



John F. Abitz

FEB 19, 1947 - AUG 3, 2025



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John Frederick Abitz, 78, of Fort Myers FL, passed away on August 3, 2025. Born on February 19, 1947, in Milwaukee, WI, John was the only child of Fred and Lydia Abitz. He attended Wauwatosa High School, played French horn and piano, and participated in the Boy Scouts and youth group at Bethany Baptist. In 1969, he earned his Bachelor of Music Education with an organ major at the Music Conservatory at Wheaton College (IL). Through Wheaton's ROTC program he was commissioned in the U.S. Army as a second lieutenant and served for two and a half years of which the last two were in Germany where he received an honorable discharge as a captain.

John had an epic sense of humor. When asked how he was doing, John would often quip, "I checked the obituaries and didn't see my name, so I'm doing great!" This could explain why he was once awarded Davison Optimist Club's Optimist of the Year Award. John was a pioneer in junior high choral music through the 1970's, bringing avant-garde and sacred genres to the forefront of music competitions, inspiring generation of music lovers through his teaching in Davison, Michigan and given the Teacher of the Year Award. He was an active member of the Davison Missionary Church, teaching Sunday school, leading Sunday school rallies, and serving as choral director there for many years. He attended Central Church of the Nazarene and also directed the choir at Calvary Presbyterian Church for a few years. Since moving to Florida he has attended The Village Church at Shell Point.

John was an expert memory maker and documentarian of life. As Director of Communications, Advertising and Incentives for Pioneer State Mutual Insurance Company in Flint, MI, he created unforgettable incentive trips, designed innovative publications, and helped reinvent the company's brand. Upon retirement in 2011, John continued pursuing his lifelong interests including family, reading, photography, collecting coins, autographs, and watches, and savoring gastronomic delights. True to his Wisconsin roots, he was an ice cream and frozen custard



Obituary

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connoisseur. Through the love of his dogs, Mimi and Betty Ann, John became a founding donor to Animal Saints Rescue Society, a nonprofit started by his son and daughter-in-law.

John is survived by his wife, Susan (Leet) Abitz, his two children, Joshua Ivey Abitz (Cynthia) and Karen Jesina (Ken), and his grandchildren, Lydia, Anabel and Ian Heinig.

A memorial service will be held at The Village Church Chapel, at Shell Point on Friday, August 22nd at 11:00am with a luncheon to follow.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Davison Missionary Church (<https://www.davisonmc.org/give>), The Village Church at Shell Point (<https://www.villagechurchshellpoint.org>), or Animal Saints Rescue Society (<https://animalsaints.org/donate>).

Arrangements are being handled by Fort Myers Memorial Gardens.




Events

John F. Abitz

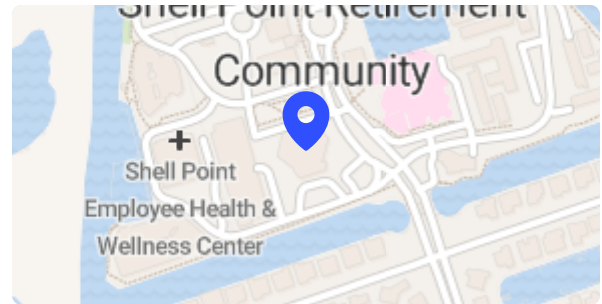
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Memorial Service

 **Friday**, August 22, 2025


 11:00 AM ET

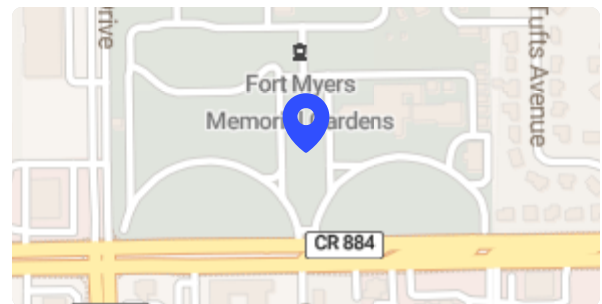
 **The Village Church**
15100 Shell Point Blvd, FT Myers FL 33908



Cemetery Details

 **Fort Myers Memorial Gardens Cemetery**
1589 Colonial Blvd, Fort Myers FL 33907

 **(239) 243-0014**





Tribute Wall

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Josh Ivey-Abitz posted:

You are invited to view the memorial service for John Abitz at this link...

