



Senior Vice President / Principal  
Soil and Materials Engineers, Inc.

## STARR D. KOHN, PHD, PE (1953-2009)

Starr D. Kohn, PhD, PE died suddenly Saturday, January 31, 2009 at his home in Pittsfield Township, Michigan. Visitation will be held on Thursday, February 5 from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. and 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. at Muehlig Funeral Chapel located at 403 South Fourth Avenue in Ann Arbor, Michigan. On Friday, February 6, visitation will be held at 9:00 a.m. at Old St. Patrick Church located at 5671 Whitmore Lake Road in Ann Arbor, Michigan. A funeral service will be held at 10:00 a.m. immediately followed by a luncheon at the church.

Starr was born May 5, 1953 in Joliet, Illinois. He is survived by his wife of 25 years, Cathy; his son Michael (Kristy); his grandson Trevor; his granddaughters Madison and Claire; his parents, Ralph (Buck) and Monty; and his brother Jay.

Dr. Kohn, PE, Senior Vice President and Principal at Soil and Materials Engineers, Inc. (SME) dedicated over 30 years to his passion, pavement engineering excellence. Starr was a dynamic leader who energized and challenged his colleagues and fellow engineers to develop innovative, practical solutions to address a variety of engineering challenges. Dr. Kohn specialized in pavement evaluation, design, management, and research. He was a specialist in the structural design of airfield pavements and nondestructive evaluation of pavement systems. He supported SME's transportation clients at every stage of the process, from site acquisition and project design through construction and maintenance/restoration. He earned a reputation for his outstanding problem-solving abilities, uncompromising professional ethics, commitment to mentoring young engineers, and dedication to client service.

Contributions can be made to:

Humane Society of Huron Valley

In Honor of Starr Kohn  
3100 Cherry Hill Road  
Ann Arbor, MI 48105

OR:

Marmion Academy  
In Honor of Starr Kohn  
1000 Butterfield Road  
Aurora, IL 60502

Starr's love of pavement began when he was a child. He was inspired by his father, who owned an asphalt production company. After graduating from high school at Marmion Academy in Aurora, Illinois, he went on to earn Bachelor and Master's degrees in Civil Engineering from the University of Illinois, and later obtained a PhD in Civil Engineering from the University of Michigan.

He began his career with the Corps of Engineers in Champaign, Illinois where he was involved in the groundbreaking development of the Pavement Condition Index (PCI) and the Paver system. This pavement management system is widely accepted today by cities, counties, and Army/Navy/Air Force installations. In 1978, he came to Detroit and joined SME for about two years. During the early to mid 1980's, Starr returned to the Corps of Engineers in Vicksburg, Mississippi where he conducted research on pavement management systems, including airfield pavements. He returned to SME in 1986, where he later achieved status as Senior Vice President, Principal and was appointed to the SME Board of Directors and Group Leader of Engineering Services. Starr enjoyed national recognition for hundreds of pavement research and infrastructure improvement projects throughout the United States.

Starr served as President of the Road Profiler User's Group (RPUG), and was Chair of the Transportation Research Board (TRB) Committee on Pavement Monitoring, Evaluation, and Data Storage. He previously served on several research committees for TRB. He also served on the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) Airfield Pavement Committee, American Concrete Institute Concrete Pavements Committee, and was an active member of the Association of Asphalt Paving Technologists (AAPT) and the American Council of Engineering Companies of Michigan (ACEC/M). He also maintained a close relationship with the University of Michigan and served as an adjunct professor during winter terms.

In 1988, he was awarded the Engineering Excellence Award from the Michigan Society of Professional Engineers (MSPE) Oakland Chapter and was honored in 1994 for Outstanding Service on the ACEC/Michigan Transportation Committee. Under his leadership, SME earned several honors for pavement excellence, including national and state awards for the M-63 Reconstruction project located in St. Joseph and Benton Harbor, and recognition at the state level for the Dixboro Road Bridge in Ann Arbor. He has also authored and co-authored dozens of technical papers and articles, sharing research findings and challenging case studies.

Starr was fiercely devoted to his staff and put their needs before his own. He built a loyal team of nationally recognized pavement engineers, always demanding excellence and challenging them at every turn. He gave generous praise for excellent work. Starr understood work-life balance and enjoyed chasing a golf ball down the fairway with friends and family, and loved boating and fishing with his father and brother. We fondly remember Starr and thank him for touching our lives in so many ways. He will be missed by all.

