

Delivering health care is a lifelong vocation for Class of 1975 members Delight Wing, M.D., and Jack Long, M.D.

partners *in practice*

by Jess Clarke

The earliest memory Delight Wing, M.D.'75, has of her husband, Jack Long, M.D.'75, was seeing him enter Hall A, the College of Medicine's main lecture hall, in pink bellbottoms on the first day of medical school in 1971. The first conversation with him that she recalls was at an orientation event, where he talked passionately about rugby, a sport that bored her at the time. It may have been one of the few topics they weren't immediately in sync on.

Long, who noticed Wing in Carpenter Auditorium on that opening day, remembers their first substantive talk late one night in the anatomy lab — Wing asked for help moving her cadaver. So, in a small way, began a collaboration that has been the hallmark of the couple's life together for 40 years, years that have found them working at a South Burlington

pediatrics practice for more than three decades, serving as UVM advisers for the Albert Schweitzer Fellowship Program, and building deep relationships with groups working to improve health care in Haiti.

In addition to the abundant contributions the couple has made to the pediatrics field at home and in Haiti, part of their legacy is how many students and colleagues they have inspired — and how profoundly.

In recognition of their work, Wing and Long, UVM clinical associate professors of pediatrics who live in Jericho, Vt., were among five physicians honored with the 2015 Service to Medicine and Community Award at the College's Medical Reunion in June.

"We are happy to provide one example of how service can be compatible with a traditional medical practice and raising a family," Long says.

That the couple could make those facets of their lives compatible is a lesson in compassion, commitment — and grit.

Wing grew up in Littleton, N.H., with a best friend whose father was a general practitioner. She and her friend spent a lot of time after hours in the doctor's office, counting tongue depressors and doing other tasks. She knew by fifth grade that she wanted to pursue medicine in some way.

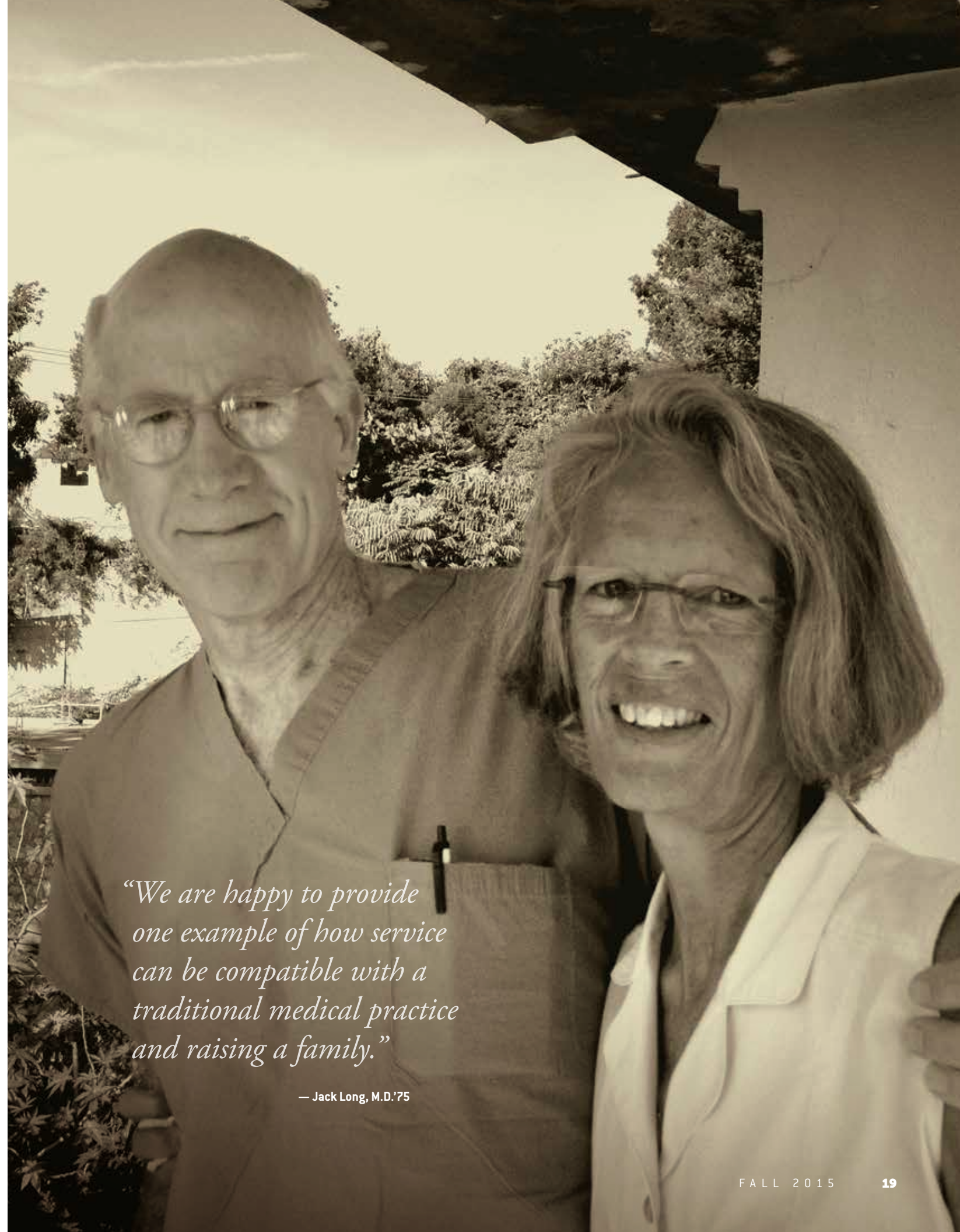
That goal was reinforced by volunteering in her local hospital and attending summer camps in biochemistry, before attending Stanford University. "I had the opportunity to experience the scope of the human interactions special to the medical field and the excitement of the science involved," Wing says.

