

# VAIL TRAILBLAZER AWARD

## **Dr. Thomas I. Steinberg**

### ***50+ years of community service***

When word spread in 1965 that Vail would be getting a full-time physician, the handful of pioneering families that had answered the call to fulfill a collective dream to build a ski resort here were especially grateful to welcome Dr. Tom Steinberg and his family to town. While serving as the attending physician for the medical clinic at the Ford Motor Company Assembly Plant in Metuchen, N.J., Dr. Steinberg felt compelled to answer an ad that had been placed in the Journal of American Medical Association for a new position in a new ski town called Vail.



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It wasn't long before the Steinberg family – Tom, wife Florence, and their two young children, Kristina and Erik - headed West to begin a new life of adventure.

The addition of on-site medical care, coupled with an established school, helped complete the early essentials required of a community that would allow the children of Vail to flourish. That was also the case for the Steinberg children. Erik fell in love with ski racing, while daughter Kristina followed in her father's footsteps in the medical field. Wife "Flo" was active in many community endeavors, serving on the town sign committee and writing a column for the Vail Trail newspaper. Flo died in 2007.

Dr. Steinberg's 25-year presence as a practicing physician in Vail contributed to the eventual establishment of a new hospital along with expanded medical services. During those early years, Dr. Steinberg was responsible for tending to a variety of medical needs which required improvising when necessary. The family station wagon, for example, doubled as an ambulance with Dr. Steinberg at the wheel when patients needed to be transferred out of town and he stepped in as coroner, when needed. He's also remembered for his heroic efforts as a first responder and emergency room physician during the gondola accident in 1976 in which he provided life-saving care to those who were injured and consoled the families of the four who died during the collapse.

Not long after establishing his medical practice, Dr. Steinberg began a lifelong commitment of public service in Vail. He was first elected to a seat on the Vail Town Council in 1968. Through the decades, he has served a total of 19 years on the Town Council – more than any other member. During those years of service, he was instrumental in the acquisition of land to be used for parks and open space, such as the Antholz property which is now Ford Park. He also helped develop a comprehensive hiking system that includes the Vail Trail as its first leg. In 1979, as a member of the Town Council, Dr. Steinberg helped establish the Real Estate Transfer Tax that is used for the purchase of open space and development and maintenance of parks and trails. He is also credited with raising environmental awareness throughout the community. He was instrumental in creating a dedicated environmental planner position in the Community Development Department in 1992.



Today, Dr. Steinberg continues to work on behalf of environmental conservation initiatives where he serves as President Emeritus of the Eagle Valley Land Trust and Eagle River Watershed Council.

In addition, Dr. Steinberg has been responsible for helping to raise the community's consciousness about the atrocities of the Holocaust. As a private in the U.S. Army during World War II, Dr. Steinberg was among the American and Allied troops who liberated the Dachau concentration camp in April 1945. During his

military service, he was awarded the Bronze Star for bravery. Years later, Dr. Steinberg was instrumental in creation of Holocaust Remembrance Day observed by the Vail Town Council.

Throughout his career, Dr. Steinberg has continued to help address the varying needs of the community. He helped provide a space for the local chapter of Alcoholic Anonymous to meet and most recently campaigned for support of the new Castle Peak Senior Care Center in Eagle which will open in fall 2016. As an additional tribute, Vail Valley Medical Center has created the Thomas I. Steinberg Heritage Society for those making a legacy gift to VVMC in their estate plans.

It is for these reasons and many more that Dr. Thomas I. Steinberg has been selected as the first recipient of the Vail Trailblazer Award in recognition of his continued efforts and dedication toward the betterment of the Vail community.