At the dawn of the 20th century, six women made history at the MU School of Medicine.

**Article by Janine Laurie Musick**

The dawn of the 20th century, six women made history at the MU School of Medicine. From the farm to psychiatry...

Anna Searcy, MD, became the first woman to graduate from the MU School of Medicine in 1900. She was in her late 70s and had no known relatives. She retired in 1960 at the age of 81.

She was the first woman to receive her medical degree from MU, came in 1897. In 1888, the school’s curriculum switched from a three-year to a four-year degree program. In 1901, construction of the school’s first hospital was completed. Two years later, a new building that held laboratories, lecture rooms and a medical library opened.

MU was rushing to join a nationwide movement to modernize medical education. But that was 100 years ago, when the School of Medicine bragged about the history of women in medicine. But many men believed with religious and scientific certainty that women lacked the intelligence and strength to be doctors. For a female physician, the antagonism “formed a situation of singular and painful loneliness, leaving her without support, respect or professional counsel,” Blackwell said.

Anna Searcy, MD, appears with fellow freshmen medical students in this 1897 yearbook photograph. In 1900, Searcy became the first woman to graduate from the MU School of Medicine.

Anna Searcy, MD, became the first woman to graduate from the MU School of Medicine. In 1900, Searcy became the first woman to graduate from the MU School of Medicine. She was in her late 70s and had no known relatives. She retired in 1960 at the age of 81.

Indeed, only 21 women received doctoral degrees of any kind in the United States in 1900, the year Anna Searcy, MD, became the first woman to earn a medical degree from MU. That was 20 years before women could vote and almost 50 years before a woman received a medical degree from Harvard University. Yet in 1900, MU School of Medicine Dean Andrew McInerney, MD, predicted all medical schools of any kind in the United States in 1900, the year Anna Searcy, MD, became the first woman to graduate from the MU School of Medicine.

“Anna Searcy, MD, appears with fellow freshmen medical students in this 1897 yearbook photograph. In 1900, Searcy became the first woman to graduate from the MU School of Medicine. In 1900, Searcy became the first woman to graduate from the MU School of Medicine. She was in her late 70s and had no known relatives. She retired in 1960 at the age of 81.”

Anna Searcy, MD, appears with fellow freshmen medical students in this 1897 yearbook photograph. In 1900, Searcy became the first woman to graduate from the MU School of Medicine.

Anna Searcy, MD, appears with fellow freshmen medical students in this 1897 yearbook photograph. In 1900, Searcy became the first woman to graduate from the MU School of Medicine.

Anna Searcy, MD, appears with fellow freshmen medical students in this 1897 yearbook photograph. In 1900, Searcy became the first woman to graduate from the MU School of Medicine.

Anna Searcy, MD, appears with fellow freshmen medical students in this 1897 yearbook photograph. In 1900, Searcy became the first woman to graduate from the MU School of Medicine. She was in her late 70s and had no known relatives. She retired in 1960 at the age of 81.

Anna Searcy, MD, appears with fellow freshmen medical students in this 1897 yearbook photograph. In 1900, Searcy became the first woman to graduate from the MU School of Medicine. She was in her late 70s and had no known relatives. She retired in 1960 at the age of 81.

Anna Searcy, MD, appears with fellow freshmen medical students in this 1897 yearbook photograph. In 1900, Searcy became the first woman to graduate from the MU School of Medicine.

Anna Searcy, MD, appears with fellow freshmen medical students in this 1897 yearbook photograph. In 1900, Searcy became the first woman to graduate from the MU School of Medicine. She was in her late 70s and had no known relatives. She retired in 1960 at the age of 81.

Anna Searcy, MD, appears with fellow freshmen medical students in this 1897 yearbook photograph. In 1900, Searcy became the first woman to graduate from the MU School of Medicine. She was in her late 70s and had no known relatives. She retired in 1960 at the age of 81.

Anna Searcy, MD, appears with fellow freshmen medical students in this 1897 yearbook photograph. In 1900, Searcy became the first woman to graduate from the MU School of Medicine. She was in her late 70s and had no known relatives. She retired in 1960 at the age of 81.

Anna Searcy, MD, appears with fellow freshmen medical students in this 1897 yearbook photograph. In 1900, Searcy became the first woman to graduate from the MU School of Medicine. She was in her late 70s and had no known relatives. She retired in 1960 at the age of 81.

