Distinguished Medical Alumna

Elizabeth Pierce Olmsted Ross, MD ’39

A dinner in her honor, hosted by the School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences and the Medical Alumni Association (MAA), was held October 27, 2006, at the Buffalo Club. In attendance were MAA officers and other alumni, Dean Michael Cain, MD, faculty and friends of Olmsted Ross.

Olmsted Ross was one of four women in a class of 64 to receive her medical degree in 1939. While still in medical school, she began flying planes as a hobby, becoming one of the first female pilots in Western New York. During World War II, she served as a medical officer and flight instructor, obtaining the rank of lieutenant in the Civil Air Patrol and serving as a member of the Ninety-Nines, the international organization of female pilots.

As an intern, she pursued a career in aviation medicine, which at the time was founded on eye tests. She enjoyed the training in ophthalmology and decided to pursue residency in this field, a decision that proved challenging. Women were not usually admitted to ophthalmology, since in most hospitals the specialty fell under a surgical residency, a field dominated by men. This changed with the start of World War II, as hospitals needed women to fill the vacancies created by male physicians drafted into war. Olmsted Ross completed her residency training in Chicago at the Illinois Eye and Ear Infirmary.

Olmsted Ross was the youngest person on record to be named diplomat of the American Board of Ophthalmology. As the first female ophthalmologist in Buffalo, she opened a private practice in 1944. Soon she was subcontracting with various local industries, beginning a long career of patient care, advocacy and research. Olmsted Ross initiated safety goggle programs and industrial lighting standards at Cerrius Wright Corporation. While working to fit engineers with protective eyewear at Cornell Aeronautical Laboratory, she listened to their concerns about working with a new technology called radar. She spent the next three years investigating the ocular effects of radar exposure and related issues with studies conducted at Tufts University, Griffiths Air Force Base, Cape Camaralab and abroad the RCA radar ship patrolling the East Coast.

During the 1950s and 1960s, Olmsted Ross established an accredited ophthalmology program at Daconess Hospital, which involved the relocation of the Wettlaufer Clinic—the largest eye clinic in the city—to the hospital. She was chair of the Wettlaufer board and created the preschool vision screening clinic in Buffalo public schools by training Junior League volunteers to conduct eye exams. Additionally, she developed and introduced large-print books to area libraries.

Olmsted Ross has been associated with the Blind Association of Western New York since she began her practice. In 1999, she made the agency a gift of $1 million to renovate the facility, the largest gift ever made by an individual to the agency, which now bears her name: The Elizabeth Pierce Olmsted, M.D. Center for the Visually Impaired. People from around the world come to participate in the services provided, to obtain training and job skills and to learn solutions to the challenges they face living with impaired vision.

In the fall of 2003, Olmsted Ross offered a $3 million challenge grant to UB to establish the Ira G. Ross Eye Institute, the research and teaching affiliate of the center named in honor of her late husband. Upon its successful conclusion, she made an additional $1 million challenge grant. The institute will be an important element of the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus, a world-class facility located in downtown Buffalo (see related story on page 40).

A recipient of many awards for career accomplishments, Olmsted Ross was inducted into the Western New York Women’s Hall of Fame in 2002 and received UB’s prestigious Samuel F. Capen Award in 2005 for “meritorious contributions to the University at Buffalo.”

—Kathleen Water

Changes in Residency Programs

In September 2006, University at Buffalo announced significant changes in two of the 64 residency training programs that it operates jointly with area hospitals.

The formerly suspended training program in otolaryngology is being reestablished, and the residency in radiology will be closed.

The university will voluntarily withdraw Buffalo’s radiology residency training program from the national accreditation process conducted by the Accreditation Council on Graduate Medical Education (ACGME). The decision to take this step was reached following extensive internal reviews, an on-site assessment by an independent panel of nationally recognized leaders in radiology education and with the full concurrence of Kaleida Health, Roswell Park Cancer Institute, and the Buffalo Veterans Affairs Western New York Healthcare System, the current radiology residency training site.

David L. Dunn, MD, PhD, UB vice president for health sciences, said the radiology residency cannot meet accreditation criteria with its current structure. Similar problems, he added, are being faced by nearly one-third of the radiology residency programs in the country. Of the 773 residents in training programs overseen by UB, 14 are in the four-year radiology residency that will cease operation at the end of the 2007-08 academic year. The office of Graduate Medical Education in the School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences will provide assistance and oversight for an orderly transition as residents in the program complete their training here or are placed in accredited programs elsewhere in the U.S.

Since several components of the radiology residency were judged to be of high quality, UB and its partner organizations plan to develop a new radiology training program with a structure designed to meet the accreditation criteria of the ACGME. Dunn said UB is confident that the withdrawal will not impact the excellent training in radiology provided to UB medical students or those provided to patients in the community.

“The UB School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences effectively managed a similar situation with the otolaryngology residency program in 2002 and is pleased to announce the new residency program in this specialty, which has been accredited by the ACGME after being restructured under the new leadership of Dr. David Sherris,” Dunn said. “The new residency program in otolaryngology replaces one that was disbanded in June 2002 due to inadequate funding for a chairman (the program was not threatened with losing accreditation). Residents are being recruited for the new five-year program, which will begin in July 2007.