<https://iplayerhd.com/player/video/2e17b792-f719-4b71-8cb7-8b0ad918f03d/share>

August 23 at 4:41 PM



Anonymous sent a Medium Dish Garden to the Abitz family.



August 20 at 3:04 PM



Anonymous planted a Memorial Tree in honor of John.



August 20 at 3:04 PM



Dan Flowers posted:

I will never forget walking down the stairs for my Jr. High choir try-out at Central Elementary in the spring of 1982 and meeting Mr. Abitz for the first time. He was as friendly as can be and took me through my little audition like a pro. I loved being in his choir class. I'll never forget when he rolled that VCR into choir class and showed us the video of Dave Bergman hitting 9 foul balls in a row before blasting a walk-off homer in the bottom of the 9th during the spring start of the Tigers' historic 1984 season. He thought we needed to see it, and I couldn't believe there was a machine that recorded tv shows? Wait, this happened last night and you recorded it on that machine there...and now we're watching it in choir?? This is incredible!! I could go on. He was just a friendly, stand-up, confident guy. He made choir something guys could feel like guys doing. He took us to Chicago. Plastered his room with positive thinking signs, taught us some great songs that I still sing today...40 years later (Sweet Gypsy Rose, One Voice, The Elements Song, The Gettysburg Address...I could go on and on). His daughter, Karen, was so lovely and sweet. His son was friendly and kind. He was just a wonderful man. Thanks so much for living a great life, sir. A life we can all learn from and be inspired by. Much love to the whole family. #SteadyOnDan Flowers Dan Flowers

August 18 at 3:48 PM



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RB

Rita Blackwell posted:

John was such a great person to work with for years. His sense of humor will be missed. RIP my friend

August 16 at 9:44 AM

JH

Jon Harpst posted:

One day we had gone to lunch and enough Chinese for five. In a state of food coma I told John of a place where meringue was a good five inches on both Lemon pie and coconut cream. We forced ourself to have desert. John was a stand up guy! A true friend. I will miss him, he was special

August 13 at 9:06 PM

KJ

Karen Jesina August 20 at 2:59 PM

yup that sounds just like him!

KS

Kennedy Sheryl posted:

I can't begin to share all that your dad meant to me. I was doubly blessed to have him as a teacher in select choir and Gals and Pals, and as an MSVMA Honors Choir Director. I had such low self-esteem in middle school, but your dad gave me a reason to view myself as talented. I still remember the words of praise he wrote in my yearbook. It gave me hope for my future. I did end up being a choral music teacher, taking the place of Sally Bird at the high school. Everyone assumes she was my choral influence, but far more so was your dad. I often chose repertoire I loved from middle school to teach my freshman girls. Once I took a typical John Abitz a-tonal, tone clustery, a capella piece to festival as a young, baby teacher. The judges were amazed at the abilities of my high school students to perform such a difficult piece. I laughed inside, knowing we had performed the same piece equally as well in 7th grade! Unlike many choral teachers, your dad had zero ego. He loved TEACHING, not just performing. I was blessed to keep up with him from time to time. He also kept up with me throughout my career in education and then in politics. All who had him were truly blessed. I felt this to an infinite power. One of the tone clusters in the song I referenced chanted, "Make a joyful noise to the Lord with thanksgiving." I know your dad, ever faithful, is doing that right now.

August 11 at 9:40 AM



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Lori Toews posted:

I was in Davison Jr. High choirs with Mr. Abitz from 1974-1976. He made a lasting impression with his fun, care, talent, the music he chose and investing in our lives. I still can sing some of the songs today. The most "unique" ... and never seen or heard again, was the wordless "clapping song" ... with a whole piece composed of different sounds made with our hands and mouths. He genuinely seemed to care and I appreciated his Christian influence. Our condolences to his family. Thanks for posting his "home-going" and a bit more of his life.