Anna Searcy, MD, appears with fellow freshmen medical students in this 1897 yearbook photograph. In 1900, Searcy became the first woman to graduate from the MU School of Medicine. She was in her late 70s and had no known relatives. She retired in 1960 at the age of 81.

Anna Searcy, MD, appears with fellow freshmen medical students in this 1897 yearbook photograph. In 1900, Searcy became the first woman to graduate from the MU School of Medicine. She was in her late 70s and had no known relatives. She retired in 1960 at the age of 81.

Anna Searcy, MD, appears with fellow freshmen medical students in this 1897 yearbook photograph. In 1900, Searcy became the first woman to graduate from the MU School of Medicine. She was in her late 70s and had no known relatives. She retired in 1960 at the age of 81.
Before her death in 1969, Dunaway’s compassion for her patients—not only those who were mentally ill—was captured in her 1964 book Letters From Dr. Jane, a compilation of letters she had written to a nephew who wanted to become a physician. “The purpose of these stories,” she wrote, “is to try, just try, to help a few people to understand what a very thin line there is between the emotionally disturbed, who seek help, and the remainder of us who are normal ... erratic, economic, bigoted, biased, superstitious persons who are dependent upon alcohol, tobacco, transvestites or other people and who need help but are too arrogant to recognize the fact. “The people with whom I’ve been dealing are just people, usually original, individualistic, never boring, sometimes charming or entertaining and always interesting.”

Fast-paced practice in St. Louis
Grace Scholz Mountjoy, MD, graduated from the School of Medicine in 1906 at the age of 25. During her time in medical school, she lived in the home of a local reverend and married his son, John Mountjoy. She practiced ophthalmology in Columbia with Guy Noyes, MD, who became dean of the School of Medicine. In 1910, she had a son, Philip, who became a country doctor.

Missouri’s medicine woman
While Mountjoy practiced in the city, her classmate Ruth Seevers, MD, took a train home to the small town of Osceola, Mo. Seevers’ father, a physician, met her at the train, and they immediately visited her first patient. It was familiar territory for the new doctor. As a child, Seevers drove her father’s horses between visits to patients. Once, her father fished in his pocket and got back in the boat. The man was very kind, “John Mountjoy recalls. “She loved to talk and carry on about her practice.”

Missouri’s medical review
After she received her medical degree in 1908, Seevers boarded the Transcontinental Railroad. Those tracks carried Brewer home after she received her medical degree in 1908. Brewer was at one time the only physician in Osceola. In 1882, she became the first baby born in Ridgeway, Mo. At the time, men were dropping their horses and their dog—a constant companion—onto the streetcar line. She took over his practice and ran it for nearly 50 years. Her office was on a cobblestone street just off the streetcar line.

Missouri’s medical review
By 1917, Seevers bought her first car, one she had to crank on and off “my arms turned black and blue,” she said. From the tales of her run-ins with robbers and marines and the intoxication of the intoxicated father dragged out by the horses’ feet, she saw the worst of Missouri. “I think, well, that’s all right, but he doesn’t know anything about the country. I heard country folks call my father Doc all my life.”

From top, Grace Scholz Mountjoy, MD ’06, as she appeared in the age of 91. With Guy Noyes, MD, who became dean of the School of Medicine. Grace Scholz Mountjoy, MD, graduated from the School of Medicine in 1906 at the age of 25. During her time in medical school, she lived in the home of a local reverend and married his son, John Mountjoy. They practiced ophthalmology in Columbia with Guy Noyes, MD, who became dean of the School of Medicine. In 1910, she had a son, Philip, who became a country doctor.

Missouri’s medical review
After she received her medical degree in 1908, Seevers boarded the Transcontinental Railroad. Those tracks carried Brewer home after she received her medical degree in 1908. Brewer was at one time the only physician in Osceola. In 1882, she became the first baby born in Ridgeway, Mo. At the time, men were dropping their horses and their dog—a constant companion—onto the streetcar line. She took over his practice and ran it for nearly 50 years. Her office was on a cobblestone street just off the streetcar line.

Missouri’s medical review
By 1917, Seevers bought her first car, one she had to crank on and off “my arms turned black and blue,” she said. From the tales of her run-ins with robbers and marines and the intoxication of the intoxicated father dragged out by the horses’ feet, she saw the worst of Missouri. “I think, well, that’s all right, but he doesn’t know anything about the country. I heard country folks call my father Doc all my life.”