She briefly considered a teaching career. "But I realized that I most enjoyed the more intimate, one-on-one relationships and that I prefer learning and applying science to teaching it."

Long, born in Washington, D.C., grew up in a military family and lived in states all over the country. During most



At right, partners in life and medical practice Jack Long, M.D.'75 and Delight Wing, M.D.'75, on one of their rotations in Haiti. At left, Haiti's University Hospital of Mirebalais.



"We are happy to provide one example of how service can be compatible with a traditional medical practice and raising a family."

— Jack Long, M.D.'75

of his undergraduate years at UMass Amherst, he envisioned a career in oceanography. But a *Life* magazine article on a family physician captured his interest.

“I decided after my junior year that I was more interested in a career which would bring me into contact with people and offer the opportunity to be of service while satisfying my interest in science,” Long says.

At the College of Medicine they were encouraged by the late Charles Houston, M.D., in the College’s former Community Medicine Department, to pursue opportunities to help underserved people in other countries. Former College faculty member Renee Bergner, M.D., and her husband, Arthur, M.D., introduced them to Hospital Albert Schweitzer in Deschappelles, Haiti, and were role models for aiding the poor while maintaining a medical practice.

“Most people go into medicine with the idea of helping people in need. That was the primary motivation behind it for us, coupled with an interest in the wider world,” Long says of their decision to work in Haiti.

For nearly 30 years, Wing and Long volunteered at Hospital Albert Schweitzer. They went annually for a few weeks at a time with their two sons when the boys were still at home. Since they retired from their practice in 2012, they have worked with Partners In Health, a Boston-based organization that operates Haiti’s University Hospital of Mirebalais. The couple helped develop pediatric inpatient and outpatient units and a pediatric residency program at the hospital. Now they assist colleagues there for six months a year. They also work at clinical sites operated by Haiti’s health department.