August 10 at 9:06 PM



Kimberly Biederman posted:

The sounds this man had to endure during his time as a teacher. At one point we had to go in a room with him and sing the birthday song. When I was finished he asked if I had a cold. I did not have a cold. I still can't sing, but I still do, lol.

August 10 at 8:51 PM



Al Williams posted:

Had Mr. Abitz for homeroom back at DJH. Our name for field day was Abitz Rabitz. Rest in Peace.

August 10 at 8:20 PM



Ann Dawe posted:

He was a great teacher. Great sense of humor. I had him for 2yrs. in the late 70's. What a fun time. We went to the Whiting Auditorium to perform. Had to make our own dresses. We all matched. Also made an album with select choir with all the songs we learned. To top that off ? He took us to cedar point at the end of the year. Best experience of our youth. 🙏 Saying a prayer for your family.

August 10 at 7:52 PM

KJ **Karen Jesina** August 20 at 2:58 PM
Cedar Point trips were the best!!



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DP

Donald Palmer shared a photo to the **Tribute Wall** album.

One of my very favorite teachers I had the pleasure of being in his choir class. He led us through raising the money for a trip to Chicago to compete against high school and college choirs! I will always remember him for his tenacity and ability to teach us to perform amazing concerts. He will be greatly missed. Thank you for your presence in my life Mr. Abitz.



August 10 at 7:45 PM

BF

Bethany Frank posted:

John-Mr. Abitz was my favorite teacher of all time. He ignited a passion for music that has never left me. He was the one that put me, Kim King and Sue Berry in a trio together in 8th grade and we continued singing together for the next 4 years. We were in each others Weddings and will always have that friendship even though the miles are great. He was a wonderful and kind man who always had an ear to listen and Always encouragement. I had him in middle school and he made his students feel like we could accomplish anything. I mean who ever heard of 7th and 8th grade girls singing in 4 part harmony. He believed in us and we did it. He became a father figure the past year as we reconnected and his emails got me through some crazy times, I will be forever grateful for the beautiful music and Bible verses and just good wisdom he shared! He was loved and will be missed. Beth Frank (Yoder)

August 10 at 7:37 PM

DF

David Flowers posted:

I was in Mr. Abitz' choir classes in 7th and 8th grades. Mr. Abitz made me feel seen. I'm so sad he's gone. What a special, special man.

August 10 at 10:13 AM

LL

Linda Luoma posted:

So sorry to hear of John's passing. We never spent much time together but when I think of him, I think of his smile and quick wit. I pray your memories bring you peace. Your cousin Linda Leet Luoma

August 9 at 11:50 AM



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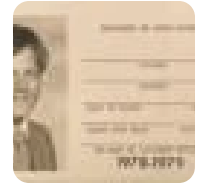


August 8 at 4:03 PM



Josh Ivey-Abitz shared a photo to the **Tribute Wall** album.

John Abitz's son, Josh, archived over 700 recordings of John's directing Davison Junior High choral performances from 1972 to 1984 on a YouTube channel called Davison Choir Archives. View it here... <https://m.youtube.com/@davisonchoirarchives>



August 8 at 3:02 PM



Media

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Donald Palmer shared a photo to the **Tribute Wall** album.

August 10 at 7:45 PM



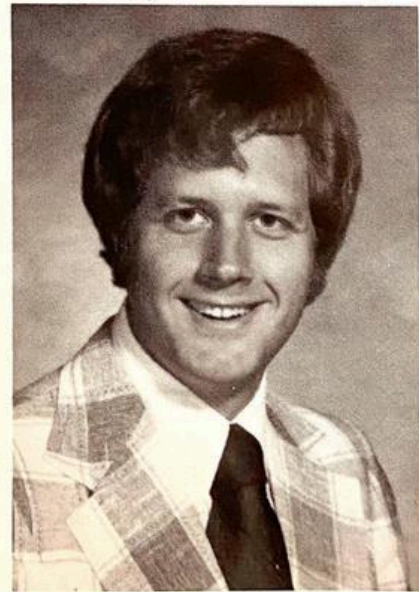


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August 8 at 4:03 PM

The choir and Mr. Abitz wish to thank MSVA for inviting us and the Davison Board of Education for allowing us to participate in the Mid-western Conference.