From top, Grace Scholz Mountjoy, MD ’06, as she appeared in the age of 91. With Guy Noyes, MD, who became dean of the School of Medicine. Grace Scholz Mountjoy, MD, graduated from the School of Medicine in 1906 at the age of 25. During her time in medical school, she lived in the home of a local reverend and married his son, John Mountjoy. They practiced ophthalmology in Columbia with Guy Noyes, MD, who became dean of the School of Medicine. In 1910, she had a son, Philip, who became a country doctor.

Missouri’s medical review
After she received her medical degree in 1908, Seevers boarded the Transcontinental Railroad. Those tracks carried Brewer home after she received her medical degree in 1908. Brewer was at one time the only physician in Osceola. In 1882, she became the first baby born in Ridgeway, Mo. At the time, men were dropping their horses and their dog—a constant companion—onto the streetcar line. She took over his practice and ran it for nearly 50 years. Her office was on a cobblestone street just off the streetcar line.

Missouri’s medical review
By 1917, Seevers bought her first car, one she had to crank on and off “my arms turned black and blue,” she said. From the tales of her run-ins with robbers and marines and the intoxication of the intoxicated father dragged out by the horses’ feet, she saw the worst of Missouri. “I think, well, that’s all right, but he doesn’t know anything about the country. I heard country folks call my father Doc all my life.”

From top, Grace Scholz Mountjoy, MD ’06, as she appeared in the age of 91. With Guy Noyes, MD, who became dean of the School of Medicine. Grace Scholz Mountjoy, MD, graduated from the School of Medicine in 1906 at the age of 25. During her time in medical school, she lived in the home of a local reverend and married his son, John Mountjoy. They practiced ophthalmology in Columbia with Guy Noyes, MD, who became dean of the School of Medicine. In 1910, she had a son, Philip, who became a country doctor.
desk holds some of her...Ridgeway, Mo., and Lake Brewer, Brewer’s alma mater. She was, after all, the first office. who has saved several medical items from Brewer’s “Auntie Lake was the pillar of the town, ” says Guffey, came to her home for advice, comfort and medication. Her mark in 1958. When she was 82, patients still medical groups. She stopped delivering babies in 1940 teacher, a business adviser and a member of many...teacher into her office as he walked...master into her office as he walked. In the early days of Brewer’s practice, people would pick her up in a horse and buggy, bury her in lap robes and put a warm brick at her feet. “They’d take her out in the boondocks to deliver a baby, ” Guffey says. “Any time of the day or night, she’d go to deliver a baby. Someone would come to the door and say, ‘Hurry, Doc Lake, Sarah Jane’s really bad, ‘ ” Guffey says. In the early days of Brewer’s practice, people would pick her up in a horse and buggy, bury her in lap robes and put a warm brick at her feet. “They’d take her out in the boondocks to deliver a baby, ” Guffey says. “Any time of the day or night, she’d go to deliver a baby. “I remember all of us (sitting) at the table, and someone would come to the door and say, ‘Hurry, Doc Lake, Sarah Jane’s really bad, ‘ ” Guffey says. “She would leave her dinner and take care of whatever it was.” Brewer was the city physician, a Sunday school teacher; a business adviser and a member of many medical groups. She stopped delivering babies in 1940 but practiced medicine at least until her 50-year career mark in 1958. When she was 82, patients still came to her home for advice, comfort and medication. “Auntie Lake was the pillar of the town, ” says Guffey, who has saved several medical items from Brewer’s office. The office also displayed memorabilia from Brewer’s alma mater. She was, after all, the first woman to hold both a bachelor’s degree and a medical degree from MU. She also was an enthusiastic member of the women’s basketball team. Her 1963 yearbook photograph was accompanied by the statement: “Amm. To be a basketball coach.” Each spring, Brewer returned to MU for alumni reunions. “She did much more than treat the ill and injured,” an MU alumnus and former patient said when Brewer died in 1967. “She was a friend and inspiration to the young people of our community. Many people scattered throughout the world, myself included, can thank Dr. Lake for the encouragement they received to go on to college and make something from what God gave you.”

Pathology and practice in Montana

Caroline McGill, PhD, MD, and Ruth Brewe were classmates in medical school until McGill changed her focus to teaching and research. McGill, who may have been the School of Medicine’s first female faculty member, was teaching anatomy at MU as early as 1903. By the time she received her doctorate in anatomy and physiology from the school in 1908, she had published five articles, three of them in prestigious German journals.

