Finding the Balance

“How would you like to live in a place that’s just minutes from the outdoors?” As it turns out, that is exactly what Dr. Anne Morris and her husband Dr. Gerald Morris were hoping to find when a lumberjack angel appeared in his office at Barnes Jewish Hospital in St. Louis and all but hired him on the spot.

The “lumberjack” was Dr. Sherman Beacham of the Alaska Clinic, who was at the St. Louis facility to be with his patient. Dr. Anne Morris was home on maternity leave, but as her husband’s story goes, he was a big man, dressed in jeans and a lumberjack shirt. He got right to the point: “I understand you’re looking to practice someplace else.” When they visited Anchorage in 1975, they liked what they saw, even in the dead of winter. “We figured that if we liked it when it looked its worst, it could only be better the rest of the year.”

Dr. Anne Morris was really the one Dr. Beacham and the other partners wanted because of her specialization in pulmonary medicine. According to her, “They got two for the price of one.” At the time, they had their one-year-old daughter Amy, who eventually followed in her mother’s footsteps and is also a pulmonologist. On July 4, 1976, their bicentennial baby, Abigail, was one of the last to be born at Anchorage Community Hospital. Their twin sons, Jason and Ashton, were born in 1979 at Alaska Hospital and Medical Center, which was owned by the Teamsters.

Throughout her career, practicing at Alaska Regional was always her first choice. “The nursing care and respiratory department always had a smaller, more personal feeling. The staff was caring—there was something a little special about the place,” she says. Ultimately, she and her husband went into private practice with two other physicians before both retired, she from directing the Providence Sleep Disorders Center.

Almost four decades later, both the community of Anchorage and the quality of healthcare at Alaska Regional did not disappoint. “The medicine was top-notch—it marked a dramatic improvement in the care available and offered the best overall patient care,” she says. At the same time, it allowed the Morris family to live a small-town lifestyle while having successful careers and spending quality time with their children. “We wanted to work to live and be able to do things as a family. There is more balance than in a big city—you can see it in the staff and the patients.”

Anne Morris, M.D.
Pulmonary Medicine Specialist, Retired

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“TWO FOR ONE”