

Paying Respects to a Dedicated Hand Surgeon and Family Man, Dr. John M. Veitch

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Dr. John Morrison Veitch died peacefully at his house on January 18, 2015, after a brief battle with brain cancer, surrounded by loving family. John was 69 years old.

John was the middle child of five siblings born to Abner and Bessie Veitch. He was raised in Lisbon, North Dakota. His father, Abner, was a country doctor who had a clinic and surgery suite in the front of their home. John attended the University of North Dakota for 3 years and went on to the college's medical school with his brother, Bob, for 2 years. John completed his third and fourth years at the University of Minnesota, during which he met Mary Ellen and married her on the day after graduation. They were married for 44 years.

John did his surgery internship in Indianapolis, Indiana, where Mary Ellen and he welcomed their son Andrew (Andy) into the world. After finishing the internship, John began his public service obligation in the United States Army as a chief medical officer. He was stationed for 2 years at Fort Greely in Alaska and 1 year at Fitzsimmons Army Hospital (now Fitzsimmons Army Medical Center) in Denver, Colorado. John and Mary Ellen welcomed their second son, Charles (Charlie), while in Alaska. After 3 years of service, John was honorably discharged as major.

In the 1970s, John underwent his orthopaedic residency and hand fellowship training at the University of New Mexico (UNM) under Dr. George E. Omer. Soon after, John and Mary Ellen moved their young family to Fort Dodge, Iowa, so John could begin his private practice. But, not surprisingly, the Land of Enchantment called them back, with an opportunity to move his practice alongside Dr. Stanley R. Lehman in Roswell, New Mexico. John worked for 13 years as a general orthopaedic surgeon and, with Mary Ellen, raised his two boys in southern New Mexico.

After their kids graduated from Goddard High School in Roswell, the couple moved to Joplin, Missouri, because the chance had arisen for John to be primarily a hand surgeon (hand surgery being his true passion in orthopaedics). John had a busy practice in Joplin for 10 years. He tried his hand at retirement but grew bored, and subsequently UNM Department of Orthopaedics & Rehabilitation would become very lucky. John accepted a position at UNM as a part-time

faculty member in the division of hand surgery, working for the UNM orthopaedics department for 7 years before retiring in 2010—this time sans boredom. John, an outstanding teacher, was awarded the UNM Orthopaedic Faculty Instructor of the Year in 2004. He was an active member of the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons and American Association for Hand Surgery.

Outside of orthopaedics, John loved spending time with his family, hiking and hunting in New Mexico, reading (especially biographies), studying foreign languages, and of course, John was a big fan of the New Mexico Lobos. He is survived by his siblings, Tom, Bob, Jim, and Marge; his loving wife, Mary Ellen, and their two sons, Andy (Class of 2003) and Charlie, along with Andy's wife, Beth; and two granddaughters, Elle and Emma. John would have been 70 years old on February 15th, 2015. We will miss him dearly.