Educational value was a priority in McGill’s family. As a girl in Laclede County, Mo., she and her siblings trapped and sold rabbits to save money for college. During the hourly horseback ride from the family farm to school, McGill passed the time by riding backward and reading a book propped up on the horse’s rump. At the age of 17, she got a job teaching elementary school, staying with a family in a one-room cabin and sharing a bed with the family’s children. She taught the six-month winter session to earn enough money to attend high school in the spring. In 1901, the high school awarded her a teaching degree. Later that year at the age of 21, McGill arrived at MU with three calcas dreses, $150 and her mother’s handwritten recipes for dessert concoctions, which included: “Beat Beat Beat Beat and beat until you beat no more.” McGill used the recipe, as well as chopping wood and doing light housekeeping for faculty members, to pay for expenses during her first year of medical school. The next year she accepted a zoology teaching assistantship at the University. During her time at the School of Medicine, McGill spent one summer studying pathology at the University of Chicago and was granted a fellowship for a summer of study at the Woods Hole Zoological Lab in Massachusetts, now the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute. After returning from Woods Hole, she used a Sarah Berlin Fellowship to travel and study for one year in Europe. “Miss McGill certainly deserves the great honor that she has received, for she is the hardest worker that I ever knew,” said Clarence Jackson, MD, senior dean of medicine at MU, when McGill received the fellowship. “She does twice the amount of studying that an average student does. She further deserves this honor because she has worked her way through medical school.” When McGill returned to Missouri in 1910, she had to choose between accepting a full professorship at the School of Medicine or moving to Montana to serve as that state’s first trained pathologist. She chose the latter and spent two years doing lab work and trying to establish basic sanitation in the frontier town of Butte. She then earned her medical degree at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, receiving the degree in two years instead of the standard four.

In 1916, at the age of 37, McGill returned to Butte and hung her shingle. The city was plagued by labor battles, crime and diseases common in mining towns. She treated patients with diabetes, tuberculosis and influenza. There was a nursing shortage, so McGill would sit by her patients’ bedsides giving what comfort she could. That may have inspired her to help establish a nursing school at the local hospital. If a woman couldn’t afford to pay for tuition at the school, McGill would count out the cash. McGill traveled by horse to miners’ cramped and unsanitary houses until 1918, when she bought a car. She became a familiar figure plowing through the muddy streets of Butte wearing her ever-present hat and a coat made for a man. She would drive as far as 300 miles to deliver a baby, then set up her portable pharmacy and let word spread that she was in the area. She’d consult with anyone who showed up at the door, conducting minor kitchen surgeries and dispensing medicine while she waited for the baby to appear.

McGill never married. Instead, she divided her time among her three passions — medicine, which she practiced until 1956, collecting artifacts and outdoor activities. “I don’t believe a woman can be a full-time doctor, a full-time wife and a full-time mother and do all three well,” McGill said. “I chose medicine.”

As an avid hunter and fisher, McGill loved nature and surrounded herself with like-minded people. In 1936, she bought a 320-acre ranch, which she opened to friends, family members and patients. She owned more than 4,200 acres, all preserved for Montana wildlife, her home in 1959 at the age of 79.

Before her death, McGill donated her substantial collections and quite a bit of money to establish what has become the Museum of the Rockies at Montana State University in Bozeman. The museum recently created a special exhibit and 75-page catalog about McGill. Both are titled An Extraordinary Life.
Making their mark

From the 1960s through the 1980s, MU produced female physicians who would go where few if any women had gone before. They pursued specialized training, entered the ranks of leadership and made their voices heard in professional organizations. At the same time, they became wives, mothers and role models for the women who would follow in their footsteps.

From the ‘60s

Elizabeth Plogsted James, MD ’65

During her interviews for admission to the School of Medicine, Elizabeth Plogsted James, MD ’65, thought being a woman might be a problem at MU. Five male faculty members were firing questions at James—a single woman with no children—when one of the men asked her how she could raise five children when she had to be on call all night. “This guy had been on my case because of my gender throughout the entire interview, and by the time he got to that question, I was irritated,” she says. “I told him I’d never been in that situation, but if I were, I would be resourceful enough to handle it. Then he got quiet, and I thought I had just cut my throat.”

