

6H-R 10-17-2022

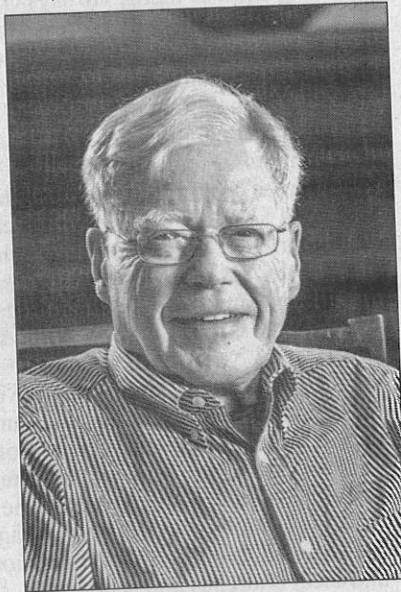
George Albert Drake

George Albert Drake, 88, of Grinnell,

died peacefully at his home, surrounded by his family on Saturday, October 15, 2022. Services are pending.

6H-R
10-24-2022

George Albert Drake



On the afternoon of Saturday, October 15, 2022, in the culmination of a rich and impactful life, George Albert Drake, 88, died peacefully at home surrounded by his loving family. His memory lives on through his wife of 62 years, Sue; son Chris and spouse Kay, and their children, Nick and spouse Jenny, Elizabeth, and Hannah; daughter Cindy and partner Louie Vencato, and Cindy's children, Danielle, Lila, and Samantha Drake-Flam; daughter Melanie and spouse Tom Wickersham; and the countless other lives he touched.

A celebration of George's life will be held on Saturday, November 19, at 2 pm in Herrick

Chapel, at Grinnell College. A reception will follow at the Humanities and Social Studies Center (HSSC) Atrium.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions can be donated to the Grinnell College Liberal Arts in Prison Program, the Grinnell Area Mental Health Consortium - JPK, or an organization of your choice, in memory of George Drake.

Spanning from February 25, 1934, to a beautiful autumn afternoon in October 2022, George's life was many things. Indeed, you would be hard pressed to find a piece of writing about George, before or after his passing, that does not highlight his numerous facets: husband, father, grandfather, athlete, historian, musician, president, two-time pastor, volunteer, mentor, and so much more.

When not speaking confidently and knowledgeably on a seemingly endless number of subjects, informed by his voracious reading and boundless curiosity, he was quietly observing and asking questions; always learning. Though to hear him tell it, this was not always the case. "I was a pretty obstreperous young man," he claimed when describing family dinners of his youth, particularly those involving Roy Smalley, friend of the family and shortstop for George's beloved Chicago Cubs.

George excelled at the college of his choice, Grinnell, winning the Archibald Prize for the highest grades in his 1956 graduating class. He also led the cross country team to its first conference championship and personally qualified for the national championships, where he placed 49th. George was inducted into the Grinnell College Athletics Hall of Fame in 2002. He remained active throughout his life: just weeks before his passing, still riding a recumbent bicycle.

Upon graduation from Grinnell, George embarked on a Fulbright Scholarship in Paris, followed immediately by a Rhodes Scholarship that took him to Merton College at Oxford from 1957-1959. After Oxford, George returned stateside, where he initially pursued his seminary degree through the Chicago Theological Seminary and eventually completed his Ph.D. in Church History at the University of Chicago. It was during this time that he reconnected with a fellow Grinnell alum, Sue Ratcliff, and, after a whirlwind courtship, the two were engaged and soon married.

Drake George

Less than a year later, the couple found themselves in the mountain town of Marble, Colorado, when George took a summer job as the pastor of the small church there. George and Sue fell in love with the beautiful Crystal River Valley and together built a cabin they would return to frequently for the rest of his life. George taught at Colorado College from 1964 to 1979, teaching history and eventually becoming Dean. During this time, he and Sue grew their family by three: Chris, Cindy, and Melanie.

Eventually, George found his way back to Grinnell, first as a trustee in 1970 and then in 1979 as the first alumnus to serve as president. In his memoir he writes of his surprise when his fellow trustees found him qualified to serve as Grinnell's president, and yet, George served that role with distinction for twelve years. The changes he made during his presidency helped put Grinnell on the path to becoming the top tier liberal arts institution that it is today.

In 1991, after stepping down from the presidency, George and Sue joined the Peace Corps in Lesotho where George taught English to high schoolers, while Sue trained local elementary school teachers. Upon their return to Grinnell in 1993, George taught history full-time for the next ten years, which he recalled as "among the most satisfactory of my life. I loved being back in the classroom, and I loved the students." Although he retired at age 70, George continued teaching a tutorial at Grinnell and in Grinnell's Liberal Arts in Prison Program at Newton Correctional Facility, a cause to which he remained deeply devoted.

In 2020, in the face of the remote instruction necessitated by the global COVID-19 pandemic, George reluctantly elected to stop teaching. Despite the diagnosis of pancreatic cancer that came soon afterward, he remained deeply involved and connected to the College. To the very end, he was, in his words, "a Grinnell College junkie."

George also gave his time and talents widely to the Grinnell, Iowa, community including through the library, their UCC Church, the hospital, and the Mayflower Home, to name just a few. He had a lifelong love of singing, and many fondly remember him on stage as a member of Shults & Co., performing songs as well as dance routines, much to the audience's delight.

When concluding his 2019 biography of Joe Rosenfield, Mentor, George wrote that he wished to remind his readers of "the richness of the man." It seems fitting, then, to do the same for him, although it will no doubt be unnecessary for those who knew, loved, and were forever changed by George Albert Drake, a good man who lived richly and well.

Celebratin of Life: George Drake

A celebration of the life of George Drake will be held at 2 p.m. on Saturday, Nov. 19, in Herrick Chapel, 1128 Park St., on the Grinnell College campus. A reception will follow the service at 3 p.m. in the Humanities and Social Studies Center, 1226 Park St.

All are welcome to honor George's remarkable legacy and pay tribute to the extraordinary impact he had on the community and college that he loved.

The service also will be livestreamed

at www.grinnell.edu/livestream. You can read George's obituary and leave a tribute on the Smith Funeral Home website (<https://www.smithfh.com/obituaries/George-Albert-Drake?obId=26155116#/obituaryInfo>).

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