AM

BK

“ Lynne, Mike, Dan & Families we are very sorry to hear of the loss of your dad, you are all in our prayers and thoughts during this difficult time.

Bob & Shelly Kaminski - March 16, 2010 at 12:00 AM