



Dr. John B. Isbell

March 24, 1931 - May 15, 2020

Dr. John B. Isbell, 89, of Fort Payne died at his home Friday, May 15, 2020, with his family present. Born March 24, 1931, to John B. and Eleanor Gilbreath Isbell, he attended Fort Payne City School and was a graduate of DeKalb County High School Class of 1949, Auburn University Class of 1954, and Medical College of Alabama Class of 1959. After serving an internship at Lloyd Noland Hospital, he returned with his family to Fort Payne in 1960, founding Isbell Clinic, and practicing General Medicine and later limiting to Obstetrics and Gynecology until his retirement in 1995. He was a Veteran of the Korean War, serving as a medic and ambulance driver from December 1950 until January 1952. He remained a member of VFW until his death.

Known as “Dr. John” to most who knew him, he was known for his love and support of his family, his church, his work and coworkers, and flying airplanes. Without exception, he was an encourager of the best sort, and a lover of learning, affecting his own children and many others to pursue excellence in all things. Delivering somewhere around ten thousand babies over his career, he made a connection to most households in the area. Many of those children later were his “copilots” in his beloved Aeronca airplane as he and his airport friends gave rides to encourage interest in flying through the Young Eagles program. Dr. John excelled in obstetrics, but since childhood had interest in almost anything mechanical. With his family, he managed to build from scratch a car, boat, and airplane, unselfishly sharing rides with any who wished, and always eager to share his enthusiasm and knowledge about such, particularly with his grandchildren, whom he adored, and presented with such challenges as conjugating verbs in multiple foreign languages.

He was an active member of First Baptist Church, serving as a Deacon, Youth and Adult Sunday School teacher, choir member, and able mentor to many, with a kind and often humorous word to all. Even after his hearing and vision largely failed him, he was faithful and eager to continue with his church family every week.

Dr. John is survived by his wife of sixty eight years, Mary Nell Norwood Isbell, and their

children Dr. Blake (Bonnie) Isbell, Dr. Steve (Merle) Isbell, and Nancy (Allen) Isbell Meisler, RN, MSN; nine grandchildren, six great grandchildren (he noted, "And three more by end of summer"); siblings Dr. Charles Isbell and Sara Isbell Quinn. His extended family also includes an incredible group of "Airport Buddies" who unfailingly supported him and treated him with the utmost respect, and employees of Isbell Medical Group who did the same, always with a smile.

Due to COVID restrictions, a private service was held at Glenwood Cemetery on Sunday, May 17, 2020. Dr. R. Pat McFadden and Dr. Marshall Henderson officiated, with Dr. Roger Walworth playing "Taps" and singing with Isbell family members. Surprising the family, and as the American flag was lifted from his casket and being prepared for presentation, Dr. John was honored with a Missing Man Formation flyover, planned and executed by his local Airport Buddies.

The Isbell family is committed to having a traditional memorial service once COVID restrictions are fully lifted.

Donations may be made to First Baptist Church, 106 Grand Avenue NW, Fort Payne, 35967 or Mitchell's Place, 4778 Overton Road, Birmingham, AL 35210.

Comments



“ I often heard my Dad say, “Dr. John B. is one of the best”. Prayers for comfort to all of you as you grieve your tremendous loss. He was a life well lived.
Jimmie G. Davis

Jimmie G. Davis - May 22 at 07:18 PM



“ I'm so sorry to hear of the loss of Dr. John. He delivered me 39 yrs ago. My mother spoke highly of him many times over the yrs. It was clear to me he was a wonderful man & doctor. Then Dr. Blake Delivered 2 of my 3 kids. Its clear great doctors run in the family. In my opinion the best around. He will be missed but clearly never forgotten. The family is in our prayers. Sincerely Stacey Stephens

Stacey Stephens - May 21 at 03:47 AM



“ Delivered my son Glenn Cryer 8-26-84. Back then you didn't know what the sex was until they were born. Half way thru the birth Dr. John said the baby's face was so pretty he believed it was going to be a girl. After birth it was a boy. He said yeah you could tell that all away across the room. LOL. Saw him at Capt. Dees with his wife a lot. Rest in Peace Dr. John.

