

CLASSMATES PROUD OF ALMA MATER

by Lisa Spellman

MUCH AT UNMC HAS CHANGED SINCE MURIEL FRANK, M.D., AUSTIN MUTZ, M.D., AND HARRY MCFADDEN JR., M.D., GRADUATED IN 1943.

One is the vast front lawn and magnificent staircase that greeted medical students as they entered University Hospital. Gone, too, is the accelerated curriculum put in place during World War II to graduate more doctors.

What hasn't changed, the trio said during their 65-year reunion, is the role UNMC plays in Nebraska.

As the state's only public academic health science center, UNMC is even more critical to the state's health care workforce and the region's vibrancy. That is evident with each graduate, faculty recruit, research discovery and new building.

"UNMC was vital to the region in 1943 just as it is today because of the doctors and nurses trained there," Dr. McFadden said. "Today that importance has increased as new disciplines have come into being, such as those in the School of Allied Health Professions. But the goals and responsibilities remain the same and that is to provide well-educated physicians, nurses, pharmacists, dentists and allied health professionals."

The three friends graduated from the University of Nebraska College of Medicine the same year 7 million Americans, nearly 10 percent of the population, were involved in World War II in Europe and the South Pacific.

People on the home front did everything they could to contribute to the war effort. Nearly every student enrolled in the medical school had either enlisted in the Army or Navy medical corps, they said.

"Almost everyone was drafted into the army," Dr. Mutz said. "All of the young instructors, those in their 30s and 40s, signed up for the war. Some of our good teachers left. After our junior and senior year, the faculty was made up entirely of volunteer physicians who also practiced in the city."

During the students' clinical rotations, they said, it was the interns and residents who became their teachers. "The interns and residents had more clinical responsibility for the patients, but they helped us a great deal," Dr. McFadden said.

In an effort to graduate more doctors quickly, the medical college curriculum was accelerated and the three-month summer vacation was cut.

Everyone did what was needed for the war effort, Dr. Frank said.

Two classes graduated in 1943. Drs. Frank and Mutz received their degrees in March; Dr. McFadden received his in December.

After graduation, Dr. Frank began her career in anesthesiology at Methodist Hospital in Omaha after a short stint in the pharmacology lab at UNMC.

Drs. Mutz and McFadden finished their internships and residencies and then were sent into service.



MURIEL FRANK, M.D.



HARRY MCFADDEN JR., M.D.



AUSTIN MUTZ, M.D.

Dr. Mutz went to the South Pacific, then settled in Spalding when he returned to Nebraska in 1946. Today, he lives in Denver.

Dr. McFadden eventually landed in Berlin where he was chief of laboratory services. He served in the U.S. Army Medical Corps for two years before returning to Omaha.

Dr. McFadden taught at UNMC from 1948 to 1987 and practiced in an independent lab. He retired in 1996.

In spite of the war, those were happy times, the trio said.

"We were happy to be in school," Dr. Frank said. "Every one of us felt fortunate." ☺☺