“UB and its hospital-system partners are committed to presenting the highest-quality residency programs across the board to train new physicians, many of whom will remain in the area to meet the health-care needs of Western New York residents,” he added. —Arthur Page
Recognizing Medical Students’ Achievements

The following is a list of award recipients and a description of the awards received.

**Departmental Awards**

The departments of the school have established awards to recognize meritorious performance as well as outstanding achievement in other curriculum-related activities.

**Biochemistry**
- Coralynn Sack, 09, received the Dr. Rennie Award, given by the Department of Biochemistry.
- Worcestershire Sandwiches.
- Richard Sarkin, Emeritus Faculty Chair of the Gold Human Honor Society

**Microbiology and Immunology**
- Anthony Cerminara, ’08, received the Dr. Witebsky Award, which is given to the student achieving the highest grade in microbiology and immunology. Dr. Witebsky was the founding chair of the Department of Microbiology.
- Kelsey Witebsky, 09, received the Donnald W. Rennie Physiology Award, which is given to the student with the highest average in physiology.
- Maria Saraus, 09, received the Donald W. Rennie Physiology Award, which is given to the student with the highest average in pathology. The award honors Dr. Kornel Terplan, past chair of the department.

**Pathology and Anatomical Sciences**
- Ajay Panchal, ’08, received the Donald W. Rennie Physiology Award, which is given to the student with the highest average in pathology. The award honors Dr. Kornel Terplan, past chair of the department.
- Margherita Bruni, ’08, received the James A. Gibson, Wayne J. Atwell and Oliver J. Jones Award, which is given by the Department of Pathology and Anatomical Sciences to the student with the highest combined average in the anatomical sciences. The award is named in honor of past chairs of the department.

**American Medical Association Foundation Scholarship**
- Emily McCourt, ’07, is the recipient of this scholarship, which provides support to medical students based on academic excellence and other qualifications at the school’s discretion.

**Alpha Omega Alpha**
- Alpha Omega Alpha is the national honor society for medicine. To be inducted, one must meet the standards of the organization. This year’s class chooses the recipient.

**Dean’s Letters of Commendation**

Dean’s Letters of Commendation recognize exceptional coursework. In years one and two, they are given to students who earn honors grades in 75 percent of required courses or achieve 75 percent of available honors points each year. In year three, students who earn at least four honors and two high satisfactory grades are honored.

**First Year**
- Giripratim Singh Awan
- Steven Bazell
- Torsten Bergers
- Kelly D. Bercou
- Robert Gregory Brewer
- Bashihrak Choudhury
- Dinesh A. Colgan
- Daniel M. Deshmukh
- Swati Gopalarasan
- Benjamin J. Green
- Kashef A. Hafe
- Alan J. Hess
- Michael A. Hova
- Rupa Kashish Kesharmaham
- Michelle C. Liang
- Joel R. Moore
- Nick Shrestha
- Justin A. Stavis
- Luigi V. Stellato
- Kritika V. Thomas
- Michelle A. Vozar
- Sarah Y. Zheng
- Sahil G. Zingare

**Second Year**
- Richard M. Ackerson
- Joanna Lyn Asayt
- Michael K. Baurkort
- Abaaz K. Baqir
- Katherine Michaela Broekhuizen
- Anthony John Chinnaswamy
- Karen Chang
- Steven Chao
- Michael John Cipolla
- Jennifer E. Costello
- Julian Jean Desmoulin
- Amy Beth Devlin
- Ashley M. Duggan
- Katherine Joy Duvall
- Sarah Lyn Dwyer
- Matthew M. Ferns
- Sara Ferrer
- Jennifer Helen Gaborek
- Stephanie M. Gauder
- Kathriona S. Ghozoun
- Sahil G. Zingare
- Southasai S. Jutnow
- Michael A. Kandar
- Samuel A. Leon
- Michael A. Maloney
- Emily A. McCoy
- Jennifer B. Moste
- Michael Frank Petrosillo
- Kathryn W. Ra
- Peter C. Ravena
- Samantha Ann Scali
- Dana Beth Schoenberg
- Patricia D. Sohn
- Ashley M. Duggan
- Cathal A. Deasy
- Elise G. Jamess
- Megan M. Swant

**Third Year**
- Michael Robert Joynt
- Praveen Kachishkar
- Monal Thapa
- Arkaya Banik Kupchan
- Victoria A. Lillig
- Jacob Stephen Maier
- Andrew W. Mariko
- Benjamin F. McGraw
- Charles Milchteim
- Paul Anthony Miriani
- Richard K. Monsees
- Michael Raphael Nazareth
- Frances James O’Connell
- Shannon E. O’Malley
- Ashby Narnia Pichlhal
- Sneha K. Rajamohan
- Carl Peterson
- Megan Suzanne Whittaker
- Christopher Wilkinson Tjoa
- David C. Zita
- Matthew D. Zimmerman
- Matthew W. Trimarco
- Vy Thao T. Tran
- Thomas W. Trimarco
- Michael C. Zang