David Cryer - May 20 at 02:38 PM



“ David Cryer sent a virtual gift in memory of Dr. John B. Isbell



David Cryer - May 20 at 02:32 PM



“ Dear Isbell family....We are so sorry for your loss of Dr John. He was a great Christian man. I enjoyed the years working with him on the OB floor at the hospital. He was always helpful & a smile on his face. My husband enjoyed having conversations with him on History. He was a very smart man! He & Dr Blake delivered by C/S our son Josh 36 years ago. So special memory there. We will all

miss Dr John. And we all dearly loved him. Thoughts & prayers. God bless. Laura Weldon

Laura Weldon - May 20 at 10:45 AM



“ Made my heart sad to hear about Dr. John's passing, he was so sweet and kind when we delivered my first baby.... May God comfort you all during these days...
--Deborah Moore Thurmond

Deborah Moore Thurmond - May 19 at 11:29 PM



“ My heart goes out to the family. Dr. John delivered all three of my boys. He always had a smile and kind words. He will be greatly missed. The family is in my thoughts and prayers.



Crystal Miller - May 19 at 09:04 PM



“ A sweet and kind soul! You will be missed by all of us!
May peace be with you!



Friends - May 18 at 07:15 PM



“ Traci W lit a candle in memory of Dr. John B. Isbell



Traci W - May 18 at 03:07 PM



“ He delivered my son on June 20 1992.I rembere him saying if you don't push this baby is going to be redheaded
And he was and he said I jinxed him. Great man and dr.

Melinda knight - May 18 at 02:35 PM



“ He was so very kind to me. Even when I insisted the baby of mine he had just delivered was a boy and NOT the girl he had held, he just smiled and told me to try again. That was 40 years ago and I never forgot his kindness. You never forget how someone treats you. I loved that man, as everyone did. DiAnne Callahan

DiAnne Callahan - May 18 at 09:41 AM



“ With our Deepest sympathy to the Isbell family..from the remaining M.H. Prater Jr Family ..Our prayers and thoughts are with you.



Pam Freeman - May 17 at 09:43 PM



“ So sorry to hear this. He delivered both of my children. He was a wonderful doctor. Prayers for the family.

Donna Light - May 17 at 07:06 PM



“ Uta Cortimilia lit a candle in memory of Dr. John B. Isbell



Uta Cortimilia - May 17 at 06:26 PM



“ Surrounding your family with our love and prayers!



Friend - May 17 at 06:14 PM



“ God Bless This Family!
Love To All...



Friend - May 17 at 05:49 PM



“ Praying for you!



Friends - May 17 at 05:45 PM



“ Couvillion Family lit a candle in memory of Dr. John B. Isbell



Couvillion Family - May 17 at 05:43 PM



“ So sorry to hear of Dr. John's passing. He was a great influence and leader in this community. He will be truly missed by all. We will continue to pray for the family during this time. God Bless! Joey & Phyllis Couvillion and Family



Joey Couvillion - May 17 at 05:41 PM



“ Dr John delivered both my sons over 49 years ago. He was so kind to me during both pregnancies. I gained 8 pounds in three weeks and I was apprehensive of his reaction. He said he couldn't say anything to me about it until he quit smoking. So down to earth. My next son was born and my husband bought a big box of tootsie roll pops to give out instead of cigars. During the middle of the night during my hospital stay I woke up and Dr John had come into my room to get a tootsie roll pop. Again, such a sweet, down to earth man and doctor. He was such a blessing to our area. Rhonda Blevins.

Charles and Rhonda Blevins - May 17 at 03:36 PM



“ Jayne Abernathy sent a virtual gift in memory of Dr. John B. Isbell



jayne abernathy - May 17 at 02:59 PM



“ I was one of the first ones that doctor is both delivered I miss you my friend

Brenda wilbanks wooten - May 17 at 07:21 PM



“ I was the first that dr. Isabel delivered

Brenda wilbanks wooten - May 17 at 07:22 PM



“ So sorry to hear that Dr. John passed away. He has been a positive influence and leader in this community. He will be truly missed by all. Our prayers and thoughts are with the family. God Bless! Joey & Phyllis Couvillion & Family



allen j Couvillion - May 17 at 02:56 PM



“ Dear Isbell Family,
Our thoughts and prayers are with you. Dr. John B will be missed on this early. We will miss his wonderful smile as he said hello in church.

