

## **2006 Distinguished Achievement Award**

Second chances are rare but when we get them, we should consider ourselves lucky. In Dr. Roger Wotkyns' case, the School of Medicine is extremely lucky – as are the thousands of individuals whose lives or careers he touched and transformed.

Inconceivably, Dr. Wotkyns, a member of the School of Medicine's class of 1955, was initially denied admission to the school. Armed with a degree in public health from the University of New Mexico, Dr. Wotkyns wasn't deterred, however. Instead he went to Stanford University and earned a master's in endocrinology before being admitted to the School of Medicine the second time around.

Following graduation from medical school, Dr. Wotkyns entered a surgical residency at CU where he quickly proved himself to be an outstanding resident, who, in the words of one of his nominators, was "smart, thoughtful, focused, energetic and superb with his hands." Once finished with his residency, Dr. Wotkyns joined forces with Dr. Frank Traylor, a CU classmate, to start a practice at Lutheran Hospital in Lakewood. At the time, they were among the first residency-trained general surgeons in the west Denver suburbs.

Over the course of his 27 years of practice, Dr. Wotkyns performed more than 25,000 surgeries, frequently averaging approximately 900 surgeries annually. Given this prolific workload, it's easy to grasp the impact Dr. Wotkyns had on the greater Denver community. But the fact that he formed lasting friendships with so many of his patients is what makes Dr. Wotkyns truly remarkable. As his former patient and friend of 45 years, Dick Downing, said, "Roger is probably the single-most caring doctor I've ever met. He takes an enormous personal interest in his patients and their lives. He's a very kind, empathetic man. And he's smarter than hell. All this makes him an outstanding doctor and a class individual."

The exceptional care he has always given his patients is matched by the outstanding training and mentorship he provided an entire generation of physicians – many of whom are Colorado's senior surgeons today. Between his classes at the School of Medicine where he taught for 40 years, and his surgical practice through which he invited residents to rotate, Dr. Wotkyns helped shape the careers of countless physicians.

It is also worth noting that in addition to his thriving practice and his faculty position at CU, Dr. Wotkyns' co-authored the seminal text *Surgical Decision Making*, which has been a trusted reference to both surgeons and medical students since its first publication in 1978.

In recognition of his outstanding achievements at the University of Colorado School of Medicine, as well as those in his practice of medicine, his provision of health care, and his education of medical professionals, I am delighted to present Dr. Roger Wotkyns with the 2006 Distinguished Achievement Award.