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Daughters followed their mom's example

City obstetrician's 3 children also have gone into medicine

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Shortly after beginning her training in obstetric medicine, Jocelyn Bush started having misgivings about the hectic lifestyle of her chosen career. So she sought advice from an expert: her mother.

Also an obstetrician, Mary Bush always had relished her work while nurturing three children and a loving marriage. Still, she didn't hesitate to encourage Jocelyn to find a new field.

"She said, 'You've got to love what medicine you're in,'" said Jocelyn, an anesthesiologist with the Urgent Spine Care Center.

For more than 25 years, Mary Bush, 66, has modeled this message for her three daughters, all of whom became physicians.

Her oldest daughter, Dana Bush, 39, is an obstetrician-gynecologist and practiced with her mother before moving to North Carolina last summer. Twins Jennifer and Jocelyn, 34, are anesthesiologists.

For these three daughters, every day is Mother's Day.

"All of us idolize our mother," said Jocelyn, who has an 18-month-old son.

Jennifer, a mother to 2-year-old twin girls, also marvels at how her mother raised a young family while completing medical school and a residency.

"Oh my gosh! I want to kiss her feet," said Jennifer, a pediatric anesthesiologist with St. Vincent Health Network. "I have no idea how she did it."

Added Dana: "I think it shows that if you want to do something, you can do it."

Mary never pushed her daughters to follow in her footsteps: "I hoped they would pick something and be



FAMILY: Dr. Mary Bush's (center) daughters, Dr. Jocelyn Bush (left), Dr. Jennifer Bush (right) and Dr. Dana Bush (not shown) followed her lead for a career choice. - Michelle Pemberton / The Star

happy for themselves," she said.

Still, Mary always made it clear she loved medicine. One day, Mary delivered conjoined twins. She brought home a video of the birth, and the whole family sat down to watch -- over dinner.

All four doctors agree that the linchpin in the family has been the one member who is neither a doctor nor female: Willie Bush, who likes to say he put four women through medical school.

"Why can't I be a doctor?"

One of eight children growing up in Tarpon Springs, Fla., Mary did not plan to be a doctor. Neither of her parents had much education, but Mary studied nursing at Florida A&M University.

While getting her master's in nursing at Emory University in Atlanta, she married Willie, whom she met through a mutual friend.

In the early 1970s, Mary was working at a community health center in Washington, D.C. Most of the physicians were affluent white men.

"They had some bad doctors there, just the way they treated patients," she recalled. "I came home and said, 'If they're doctors, why can't I be a doctor?'"

When Willie, a human resources professional, got a new job in Detroit, Mary entered medical school at the University of Michigan.

At the time, less than 6 percent of U.S. medical students were black, and less than 1.5 percent were African-American women, according to the Association of American Medical Colleges.

Soon after classes began, Mary discovered something else that set her apart: She was pregnant. As she grew larger, she thought she must be carrying a very large boy. Instead, the twins were born.

One more challenge lay ahead. Willie was transferred to Indianapolis during Mary's last year of medical school, and she stayed behind to finish up while caring for three girls.

"I studied between folding clothes and frying chicken," she said.

Mary's work ethic made a lasting impression on her girls. When she opened a textbook, she encouraged them to read, too.

"She would study; we would study," Dana said.

In 1985, Dr. Mary Bush became the first black woman to graduate from Methodist's obstetrics-gynecology residency.

Juggling a career and family looked effortless to her daughters, but Mary acknowledges it wasn't. "Some days I would be ripping and running," she said.

Still, she managed to be there for moments that mattered. When a public school in her neighborhood grouped Dana and many of the African-American children who were bused to the area into a single class, Mary transferred her children to Park Tudor, where they excelled. They went on to Harvard University.

Mary's daughters learned from her example when they became doctors. In 1980 only 3 percent of American physicians were African-Americans, according to a 2007 article in the *Journal of the National Medical Association*. More than 25 years later, it was just 4.4 percent.

"She taught me that as hard as it sounds and as modern a society as we're in, people do see color first," Jennifer said. "But you have to show them regardless of what you look like, you are a hard worker."

Dana, her mother's medical partner for a decade, still asks herself, "What would my mom do in this situation?" While Dana knew the latest techniques, Mary knew how to be an excellent clinician and take time with each patient, no matter how many others waited.

"I taught her some new things, and she taught me some old things that are still good," Dana said.

The Drs. Bush remain close. Dana calls her mother every day. Jocelyn and her husband have been living with her parents for the past year while house hunting; they just bought a home in northern Pike Township whose yard abuts theirs. Jennifer, her physician husband and their family live in Carmel.

On Mother's Day, the whole family will gather to fete the woman who has been so central in their lives. Her three toddler grandchildren will fight for the chance to hug her legs.

Said Jennifer, who like her twin sister is pregnant: "I think that's the reason you have kids. So you appreciate your parents."

About the Urgent Spine Care Center

The Urgent Spine Care Center, a division of Indianapolis-based Center for Pain Management, offers Central Indiana adults with acute spine, back, leg or neck pain and injuries access to immediate care by a physician with special qualifications in interventional pain management. The Center specializes in back, neck, leg and spinal injuries and neuropathy pain such as pinched nerves, bulging discs, herniated disks, blocked nerves, muscle tears and pulls and sciatica problems that keeps adults from comfortably performing their daily home, work, family or leisure activities. The Center's four board-certified pain management physicians provide consultation, diagnosis and multidisciplinary treatment which may include physical therapy, imaging or interventional procedures such as steroid injections or nerve blocks. The Urgent Spine Care Center accepts most insurance plans and offers scheduled appointments between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. For more information visit www.UrgentSpineCareCenter.com.