Joyce and Barry Norton - May 17 at 01:31 PM



“ I remember when I moved to Alabama in 1993. Couple months later I got pregnant with my son. I went to see him and his son Blake. John was so sweet and amazing at his job and talking to his patients. But I can say he lived a great long life. Ppl will miss him very much. And my condolences to the family at this time of grief. Family is in my prayers.



“ Danny Pike lit a candle in memory of Dr. John B. Isbell



Danny Pike - May 17 at 12:01 PM



“ We are very sorry for your loss.
Bertie Gann Ollis and Vickey Sue Ollis

Vickey Sue Ollis - May 17 at 11:26 AM



“ Dr. John delivered two of our four children - our son Don in 1961 and daughter Susan in 1963! He was a very caring and great doctor. We have been blessed to have men like him serving in our health care system. I thank him also for his military service. My brother served with him during the Korean War era and highly respected him. Prayers for his family!

Imogene J. Greene - May 17 at 11:07 AM



“ Dear Dr Steve and Merle:
Our thoughts and prayers are with you at the passing of your father.
Linda Gundros
Kristin Naugher Hall

Linda Gundros - May 17 at 10:51 AM



“ Joyce Simpson lit a candle in memory of Dr. John B. Isbell



joyce simpson - May 17 at 10:38 AM



“ Dr. John meant the world to me. I got pregnant at 17 and was scared and comforted me and treated me like one of his kids . Fly high I will always love you Dr. John.

Christy Voils - May 17 at 10:12 AM



“ We have truly been Blessed, here in Dekalb County, by the Isbell family. What a great legacy Dr. John has left us.
I can't recall him, without that warm smile on his face. We always enjoyed talking with him
Dr. John will be missed by many. Prayers of peace for all his wonderful family.
What a great day in Heaven!

Paul Gruber - May 17 at 10:02 AM



“ Such a kind hearted, down to earth sweet respectful man, great doctor, family man, Christian, loyal friend who will be greatly missed fly high with the angels I know God is rejoicing to have brother John with him God bless all of you and your family.

Karen Killian - May 17 at 09:39 AM



“ This man was nothing short of amazing! Always smiling, always present in any conversation you had with him. He delivered me in 1972 and then assisted his son Dr. Blake in the surgical delivery via c-section my son Zac Hairston in 1992. He joked and said let's guess his weight and nicknamed him "747". His exact words were, he will weigh what you did 8.14lbs and will be 21" long"! He was correct but how did that man remember my weight and inches from 20 yrs prior was beyond me! Just one example of how great a man he was!
Many many prayers for you my sweet Mrs. Mary Nell and for the rest of the family.
See you again one day sir! I salute you! Thanks for your amazing service on this

earth! May you rest in sweet peace.

April Wallace Garrett - May 17 at 09:19 AM



“ Dear Isbell family...We are so sorry for your loss of Dr John. He was a great Christian man. I enjoyed the years working with him on the OB floor at the hospital. He was always helpful & a smile on his face. My husband enjoyed having conversations with him on History. He was a very smart man! He & Dr Blake delivered by C/S our son Josh 36 years ago. So special memory there. We will all miss Dr John. And we all dearly loved him. Thoughts & prayers. God bless. Laura Weldon

Laura Weldon - May 17 at 11:06 AM



“ Dr John was loved and respected by everyone whose lives he touched through the years. He was my OB/GYN forever and before both my children were born. It happens though that Dr Charles actually delivered Judd and Misty. Dr Charles will forever be a hero to me as well. A funny story about Dr John, The girl in the room with me named her baby boy Dusty Lane and I named my newborn daughter Misty Dawn. Dr John had been out of town and missed both of our deliveries. He was so funny...the day we both were getting ready to go home Dr John burst into the room (first time being there) and proclaimed "Charles told me we had a Dirt Road and a Foggy Morning in this room and I want to see it for myself!!" Such a good man, I just loved him.

