

for your digestion

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Eugene Gastroenterology Consultants: 35 years of guts and butts!

By Gregory Knecht, M.D., Eugene Gastroenterology Consultants, P.C.

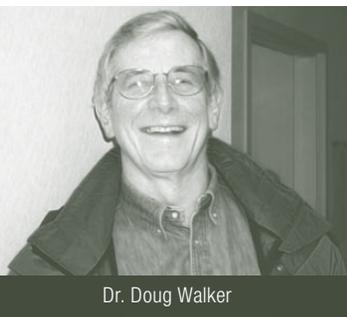
August will mark the 35th anniversary of Eugene Gastroenterology Consultants ("Eugene GI"). How time flies when you're having fun!

In 1977, on a tip from a fellow trainee at the University of California at San Diego, I took a road trip to Eugene to meet **Dr. Doug Walker**, a practicing internist and gastroenterologist. Doug was looking for a new partner to formalize and create a gastroenterology specialty practice in Eugene. What luck. It was perfect timing, and Doug turned out to be one special partner.

With a promise and a handshake, I told him I would be in Eugene to start work in August of that year. Both of us were starting from scratch with this venture, so there were no guarantees of salary, travel expenses or anything else – only the opportunity to create a specialty practice.

In good company

There were few medical specialists in Eugene back then, but that would soon change. I joined a wonderful "pledge class" of doctors who would bring medical specialization to the forefront of our medical community, including **Drs. James Walker**, nephrology, **Indulal Rughani**, pulmonary medicine, **Kirk Jacobson**, **Martin Jones**, and **Geoffrey Simmons**, internal medicine and intensive care, **Sid Cassell**, rheumatology, **Dieter Morich** and **Jim Fitzgibbons**, oncology and hematology, **Lee Michels**, radiology, and **Robert Jones**, allergy and immunology, to name a few. We joined many outstanding, established physicians in Eugene who kept us between the lines, and gave us new docs a dose of much needed humility.



Dr. Doug Walker

Building a dream

Fresh out of training and financially handicapped, Doug arranged for me to meet with a local banker. Surprisingly, it took all of 15 minutes for that signature and to acquire a startup loan. We were set to go.

Our two-man GI practice was located in a one-story office at Oakway Mall. We started with two employees, **Betty Coe**, front office, and **Norma Smith**, medical office assistant. Little did we know, Norma would be with us for 25 years.

Doug proved to be a fantastic mentor and partner, a superb clinician, and a kind man, loved by all his patients. He extended that same kindness to me throughout our 18-year partnership (Doug retired in 1995).

Doug and I took all our own call 24/7, except for weekends, which we alternated. Our practice grew quickly, and we soon added **Dr. John Haughom** in 1980. Being on call every third weekend seemed such a luxury. With John's arrival from the training program at UCSF, we needed more office space, and Sacred Heart had just finished the Physicians and Surgeons North building at the University Campus to accommodate our growing specialty community.

Expansion and growth

Suite 500 at the University Campus, which we remodeled and expanded three times, would serve us well until our move to RiverBend in 2008. At the end of our tenure there, we occupied the majority of the fifth floor – nearly 10,000 square feet. Someone (possibly **Suzie Remis**, our beloved nurse at the time), called our newfound trio "The Three Musketeers," a nickname that stuck for a decade, in spite of our increasing numbers.

Dr. Christianne Kratka arrived in 1988. Not only did she bring a great deal of new knowledge to the group, but her organizational skills transformed the way we did business. She continues to contribute in that arena and exemplifies the best in

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Dr. Gregory Knecht, windsurfing.

Meet Gregory Knecht, M.D.

Dr. Knecht co-founded Eugene Gastroenterology Associates in 1977, performing the first colonoscopies and endoscopic evaluations of the liver and pancreas in Eugene. Having such a varied and challenging job makes coming to work each day a new adventure, he says. In addition to a rewarding practice, Greg's passions include snowboarding, building and flying radio-controlled airplanes, and fly fishing, having served as president of the McKenzie Fly Fishers in 1980. His long-time love of surfing and windsurfing have lead him to Hawaii, Baja, Aruba, Fiji and the Columbia River Gorge, where he spends most summers. He and his lovely wife, Marilyn, have four daughters and two grandchildren who are a constant source of joy in their lives.





gastroenterology. After Tina's arrival, we had a progressive succession of wonderful new partners, including **Dr. Dan Phillips** in 1993 and **Dr. Craig Chamberlain** in 1995. Dr. Haughom made a career change, leaving Eugene GI in 1995, taking an administrative position at Sacred Heart in medical informatics. **Dr. Peter Kay** signed on in 1997. Peter started our endoscopic ultrasound program at Sacred Heart, which has since been expanded by **Dr. Jonathan Gonne**, our most recent acquisition.

Rounding out the team

LouAnn Elms, one of our valued, long-standing employees, came to me one day with news that she had met the next candidate for our group at a medical coding seminar. His name was **Dr. William "Duke" Wu**, and he was interested in Eugene. After we hired Duke, it became obvious why he was at that coding seminar. Duke not only demonstrated great GI skills, but he has also been responsible for a great majority of our successful business development.

Prior to Duke's and Peter's arrival, the group had discussed building and running our own endoscopy center, but didn't have the confidence to proceed. With Duke's leadership, we opened the Oregon Endoscopy Center on the third floor of the Physicians and Surgeons Building in the spring of 2002, with tremendous success.

In 2009, we combined our endoscopy center with our new offices on the fifth floor of the Northwest Specialty Clinics (NSC) building at RiverBend, with a combined total of 25,000 square feet of space.

Our last two "young guns," **Drs. Donald Yang** from UCSF and **Jonathan Gonne** from Mayo Clinic, were recruited to the practice in 2004 and 2006, respectively. The older GIs have found their youth, great humor and work ethic to be refreshing additions. Jonathan has expanded our endoscopic ultrasound services tremendously, and Donald has directed our capsule endoscopy services. We were also blessed to have an outstanding GI nurse

practitioner, **Kimberly Hanson, A.N.P.**, join our group in 2004, bringing our group to nine.

Looking back and ahead

So, here we are 35 years later: grown from two to nine providers, 1,000 square feet to 25,000, two employees to 75, and a couple major moves, which has propelled us into the 21st century and beyond.

When I started my practice, I knew every doctor in town, personally. Today, I'm delighted to say that there are too many for that to still be possible. We now have many talented and specialized physicians doing great work, to the benefit of our entire community. To be a part of this amazing growth, and to practice on the RiverBend campus with its associated technologies and facilities, has been an amazingly satisfying process for all of us.

Left: Co-founder Dr. Gregory Knecht has been with EGC since its inception in 1977. Center: Staff members enjoy crazy hat and tie day, 1983. Right: Current staff members with the longest tenure: Gale (28½ years) and LouAnn (28 years).

