

Legends and Legacies Book Chapters

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## Forward

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# Foreword

Long before I became President of M. D. Anderson in 1996, I was well aware of the many talented physicians and scientists whose contributions had helped develop this institution as an international leader in research-driven cancer patient care. As I have learned much more about the remarkable history and the pioneers who left powerful footprints for us to follow, I have been increasingly impressed by the number of women faculty so critical to the progress on which we are building today.

*Legends and Legacies* is a captivating collection of the personal journeys taken by 26 of our successful women physicians and scientists. After reading their stories, I was struck by how diverse — and often difficult — their pilgrimages have been, yet all share the common bond of growing up knowing they wanted to make a difference. Some were the first in their families to attend college, while others are carrying on scientific traditions inspired by parents and grandparents who were health care professionals. A few thought they would be teachers, one aspired to become a dancer, and another originally planned to be a nuclear physicist. Several recall expecting to escape childhood hardships, including one whose parents were migrant farm workers. Even those with extremely limited economic means remember being encouraged by mothers and fathers to get an education. Their cumulative roots represent a rich smorgasbord of cultures, from India, Japan, South Africa, Mexico, China and Canada as well as a cross section of American small towns and large cities.

An influential thread uniting these women involves how they overcame the unfortunate discrimination that has existed far too long against those who strived for careers in the biomedical sciences. Some tell how they also had to tolerate racial and social biases on top of the gender issues. Central to each journey is the innate tenacity to succeed combined with the importance of caring mentors, both men and women, who during different periods had a profound impact on their career development. Most describe their dilemmas concerning how they could balance marriage — plus if and when to have children — with demanding responsibilities at a major academic institution. The women whose husbands also are physicians and scientists discuss the tough choices they faced in deciding to come to M. D. Anderson. Nearly all of the stories include details of how these women learned organizational and leadership skills needed to advance into key administrative positions and accept important assignments that provide national visibility. Most offer insights about how they have achieved harmony in their professional and personal lives.

M. D. Anderson has a long-standing interest in expanding opportunities for its women faculty. Margaret L. Kripke, Ph.D., who in 1983 was named the first woman to chair a department (Immunology), raised concerns about equitable recruitment, salary and promotion while serving as the inaugural chair of the Committee on the Status of Women and Minorities as well as founding chair of the Women's Faculty Organization. She also achieved many other "firsts," including the first woman faculty member selected to top management. Even though she retired in 2007 as our Executive Vice President and Chief Academic Officer, she has continued to inspire us all with her unwavering advocacy for women in medicine and science. Her legacy will live on through the Office of Women Faculty Programs, which we established to coordinate myriad activities aimed at identifying and implementing career development options for women faculty, promoting networking and mentoring, and advising senior leaders about important issues as well as women who should be considered for leadership positions.

I am grateful to Elizabeth L. Travis, Ph.D., our first Associate Vice President for Women Faculty Programs, for leading our efforts to make M. D. Anderson the number one destination for women physicians and scientists in cancer-focused patient care, research, education and prevention. She has led development of *Legends and Legacies*, which I believe all readers will find fascinating.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "John Mendelsohn". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "John" being more prominent and the last name "Mendelsohn" written in a continuous script.

John Mendelsohn, M.D.

President and Professor of Cancer Medicine

The University of Texas M. D. Anderson Cancer Center