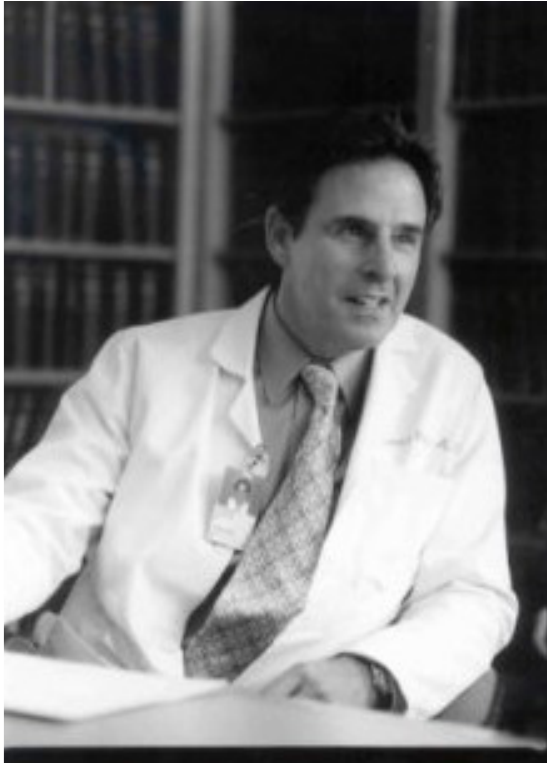




# Thomas Barr Graboys



*Photograph courtesy of the Graboys Family*

On January 5, 2015, the world lost a caring and charismatic physician who was passionately dedicated to his patients, students, and the practice of medicine. Dr. Thomas Barr Graboys died on that day at the age of 70 with Parkinson's Disease and Lewy Body Dementia. His clinical work centered at the Lown Cardiovascular Center and the Brigham and Women's Hospital, but extended to the West Roxbury VA Hospital, Goddard Memorial Hospital, and the Parker Hill/New England Baptist Hospital. He influenced care not only on a local level but also nationally and internationally through his commentaries, reviews, editorials, and public policy pieces.

Dr. Graboys was born in Fall River Massachusetts and graduated from Tabor Academy before going on to Cornell University, Ithaca, NY for a B.A. degree. He received the M.D. degree from New York Medical College, Valhalla, NY. His internship and medical residency training were completed at Boston City Hospital, Boston, MA. This was followed by two years of service as a Research Associate at the United States Air Force School of Aerospace Medicine, Brooks Air Force Base, Texas. He returned to Boston as a

research fellow in Medicine and Cardiology at the Peter Bent Brigham Hospital and Harvard School of Public Health before commencing his distinguished career as a master clinical cardiologist, educator and his productive association with his mentor Bernard Lown.

In addition to the clinical, administrative and teaching responsibilities as Director of the Lown Cardiovascular Center, Dr Graboys remained steadfast in his commitment to Harvard Medical School. He served on the Admissions Committee, then Chair, Subcommittee III, and Member of the Main Committee of Admissions. A thankless task committed to the excellence and diversity of the medical school, his day as a clinician would end at 8 PM, and then he would begin review of applicants. Piles of applications would cover the dining room table well into the night; he felt that the quality of medical students at Harvard Medical School would define the future leadership of healthcare, and he always was honored to be part of that process. He also served on the HMS Faculty Council, Board of Advisors for the Walter Bradford Cannon Society, and Aesculapian Club. To no surprise, he received the Faculty Prize for Excellence in Teaching at HMS.

*In tribute to their dedicated efforts to science and medicine, deceased members of the Harvard Faculty of Medicine (those at the rank of full or emeritus professor) receive a review of their life and contributions with a complete reflection, a **Memorial Minute**.*

Dr. Graboys always presented a rational approach to the management of complex cardiovascular disease. He was a co-author on a 1981 publication in *The New England Journal of Medicine* on successful long-term management of ischemic heart disease without resorting to aggressive, invasive and expensive intervention. Optimal medical therapy, while maturing as new treatments were introduced, has remained a standard of care for ischemic heart disease for 40 years. He brought the same common sense approach to the management of complex ventricular arrhythmias in multiple publications.

Dr. Graboys directed the care of hundreds of patients in the coronary care unit and inpatient cardiology services at Brigham and Women's Hospital. He was a mentor to students, advisor to junior faculty and to established professionals. He was universally viewed as one of the most devoted, skilled and compassionate of clinicians. His personal conviction as to the frequent overuse of cardiovascular technology and invasive procedures influenced scores of Brigham house officers to focus first on optimizing medical management and reducing cardiac risk factors in patients with coronary artery disease. His sensitivity and clinical acumen when discussing treatment options with survivors of out-of-hospital cardiac arrest modeled for his trainees how to best guide their own future difficult clinical conversations. He was tirelessly devoted to ensuring the voice of the patient influenced the ultimate therapeutic strategy within the confines of evidence-based medicine

Dr. Graboys wrote: "I believe that my most important contribution has been in the area of "public policy, particularly as it influences medical care and global issues. Following military service at the USAF School of Aerospace Medicine, I joined Greater Boston Physicians for Social Responsibility, served as its president, and chaired its steering committee for six years. I was co-producer and host of the New England Satellite cable television program, "Critical Condition: The Nuclear Arms Race." I was among the team of doctors who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1985 for their work with the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War. From 1985 to 1986, I was a special consultant to the U.S. Senate Committee on Aging in Washington. I continue to serve on the Medicaid Advisory Group of the Medicaid Fraud Control Unit for the attorney general of Massachusetts."

Family, medicine, tennis and skiing, in that order, were central to Dr. Graboys's life. He was immensely proud of the accomplishments of his two daughters, Penelope and Sarah. Dr. Graboys survived his wife of 30 years, Caroline Rigby Graboys who died in 1998, and married Victoria Tenney Graboys in 2002. It was Victoria who unselfishly and lovingly supported him through his inevitable decline with Parkinson's Disease. At his passing, he had three additional stepchildren and 11 grandchildren.

Dr. Graboys was the lead (and only) drummer for a rock band of cardiologists he formed called the Dysrhythmics. While he and his fellow musicians did not achieve the critical acclaim in their musical endeavors that they were able to accomplish in their healthcare profession, limited engagements in rented facilities attracted the best of cardiovascular care in the Boston and Harvard community to celebrate their diversity and collective mission.

Despite Dr. Graboys's commitment to complex clinical care, public policy, research, and the education of generations of physician leaders, he might be best remembered now for his unselfish humanitarian instincts. This was reflected at the bedside and in conferences, but no place better characterized than in his final book, "Life in the Balance: A Physician's Memoir of Life, Love and Loss with Parkinson's Disease and Dementia". He characterizes the downfall of a compassionate physician, a keen and sensitive mind, and loving husband and father to an incurable disease.

"I am stooped. I shuffle when walk and my body trembles. My train of thought regularly runs off the

rails. There is no sugarcoating Parkinson's. There is no silver lining here. There is anger, pain, and frustration at being victimized by a disease that can to some extent be managed but cannot be cured."

"Now in the tenth year of a battle that will continue as long as I live, I have watched as huge swaths of my abilities have been calved like chunks of ice falling from a glacier into the sea. My circle of friends has shrunk, the role I used to play in my family life has diminished dramatically and my medical career is over."

Dr. Graboy's writings define him as the consummate teacher and compassionate physician. That is his lasting legacy to future patients and healthcare.

Respectfully submitted,

Elliott M. Antman, MD, *Chairperson*

James M. Kirshenbaum, MD

Gilbert H. Mudge, MD

Marc A. Pfeffer, MD, PhD