Glenda Stiefel - May 17 at 03:21 PM



“ Dr. Isbell always had a warm smile and I remember him most from his presence in my childhood at First Baptist.

Sarah Haase - May 17 at 09:11 AM



“ Dr. Isbell was the man that delivered my husband nearly 39 years ago. I met him one time at a Young Eagles flight that I took my children to in Ft. Payne. He was such a lovely man with interesting information. I had hoped we'd meet again. Maybe on the other side.

To his family, I am praying for you.

Faith - May 17 at 08:03 AM



“ So sorry for everyones loss.R.John was a very special man and I ve always thought alot of him.He delivered my children and my daughters son.It hasn t been long since we saw him in Walgreen s and he said that he remembered us.He was telling us about how many kids that he had brouhht into this world.He was a very sweet man and will be missed by all.Dr. John,Dr.Charles and Dr.Walker have been great people and doctors.



“ Betty Gilbreath lit a candle in memory of Dr. John B. Isbell



Betty Gilbreath - May 17 at 03:30 AM



“ Dr John was such a kind man. I was in church with my oldest son Rob. Dr John mentioned to me that I might need to quit carrying him once his feet went below my knees. I have gotten a grin every time I think of it. Of course today I am 5' 4". And he is 6' 5" I wish he could have seen us to heater now Love to Mary Nell and the whole family

Christine Nichols - May 17 at 01:25 AM



“ So very to learn of "Dr. John's" death. He was one in a million... and will be greatly missed by many..(He delivered my one and only child) for that I am so grateful! My Prayers and Sympathy for his family and friends.

Annette Baugh



Annette Baugh - May 17 at 01:20 AM



“ Dr. John was a wonderful man and a great doctor. He was always kind and thoughtful. He will be greatly missed.

Brenda Goggans - May 17 at 12:00 AM



“ Brenda Goggans lit a candle in memory of Dr. John B. Isbell



Brenda Goggans - May 16 at 11:59 PM



“ Dr. John was a wonderful man. I always felt safe when he was taking care of me. He will be greatly missed. Rest in peace.

Brenda Goggans - May 16 at 11:57 PM



“ God Bless Dr. John's precious soul. We will certainly be lifting the entire family up in Prayer.

My wife and I thank the Lord everyday for putting Dr. John in our lives, 30 years ago he saved our daughters life. I will never forget that night! Dr. John called me out in the hall, and said we need to do an emergency surgery, his wisdom and listening to the Holy Spirit, proved to be the absolute right thing to do. For without it, our child would have died.

Every time my wife and I saw him out and about, he always greeted us, with that big smile on his face.. This world says good by to a precious man, but his savior says welcome to heaven my child..

Rev. Benjie & Pam Parker Mason - Fort Payne..

Benjie Mason - May 16 at 11:49 PM



“ Doc Isbell had an awesome sense of humor. He shared several stories with me. One of my favorites was his tell of when he gave a shot for the very first time when he was in service. I was stunned and laughed so hard. He just grinned. He was such a sweet and precious man. I feel honored and blessed to have had the opportunity to get to know him and help care for him in his final months, Plus to have met the family members I was fortunate to share time with Doc Isbell. Love and prayers to you all. Ms. Mary Nell, my deepest and sincerest condolences. Prayers of peace and comfort.



Cynthia Black, Care Giver with ACAF - May 16 at 11:32 PM



“ Dr John delivered my daughter Kim I was 16 years old that was 48 years ago he was my friend even now when I would go to the airport where my son Wes works he would hug me and say you feel so good lol bless him he will be so missed my son Wes loved him so much he said mom do you think Dr John knew I loved him I said son he knew by the way you treated him going over to pick him up or just talking to him at the airport Rest In Peace our friend



Diane Woods - May 16 at 11:31 PM



“ Wonderful man and amazing Doctor . Dr.John delivered my oldest daughter in December 1971. She was born with a birth defect that we had never heard of. He was such a Blessing to us, explaining that everything would be okay, as he was familiar to the defect. Will never forget this wonderful man. Prayers for all his family. (Bettye Bailey)

Bettye Bailey Crider - May 17 at 01:04 PM