One of the biggest challenges Wing and Long have faced has been the shortage of just about everything in one of the world’s poorest countries. There are occasional days without electricity and transportation; water rationing; blocked roads. Top-of-the-line medical supplies are often unavailable.

Sometimes Wing and Long have made do with second-rate antibiotics, dressings and intravenous fluids. “You can

“Most people go into medicine with the idea of helping people in need. That was the primary motivation behind it for us, coupled with an interest in the wider world.”

— Jack Long, M.D.’75

do workarounds. Unfortunately, there are times when you don’t have a workaround, and the patient just goes without,” Long says. “There’s nothing else to be done — and that’s difficult.”

Other situations have been difficult, too.

On one Haiti trip, their sons’ luggage didn’t arrive, and the boys wore clothing donated for hospital patients. “They weren’t happy about it,” Long recalls. “But it was a good lesson in humility.”

It was important to the couple to have their children with them in Haiti. “We realized by not living in a more diverse community, our kids would be lacking something. Through this international experience, we hoped to make them a little bit more...appreciative of what they have,” Long says.

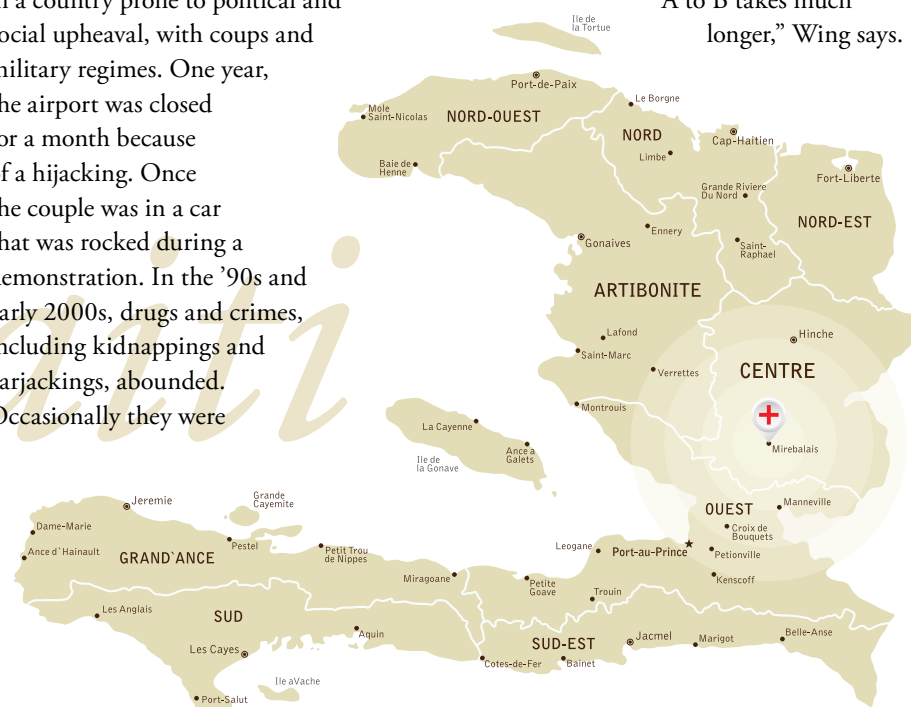
Sometimes safety has been a concern in a country prone to political and social upheaval, with coups and military regimes. One year, the airport was closed for a month because of a hijacking. Once the couple was in a car that was rocked during a demonstration. In the ’90s and early 2000s, drugs and crimes, including kidnappings and carjackings, abounded. Occasionally they were

advised to travel with armed security guards to the airport.

“There are definitely no-go places that we all respect,” Long says. “Partners In Health takes very good care of us.”

Another challenge for Wing and Long was adjusting to a different approach to practicing medicine in a country so lacking in resources.

“Without a common understanding and language, it requires more direct teaching when we’re working on a new program or project. The understanding we would have here (in the United States) that we could proceed in a certain way isn’t a given in this setting. Realizing a common goal and a common approach to that goal takes a lot more effort and time, so the scope of the project is much larger, and the time it takes to get from A to B takes much longer,” Wing says.



