

Robbins Honored for Lifetime Achievement

Written by Gillian Baker

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There's a chance that the name, Spencer Robbins, may not be familiar to you. But, if you have spent any time in the High Country, you have definitely been touched by his work. Together with his brothers, Grover and Harry, Robbins helped create Tweetsie Railroad, the Hound Ears Club, the Elk River Club, Beech Mountain, Land Harbor and the Land of Oz.

On September 12, 2011, Appalachian Regional Healthcare Foundation presented E. Spencer Robbins with a Lifetime Achievement Award in recognition of his "Exceptional Insight and Leadership."

Robbins' association with the healthcare system began in the 1970s when he and his brother, Harry, decided to honor their late brother, Grover, through a golf tournament. Grover Robbins, Jr. passed away in 1970 from cancer. Proceeds from the Grover C. Robbins, Jr. Memorial Golf Tournament helped Watauga Medical Center (then called Watauga Hospital) purchase cancer detection equipment throughout the 1970s and 1980s. In the 1990s, funds from the tournament went towards building and equipping the Seby B. Jones Regional Cancer Center, which is located on the campus of Watauga Medical Center.

"Spencer and Harry led the charge to improve cancer detection and provide cancer treatment options to the citizens of this region," shared Richard Sparks, President and CEO of Appalachian Regional Healthcare System. "They were the first to step up and make a substantial commitment to healthcare in this community."

Through the Grover C. Robbins, Jr. Memorial Golf Tournament, sponsored by Appalachian Regional Healthcare Foundation, Robbins has helped raise more than \$1.3 million for Watauga Medical Center and Seby B. Jones Regional Cancer Center.

"Spencer and Harry felt that our healthcare facility was worthy of their support," Sparks continued. "They were catalysts in helping the system move forward and in the development of our Foundation office."

Appalachian Regional Healthcare Foundation assists Appalachian Regional Healthcare System in ensuring that its patients have access to the highest quality healthcare; that its caregivers have access to advanced medical resources and technologies; and that its donors realize great satisfaction in bringing the very best possible healthcare to the individuals within our communities.

Friend, Bill Hensley, saluted Robbins for "his sense of humor, high moral character, love of family and friends" and most importantly for his dedication to a better life for his hometown. Having worked with all three Robbins brothers, Hensley said, "Grover was the idea person; Harry was the frontman and Spencer did all the work." Not much has changed since those early days. BusinessNC.com reported that Robbins, in his 80s, "is still going strong – in his Elk River office every day he's in town," which is most any time that he and his wife, Grace, aren't visiting their four children, six grandchildren and a great grandchild.

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“Healthcare facilities and systems cannot achieve greatness without external support,” said Jerry Hutchens, Senior Vice President of System Advancement. “The Robbins family helped start the ball rolling many years ago and have been true to their commitment for the past 39 years.”

The 39th Annual Grover C. Robbins, Jr. Memorial Golf Tournament will be October 10, 2011 at the Elk River Club. If you would like to play in or sponsor next year’s tournament, call (828) 262-9564.