Today, James is a high-ranking member of the full-time faculty at the School of Medicine. She is director of neonatal and perinatal medicine, a position she has held since 1971, and serves as a professor of child health and obstetrics and gynecology. She also has been instrumental in the development of MU’s neonatal intensive care unit and neonatal transport program.

“I have always felt that in this setting, people are treated according to their abilities, not their gender,” James says. “If you are a competent student, resident or faculty member, people recognize that. It would have been difficult not to recognize James throughout her higher education. She was the first white woman to enroll full time at Lincoln University, a historically black college in her hometown of Jefferson City, Mo. “I didn’t think about being the only white person. I was there to learn. That approach carried over to my days in medical school,” she says.

“I was always aware that I stuck out like a sore thumb to patients, residents and faculty members, but it wasn’t uncomfortable because of the relationship I developed with my classmates,” James adds. “We pulled together pretty quickly because it was clear that if we didn’t pull together, we would fall apart.”

After completing a fellowship at the University of Colorado in Denver, James spent more than seven years as the only neonatologist at MU. Another neonatologist arrived about the time James’ daughter was born in 1978, allowing the new mother to take some time away from work. Also that year, James’ mother retired and offered to help care for the child. “Female physicians who don’t have that kind of support—and it’s hard to buy that kind of support—tend to find that they must drop out of the advancement loop for several years if they have children,” says James, wife of Ronald James, MD ’65, and mother of two. “It’s a difficulty that is built into gender.”

E. Dorinda Loeffel Shelley, MD ’66

Who should resign? That’s the question E. Dorinda Loeffel Shelley, MD ’66, and her husband faced when they got married in 1960. Each was the chair of a dermatology department, but there was more to their tales. She was the only female chair of dermatology in the United States. On the other hand, he ran a large department at the University of Pennsylvania, home of the first medical school in the nation. “My husband very graciously gave up his chair to become one of my professors at the branch of the University of Illinois College of Medicine in Peoria,” Shelley says. “I didn’t want to leave the residency program I was trying to start and loved living on a 60-acre farm.”

Shelley and her husband, Walter Shelley, MD, PhD, worked together until they retired in 1997 from the Medical College of Ohio in Toledo. During their 14 years as professors at the college, she served as chief of the division of dermatology. “I wanted my students to learn that medicine is more than a science, so I always tried to show them how to be sympathetic and cut to the chase,” Shelley says.

Teaching medicine ran a close second to Shelley’s first love—writing about medicine. A revised version of the Shelley’s 1986 textbook, Advanced Dermatologic Therapy, is scheduled to be released next spring at the American Academy of Dermatology’s annual meeting. The Shelleys also are well-known for writing a diary that contained a daily record of their clinical practice and family life from 1990 to 1995. The diary was published in a series of more than 60 articles that appeared in the medical journal Cutis. “People were more interested in our family than in our clinic,” Shelley says. “They would come up to us at meetings and ask us about our three children.”

Making room for women: Barbara Buchanan McCance, MD ’66, shares a microscope with a fellow student in this 1963 yearbook photograph. Today, she is a retired child and adolescent psychiatrist in Belton, Mo., and the wife of Andrew McCance, MD, BS ’51, ’53.

Frustration for all: After showing disappointment with a lab experiment in this 1961 yearbook photograph, Cathy Jarvis, MD ‘59, became an internist in Florissant, Mo.
Many female pathologists choose careers in academic medicine, but few have reached the same level of leadership as pediatric pathologists Carole Vogler, MD ’78, professor and vice chair of pathology at Saint Louis University. Shortly after gaining the university as an assistant professor of pathology and pediatrics in 1985, Vogler began studying a lysosomal storage disease that had been discovered at the university by William Sly, MD. Vogler uses a murine model of the disease — called MPS VII, or Sly Syndrome — to test experimental therapies, which include enzyme replacement, bone marrow and stem cell transplantation, and gene therapy. She collaborates with investigators working with the MPS VII model at Washington University in St. Louis as well as scientists at the Jackson Laboratory in Bar Harbor, Maine.

Outside the lab, Vogler keeps in touch with medical students and residents as director of the residency program in pathology and a faculty member of the Freshman support group. She places a high value on her contact with students and residents and on mentoring. “Every physician needs a mentor, but there are not enough women leaders in academic medicine to serve as mentors,” Vogler says. “There is a glass ceiling in medicine, but I also think women in general are less interested in leadership positions than men. Women are less driven by the need for power and more interested in the caring aspects of medicine and their families.”