The newly-opened 300-bed hospital in Mirebalais, Haiti serves the population 185,000 residents of the city, plus most of the patient population of the central region of the country

Despite the time to get from A to B, the couple has made significant contributions in Haiti: developing a manual of protocols to help standardize acute and chronic pediatric care, teaching a neonatal resuscitation course at various sites and creating a system for ongoing monitoring and education of staff.

They’re involved in addressing underlying issues that contribute to such chronic conditions as malnutrition. Along the way, they’ve learned it’s possible to bring first-rate medical care to a desperately poor country.

“We have seen dramatic cases of children in advanced stages of HIV and tuberculosis combined and looking literally as if they’re on death’s door. Seeing them later, they’re happy, healthy, thriving adolescents,” Long says.

That kind of success, and close work and social connections with colleagues, have sparked them to return each year.

In their South Burlington practice, “The bulk of our work was office-based healthy children,” Wing says. “As much as we loved our work in primary care pediatrics in Vermont, our work in Haiti has afforded us the opportunity to use more of the ‘doctoring skills’ we learned in medical school and training — procedures and solving diagnostic dilemmas.”

Their doctoring skills and Haiti experience have motivated many medical students Wing and Long mentored when they were UVM advisers for the Schweitzer Fellowship. Wing is on the Boston-based organization’s advisory board.

“I was impressed by their selflessness and unwavering dedication to the program’s mission and the fellows’ potential. They spent hours in individual and group mentoring activities with student participants, despite maintaining their clinical practice and other educational and extracurricular activities,” former Schweitzer Fellow Heidi Schumacher, M.D.’10, says. “Jack and Delight inspired and modeled a form of peer-to-peer coaching that allowed us to learn from one another, in addition to learning from the expertise and experience of Jack and Delight.



Dr. Long and Wing received their UVM Medical Alumni Association Award for Service to Medicine and the Community this June. Presenting the award was Marga Sproul, M.D.’75, at far left, and Dean Rick Morin at far right.

“They have reminded me that even those with a primary emphasis on clinical medicine can find meaningful, sustained ways to give back to their local communities and beyond,” says Schumacher, who works in primary care pediatrics and with federal health policy in Washington, D.C.

In their commitment and courage, Wing and Long haven’t changed since David Little, M.D.’75, was their classmate in medical school.

“They were always so idealistic and altruistic,” recalls Little, professor of family medicine at the College. “They helped inspire many UVM students to consider similar options for overseas work through their role as Schweitzer program advisers. I was never surprised they walked the walk in their own way...The Class of 1975 is so incredibly proud of what they have accomplished.”

Wing and Long spend time with their own children and grandchildren when not in Haiti. Their son Webb Long, M.D.’06, is a pediatrician who met his wife, Leslie Bradford, M.D.’06, a gynecologic oncologist, in medical school at UVM. Their son Duncan is married to a pediatrician.

The couple stays active in Vermont, where they’ve long been involved in community service. Wing is treasurer of the Community Center in Jericho and on the honorary board of the Visiting Nurse Association of Chittenden and Grand Isle Counties. Long, former Jericho School Board chairman and multi-sport youth coach, is a founder of the Burlington Rugby Football Club and played rugby until he was 60.

With no set timetable for retirement, Wing and Long have committed to Partners In Health for at least another year.

That the year ahead may see further obstacles to overcome in order to provide decent health care to their patients is a given for the couple. But dealing with adversity is par for the course for these two members of the Class of ’75. An important lesson the couple has learned and shared with many others is a simple one: “Life goes on,” as Jack Long says. **VM**



View a lecture on medical practice in Haiti given by Drs. Wing and Long and John Durham, M.D.’85 during Medical Reunion 2015. Go to: uvm.edu/medicine/vtmedicine