John Abitz graduated from the Wheaton College Conservatory of Music with a Bachelor of Music Education degree. After serving three years in the Army, he began teaching at the Davison Junior High School, and is now completing his sixth year there. He earned a Masters in Music degree at Michigan State University in 1976. Mr. Abitz is a lifetime member of ACDA and holds membership in MSVA where he is the co-manager of District III. Besides the Select Girl's Choir, he has three other performing choirs from the junior high which cumulatively involve 300 students on the 7th and 8th grade levels.





Media

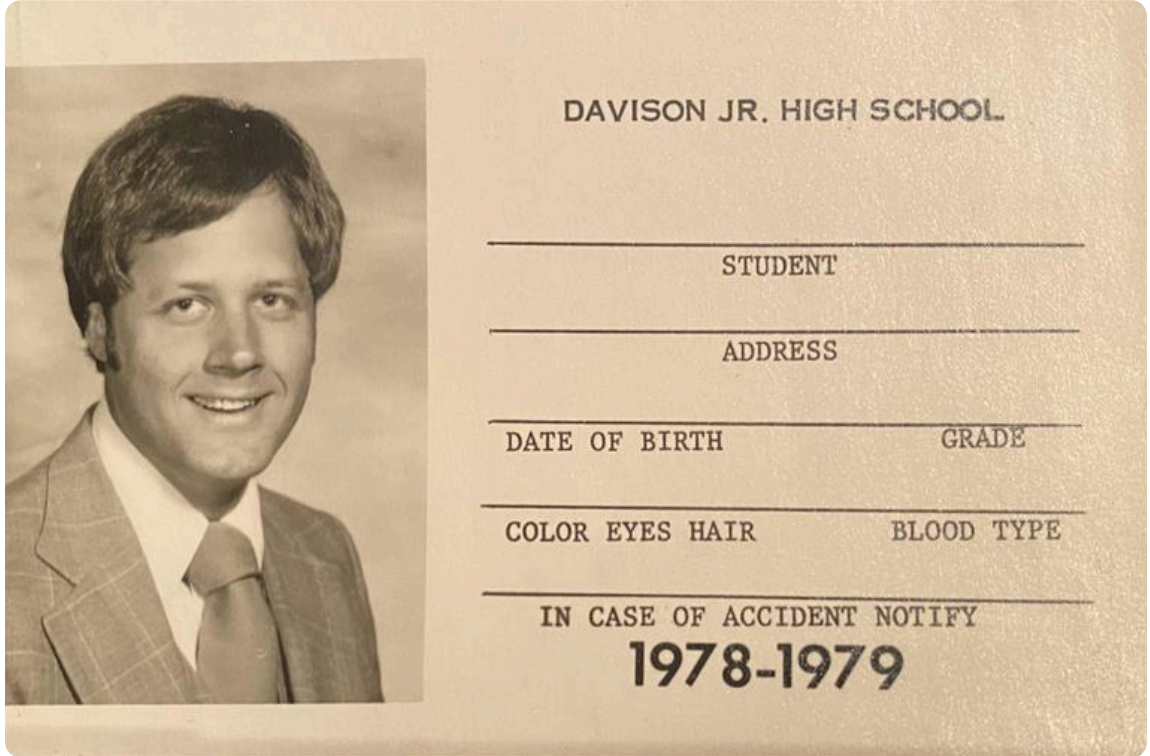
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August 8 at 3:02 PM





Memories only last if you share them

Join us in honoring John by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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