For a woman to balance a family and a career, it’s essential that she find a husband who shares her values, adds Vogler, who is married to Gary Livissian, MD ’78. It was a love of science that attracted Vogler to pathology after she earned a bachelor’s degree from the St. Louis College of Pharmacy. If she had taken her grandmother’s advice about progressing to medical school, Vogler’s research on topics related to pediatric pathology would not have appeared later in the New England Journal of Medicine or the proceedings of the National Institute of Sciences. “My grandmother said I couldn’t possibly go to medical school because I was a woman, that I was making a mistake,” she recalls.

Today, Vogler acknowledges a need for more women to achieve the rank of dean, assistant dean, department chair and division director at medical schools. When women take on leadership roles, she says, they prove they can be as effective as leaders who are men. “Women and men handle situations completely differently. For example, women tend to be consensus builders, and men tend to give orders,” Vogler explains. “We have a female medical school dean at Saint Louis University who is an effective leader, and it’s clear that her leadership style is very different from a man’s style.”

From the ‘80s

Carole Vogler, MD ’78

From her medical school days through her rise in the ranks of organized medicine, Jean Edwards Holt, MD ’72, has stayed at the top of her profession. Holt was the first woman to graduate at the top of her class at the School of Medicine since the school’s four-year degree program was re-established in 1956. Today, she is the first woman to serve as the Southern Medical Association’s counselor from Texas. She also is presently being considered for the presidency of the association, which has not had a woman president since it formed in 1906.

Shortly after Holt completed her internship and residency training at MU, she became a faculty member at the University of Texas Health Science Center in San Antonio. From 1990 to 1991, she served as acting chair of the Department of Ophthalmology. She now serves as a clinical professor for the department and maintains a busy private practice.

“I’ve never had any doors closed on me because I’m a woman, but there is still a glass ceiling that needs to be broken in some areas of medicine, particularly academia,” Holt says. “My joke is that it’s all going to end because the professors now have daughters in medical school.”

AFounding member of the health center’s Women’s Faculty Association, Holt holds a reception for female faculty members and medical students each year in her private office. “I always tell young female medical students that they can be a first-class anything, but they can never be a first-rate man,” says Holt, who also chairs a women’s committee for her county medical society. “Tell them not to try to beat a man at his game. Be a woman, and be proud of it.”

Of all her accomplishments, Holt is most proud of her marriage to G. Richard Holt, MD ’70, and their three children. “I don’t want any one telling young women they can’t have a family and a career in medicine,” Holt says. “I’m very proud of my career, and my children are proud of it, too. My children have always understood that the only time they don’t come first is when I’m committed to surgery.”

In 1999, Holt’s career took a new direction. She received a masters degree from the health-care administration department at Trinity University in San Antonio. An adjunct professor for the department, Holt has taught classes, written articles and given presentations across the country to help physicians better understand the business of medicine.

“About 10 percent of health-care business CEOs are physicians, and only a handful of them are women,” Holt says.

Holt was the first woman to graduate at the top of her class at the School of Medicine since the school’s four-year degree program was re-established in 1956. Today, she is the first woman to serve as the Southern Medical Association’s counselor from Texas. She also is presently being considered for the presidency of the association, which has not had a woman president since it formed in 1906.

Shortly after Holt completed her internship and residency training at MU, she became a faculty member at the University of Texas Health Science Center in San Antonio. From 1990 to 1991, she served as acting chair of the Department of Ophthalmology. She now serves as a clinical professor for the department and maintains a busy private practice.

“I’ve never had any doors closed on me because I’m a woman, but there is still a glass ceiling that needs to be broken in some areas of medicine, particularly academia,” Holt says. “My joke is that it’s all going to end because the professors now have daughters in medical school.”

A founding member of the health center’s Women’s Faculty Association, Holt holds a reception for female faculty members and medical students each year in her private office. “I always tell young female medical students that they can be a first-class anything, but they can never be a first-rate man,” says Holt, who also chairs a women’s committee for her county medical society. “Tell them not to try to beat a man at his game. Be a woman, and be proud of it.”

