Thank you for running the announcement [Spring 2009] about the recent death of my mother, Ruth Masters (MD ‘35). I thought you might enjoy seeing this photograph and knowing a little bit more about her. She was one of very few women who became doctors in those days. In 1933 there were only 650 members of the Medical Women’s National Association. By 1941, the number of women physicians in the country had climbed to a mere 7,500 compared to almost 200,000 male doctors. My mother graduated during this time. She had no resentment about her treatment, she just said that by working twice as hard as everyone else, she found that she was not looked down upon as a woman. In her 1935 Pitt medical school class of more than 60 students, there was only one other woman.

My sister Dr. Carol Rumack, who followed in Mother’s footsteps, wrote this about her: “Ruth Masters, MD, was born at home September 28, 1913, and raised and educated in Pittsburgh. Dr. Ruth won a scholarship to the University of Pittsburgh, which she entered at age 16 after winning a mathematics competition. She entered medical school at 18 years of age and graduated at 21. (Her mother marched in the women’s suffrage movement.) She married a classmate, the late Dr. Raymond Masters, in 1936, during their internship at the University of Pittsburgh. They opened an office in his father’s home on November 1, 1936, and practiced there for 64 years. She practiced family medicine and delivered more than 3,200 babies, including 200 home deliveries. She says she always prayed during a delivery that “God would bless me to give me the strength and talent to do it.” She arranged adoptions of babies from mothers who did not want to choose abortion. Dr. Ruth was elected the first woman president of the medical staff at University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (UPMC) at McKeesport Hospital, serving from 1979 to 1980. She retired from active practice in 2001 at the age of 88 and remained a member of the hospital’s ethics committee.”

The other Dr. Masters—Raymond E. Masters, my father—was a physician who pioneered atomic safety methods. Both of my parents had wonderful and productive lives.

Sara Masters
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

We gladly receive letters (which we may edit for length, style, and clarity).

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