

Dr. John H. Drabing, D.O., FAOAO, FACOS



John Hadyn Drabing was born in Gainesville, Texas on May 13, 1935, to Dr. Martin Luther Drabing and Faith Wells Drabing. For health reasons, Martin relocated the family to Denver in 1943, three weeks before he succumbed to his respiratory illness, leaving Faith a widow and single mother of two. John would go on to graduate from Denver's East High School in 1953 before pursuing higher education at the University of Colorado-Boulder, earning his undergraduate degree in 1957. John met Sally Stevenson that summer and the two fell in love. Driven by a calling to medicine and a deep desire to help others, John went to Osteopathic Medical School at the Kirksville College of Osteopathic Medicine (KCOM) in Kirksville, Missouri. John and Sally were married in August 1958 and while in Kirksville, they welcomed their first child, Jeffrey, in 1960. John earned his medical degree the following year, and soon thereafter began a one-year rotating internship at the Oklahoma Osteopathic Hospital in Sally's hometown of Tulsa, Oklahoma. Upon completion of his internship, John relocated to Ft. Collins, Colorado, where he entered family practice. The Drabing family expanded in 1962 with the addition of their daughter, Diane. And although John and Sally loved the area, Dr. Drabing, being a D.O., was unable to obtain hospital privileges in Ft. Collins. After two more years of family practice, the burgeoning family moved to Colorado Springs where Dr. Drabing was granted full hospital privileges at the newly opened Eisenhower Osteopathic Hospital. In 1966, Sally gave birth to their third child, Michael. Dr. John practiced family medicine for two more years before undertaking Orthopedic Surgery Residency at Doctors Hospital in Columbus, Ohio, where, in 1968, they had their fourth child, Kirk. Upon completion of his residency in 1969, they returned to Colorado Springs and to Eisenhower Osteopathic Hospital, where Dr. Drabing established the Department of Orthopedic Surgery. Dr. Drabing has the distinction of having performed the first total hip replacement surgery in Colorado Springs, circa 1974.

Dr. Drabing's career was marked by excellence and dedication to the field of Osteopathic Medicine. He served twice as Chief of Staff at Eisenhower and helped oversee the hospital's growth as it tripled in size during the 1970s. He held numerous leadership roles throughout his professional life. He served on the board of the Colorado Society of Osteopathic Medicine (CSOM), becoming its president in 1976-1977 and representing Colorado at the American Osteopathic Association (AOA) House of Delegates from 1975 to 1987. His commitment to advancing medical education continued through his service on the KCOM Board of Trustees from 1982 to 1991, serving as vice president for one year and as president in 1990-1991. He received the college's Alumnus of the Year Award in 2001. He served on the board of the American Osteopathic Academy of Orthopedics (AOAO) for nine years and as

president in 1986-1987. In recognition of his contributions to the organization, he received the AOA's Knotty Cane Award in both 1991 and 1998. He served on the board of the American College of Osteopathic Surgeons (ACOS) for three years, from 1989 to 1992. John was awarded the distinction of Fellow of both the AOA and the ACOS for outstanding work and service. From 1998 through 2005, Dr. Drabing represented the CSOM as a board member of the Colorado Physicians Health Program. He also served as a local host to two national meetings of the North American Spine Society in the 1990s. Dr. Drabing was a founding board member of the El Paso County Medical Society Physicians Foundation as well as a founding board member of the Colorado Springs Osteopathic Foundation (CSOF) in 1984, serving as president in 1989-1990. He was a staunch supporter of Osteopathic Medicine, KCOM (now ATSU) and the Colorado Springs Osteopathic Foundation, from its inception throughout the remainder of his life.

Beyond his professional achievements, Dr. Drabing was deeply involved with the Arthritis Foundation's Colorado branch and served as its President. His contributions helped improve countless lives through advocacy and support for those living with arthritis.

While medicine was his vocation, Dr. Drabing found joy and balance through his many hobbies. He was a fly fisherman who cherished time spent at his cabin in Tarryall and on fishing excursions with his children in Alaska. He loved exploring 4x4 trails throughout central Colorado in his trusty Jeep CJ-5, golfing (despite its frustrations), and playing bridge. He was a skier and an enthusiastic traveler who enjoyed globetrotting with Sally, his sister, Caroline, and her husband, "Big John." Their favorite adventures included trips to New Zealand, Europe, the U.K, Ireland, South America, and Tahiti. In more recent years, John and Doris embarked on several journeys of their own, cruising the Caribbean, the St. Lawrence Seaway, the Columbia and Snake rivers, and the Upper Mississippi from St. Louis to St. Paul. They explored cities like New York, Chicago, Washington D.C., Columbus, Austin, Las Vegas, as well as destinations in California, Hawaii, Florida, and Mexico.

On February 9, 1990, John suffered a heart attack at the base lodge of the Mary Jane ski area. Fortunately, he collapsed in front of two off-duty ski patrol who immediately began resuscitation efforts. Though CPR was ineffective, the base lodge was equipped with a defibrillator, and the EMTs revived him after his heart had been stopped for over four minutes. He was lucky to survive the incident without suffering any lasting dain bramage [sic].

John's heart attack could easily have ended his life, but we were blessed to have him in our lives for an additional 35 years. We will miss his wisdom, quick wit, humor, charisma, charm, kindness, and generosity. John helped countless patients throughout his medical career and

was an upstanding community member. He will be remembered as a good brother, husband, father, grandfather, uncle, friend, neighbor, colleague, mentor, partner, employer, surgeon, board member, club member, bridge partner, philanthropist, and, at best, a mediocre golfer. In a word, he was a gentleman.

Those who knew him remember his kindness, humor, generosity, wisdom, knowledge, and fun-loving spirit—qualities that enriched every relationship he formed.

Predeceased in 2005 by Sally, his wife of 47 years, his parents, his brothers-in-law, John and Dick, and his best friend, Glenn, John is lovingly remembered by his sister Caroline; his longtime lady friend Doris; his children Jeff (wife Ann), Diane (partner Scott), Mike (wife Taren), and Kirk; grandchildren Hadyn, Shane, and Abby; niece Gail; nephews Craig (wife Mindi), Bryce, and Mark (wife Cortney); partners in Orthopedic Surgery, Tom (wife Janie) and Ron (wife Kathy); favorite office manager Candia (husband Ray); dear friends, Karen, Gene and Sally; and many others whose lives were touched by his warmth and guidance.

John Drabing passed away in Colorado Springs on April 19, 2025, at the age of 89, after experiencing complications with living. To quote him, he simply “*didn’t have any more gas in the tank.*” May his memory bring comfort to all who knew him and continue to inspire those following in his footsteps. Bravo, Dr. John! Here’s to both a life lived well, and a life well-lived! We will miss you. May you rest in peace. You’ve earned it, old man.

John’s family is planning a private celebration of his life in the coming weeks and asks that in lieu of sending flowers, please donate to the Colorado Springs Osteopathic Foundation, P.O. Box 49577, Colorado Springs, CO 80949; www.csosf.org.