Of all her accomplishments, Holt is most proud of her marriage to G. Richard Holt, MD ’70, and their three children. “I don’t want any one telling young women they can’t have a family and a career in medicine,” Holt says. “I’m very proud of my career, and my children are proud of it, too. My children have always understood that the only time they don’t come first is when I’m committed to surgery.”

In 1999, Holt’s career took a new direction. She received a master’s degree from the health-care administration department at Trinity University in San Antonio. An adjunct professor for the department, Holt has taught classes, written articles and given presentations across the country to help physicians better understand the business of medicine.

“About 10 percent of health-care business CEOs are physicians, and only a handful of them are women,” Holt says.

Holt was the first woman to graduate at the top of her class at the School of Medicine since the school’s four-year degree program was re-established in 1956. Today, she is the first woman to serve as the Southern Medical Association’s counselor from Texas. She also is presently being considered for the presidency of the association, which has not had a woman president since it formed in 1906.

Shortly after Holt completed her internship and residency training at MU, she became a faculty member at the University of Texas Health Science Center in San Antonio. From 1990 to 1991, she served as acting chair of the Department of Ophthalmology. She now serves as a clinical professor for the department and maintains a busy private practice.

“I’ve never had any doors closed on me because I’m a woman, but there is still a glass ceiling that needs to be broken in some areas of medicine, particularly academia,” Holt says. “My joke is that it’s all going to end because the professors now have daughters in medical school.”

A founding member of the health center’s Women’s Faculty Association, Holt holds a reception for female faculty members and medical students each year in her private office. “I always tell young female medical students that they can be a first-class anything, but they can never be a first-rate man,” says Holt, who also chairs a women’s committee for her county medical society. “Tell them not to try to beat a man at his game. Be a woman, and be proud of it.”

Of all her accomplishments, Holt is most proud of her marriage to G. Richard Holt, MD ’70, and their three children. “I don’t want any one telling young women they can’t have a family and a career in medicine,” Holt says. “I’m very proud of my career, and my children are proud of it, too. My children have always understood that the only time they don’t come first is when I’m committed to surgery.”

In 1999, Holt’s career took a new direction. She received a master’s degree from the health-care administration department at Trinity University in San Antonio. An adjunct professor for the department, Holt has taught classes, written articles and given presentations across the country to help physicians better understand the business of medicine.

“About 10 percent of health-care business CEOs are physicians, and only a handful of them are women,” Holt says.

Holt was the first woman to graduate at the top of her class at the School of Medicine since the school’s four-year degree program was re-established in 1956. Today, she is the first woman to serve as the Southern Medical Association’s counselor from Texas. She also is presently being considered for the presidency of the association, which has not had a woman president since it formed in 1906.

Shortly after Holt completed her internship and residency training at MU, she became a faculty member at the University of Texas Health Science Center in San Antonio. From 1990 to 1991, she served as acting chair of the Department of Ophthalmology. She now serves as a clinical professor for the department and maintains a busy private practice.

“I’ve never had any doors closed on me because I’m a woman, but there is still a glass ceiling that needs to be broken in some areas of medicine, particularly academia,” Holt says. “My joke is that it’s all going to end because the professors now have daughters in medical school.”

A founding member of the health center’s Women’s Faculty Association, Holt holds a reception for female faculty members and medical students each year in her private office. “I always tell young female medical students that they can be a first-class anything, but they can never be a first-rate man,” says Holt, who also chairs a women’s committee for her county medical society. “Tell them not to try to beat a man at his game. Be a woman, and be proud of it.”

Of all her accomplishments, Holt is most proud of her marriage to G. Richard Holt, MD ’70, and their three children. “I don’t want any one telling young women they can’t have a family and a career in medicine,” Holt says. “I’m very proud of my career, and my children are proud of it, too. My children have always understood that the only time they don’t come first is when I’m committed to surgery.”

In 1999, Holt’s career took a new direction. She received a master’s degree from the health-care administration department at Trinity University in San Antonio. An adjunct professor for the department, Holt has taught classes, written articles and given presentations across the country to help physicians better understand the business of medicine.

“About 10 percent of health-care business CEOs are physicians, and only a handful of them are women,” Holt says.
For Ann Peick, MD ‘81, there’s an identity crisis that comes with being a surgeon. Some people don’t know how to react when Annie Peick — the friendly, recipe-swapping mother of two — transforms into Dr. Peick, the physician who’s all business about patient care.

