

## SUE POPE — A COLLEGE OF MEDICINE ORIGINAL

by Chuck Brown



Several years ago, Sue Pope waited in a clinic room to be seen by a physician. When the doctor walked in the room, Pope took one look at him, shook her head and laughed.

The doctor was a former UNMC student whom Pope remembered as being quite the joker in his medical school days.

“In my job, you get to know the students on a pretty personal level,” Pope said. “It can lead to some interesting interactions when we see each other in the real world.”

In her more than 40 years in the College of Medicine, Pope’s known all kinds of students — jokers, ultra serious types and thousands who fall in somewhere in the middle.

“It’s to the point that I have seen former students retired and their children are coming through medical school now,” Pope said. “That makes me feel old.”

Her official title is academic affairs program coordinator but her de facto role is as the “den mother” of the college.

From the students’ first day in the gross anatomy lab all the way through to Match Day and commencement in their fourth year, Pope makes sure their important paperwork and procedural activities are completed.

“Sue was great,” said Michael Schafer, M.D., an Omaha area gastroenterologist and a 2002 College of Medicine alumnus. “She took good care of us and made sure we got all our I’s dotted and T’s crossed.”

Pope has seen a lot change at the college since 1970.

About 5,000 students have become physicians. She has worked under eight full-time deans, including UNMC Chancellor Harold M. Maurer, M.D., and the recently arrived Bradley Britigan, M.D.

She remembers when fourth-year medical students used to attend a champagne breakfast before Match Day.

“Everyone was, should I say, ‘very relaxed’ when the ceremony began,” Pope said.

In 2008, she helped move the college into its first full-time home, the Michael F. Sorrell Center for Health Science Education.

In fact, it could be argued that Pope is one of the few constants in the college and she wants it to stay that way for quite a while.

“I’m having fun and I still find my job rewarding,” Pope said. “To know that I play a part in helping these students become doctors is still important to me.

“I’ve made it past 40 years and I think it would be neat to go ahead and make it 50.” 