

SOUTHWESTERN NEWS

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SOUTHWESTERN MEDICAL SCHOOL GRADUATE'S BEQUEST TO FUND RESEARCH, SCHOLARSHIPS AND STUDENT UNION BUILDING

DALLAS — February 14, 1997 — Dr. Dorothy Lee, who persevered when few women were medical students to become a doctor at age 44, has bequeathed nearly \$1.7 million to her alma mater, UT Southwestern Medical School.

The gift from Dr. Lee, who died in 1993 at age 82, will establish endowment funds for merit- and need-based scholarships and for research into pathology and hearing impairment. Part of the gift will be used to maintain the Skillern Student Union Building at the UT Southwestern campus and to help with construction of a new one.

"Dorothy Lee was a pioneer," said Dr. Kern Wildenthal, UT Southwestern president. "Many alumni and faculty at UT Southwestern felt an exceptional fondness and admiration for her. We will never forget her, and we are honored she remembered us."

Dr. Lee remembered UT Southwestern in her will by creating a trust for the benefit of her cousin, Phoebe Tippie of Dallas, with the remainder of the trust to go to UT Southwestern upon Mrs. Tippie's death.

But Mrs. Tippie generously disclaimed a portion of the trust, a gesture that made a substantial portion of the funds available to the medical school immediately, and increased the total amount that would ultimately be received. "Mother knew that was what Dorothy would have wanted because Southwestern was so dear to her," said Mrs. Tippie's son, Kenneth Tippie of Dallas. When his mother died in November 1996, the entire trust passed to UT Southwestern, which remained an important part of Lee's life long after she earned her medical degree.

Dorothy Lee was born in Morgan, Texas, in 1911. By the time she graduated from Oak Cliff High School in Dallas, she'd traveled with her mother to Europe. She attended the University of Texas-Austin, then became a laboratory technician at Parkland Hospital.

In 1952, she was one of nine women accepted by Southwestern Medical School for

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the class of 1956. She was 40 years old.

"She was way ahead of her time when she decided that there was no good reason to accept the limitations on her career and her contributions to patients that society and convention had imposed," Wildenthal said. "A lot of patients, employees and fellow doctors feel fortunate and grateful that she prevailed and became a doctor against all the odds."

Dr. Lee specialized in pathology, working in hospitals and labs in Beaumont, Arlington, Mesquite and St. Joseph, Mo. She was the county coroner in Hobbs, N.M., and later headed the pathology lab at Plains Regional Medical Center-Clovis, N.M. She often combined her love of medicine and travel, visiting hospitals in other countries such as the former Soviet Union. She retired in 1989.

"Even after she retired, she'd go to the hospital to have lunch with friends," said her cousin, Ann Honea of Dallas. "She was not your usual doctor or, for that matter, she was not your usual person."

Dr. Lee maintained her apartment in Clovis and the family home in Oak Cliff. She returned to Dallas nearly every month, often scheduling her visits around events at UT Southwestern, where she was a longtime member of the alumni association's board of trustees. In 1993 she attended the medical school's 50th anniversary celebration just a month before her death.

UT Southwestern has allocated funds from Dr. Lee's bequest to four areas that reflect her life work and special interests. The Dorothy Lee, M.D., Pathology Research Endowment Fund will support work in her chosen specialty, while the Dorothy Lee, M.D., and Phoebe Tippie Hearing Impairment Research Endowment Fund recognizes the fact that Mrs. Tippie was deaf since birth. The Dorothy Lee, M.D., Scholarship Fund will provide financial support for medical students and the Dorothy Lee, M.D., Fund for Student Activities will enhance the student union building, in recognition of the fact that Dr. Lee felt a special affinity for medical students and their arduous life.

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