“If a male doctor wants something done, it gets done without question. If I want something done, I’m cranky or a number of other things I don’t care to repeat,” Peick says. “I respond by saying that the problem isn’t Dr. Peick — it’s a problem with patient care. It’s like Harry Truman said: ‘I never gave anybody hell. I just told the truth, and they thought it was hell’.”

Peick, who has a private practice in St. Louis, makes no apologies for being aggressive about her goals. That attitude helped her get into medical school after she was initially turned down. Faculty member Elizabeth James, MD ’65, encouraged Peick to keep trying because the school viewed persistence as a form of motivation. “I told them that they’d see me on their doorstep until I was through menopause,” Peick says. “I think I got in the following year because they didn’t want to put up with me that long.”

Before completing her fellowship at MU in 1987, Peick got married, had a child and served as chief resident. “Even when I was pregnant, I toted my own weight just like everybody else,” she says. “I wasn’t treated any better or worse because I was a woman.”

That changed when Peick left MU to become an assistant professor at another university. Even the residents there were hostile toward female surgeons. “People looked at me like I had a third eye, like I should have been in the kitchen, barefoot and pregnant,” Peick says. “It was an eye-opening experience.”

After nine years of private practice in Poplar Bluff, Mo., Peick returned to her hometown of St. Louis in 1998. She currently is the director of trauma services at St. Anthony’s Medical Center and serves on the staff of the Level I trauma center at St. John’s Mercy Medical Center. Peick recently was appointed to the board of trustees of the American Society of General Surgeons and has held a variety of high-ranking positions with the Missouri State Medical Association and the Missouri State Surgical Society.

Now in a city where patients have many health-care options, Peick says being a female physician can be good for business. Women are the primary health-care consumers, and they often prefer to be treated by another woman.

“Women tell me about all types of problems, many of which I can do nothing about, but I think 90 percent of helping them is taking the time to listen and let them know they’re not crazy. I think that’s part of the art of medicine,” Peick says. “Maybe I’d act the same if I were Dr. Andy Peick, but I’m not sure.”

Cover girl: Missouri Medical Review first reported on women in medicine at MU in a 1982 issue that featured this photograph of family practice resident Joyce Floyd, MD ‘80, on the cover. In the cover article, Floyd said, “Now there are so many women residents that I seldom feel conspicuous.”

For Patricia Wetherill, MD ‘87, there’s an identity crisis that comes with being a surgeon. Some people don’t know how to react when Annie Wetherill, MD ‘87, crossed the globe while fighting a disease that now infects more than 34 million people.

Wetherill serves as director of the AIDS and Palliative Care Consultancy Program at the Alfred Hospital in Melbourne, Australia, one of the first countries in the world to have reported AIDS cases. The program is available to all people dying of AIDS in the state of Victoria. It’s Wetherill’s job to coordinate their care in the hospital, their communities or their homes.

“There’s so much energy in the treatment of HIV. It’s constantly cutting-edge medicine and cutting-edge technology,” Wetherill says. “It’s easy to get caught up in the fight against AIDS because you are involved with a very dynamic group of people who are working at a rapid pace.”

When Wetherill first encountered HIV patients as an intern at San Joaquin General Hospital in Stockton, Calif., the medical community knew much less about the disease than it does today. Few treatments were available, and research had yet to show how quickly the virus mutates.

“We were blissfully ignorant back then,” Wetherill recalls. “We thought we just needed a few more medications, and then we would have a cure.”

After Wetherill completed her residency at MU, she pursued a fellowship at Yale University in New Haven, Conn., where she was part of the school’s AIDS Clinical Trial Group. A principal investigator of several trials, Wetherill continued her research at Yale and served as an HIV specialist in surrounding health-care facilities until 1998, when an article on the group’s research that Wetherill co-authored appeared in the New England Journal of Medicine.

In 1999, Wetherill moved to Melbourne with her husband, Todd Baumgarten, MD ‘86, director of pharmaceutical research and development for Bristol-Myers Squibb in Australia and New Zealand. They have two children. “There have been times since I had the children that I have altered my hours and had less of a career,” Wetherill says. “You can’t do everything if you choose to have a family.”

Wetherill continues to make time in her schedule for mentoring, something she benefited from during her time at MU. She participated in a women’s internal medicine group at Yale and now advises residents in Australia.

“As females, we need support from each other, and we need to serve as role models for each other,” Wetherill says. “There’s no book on how to be a woman in medicine.”