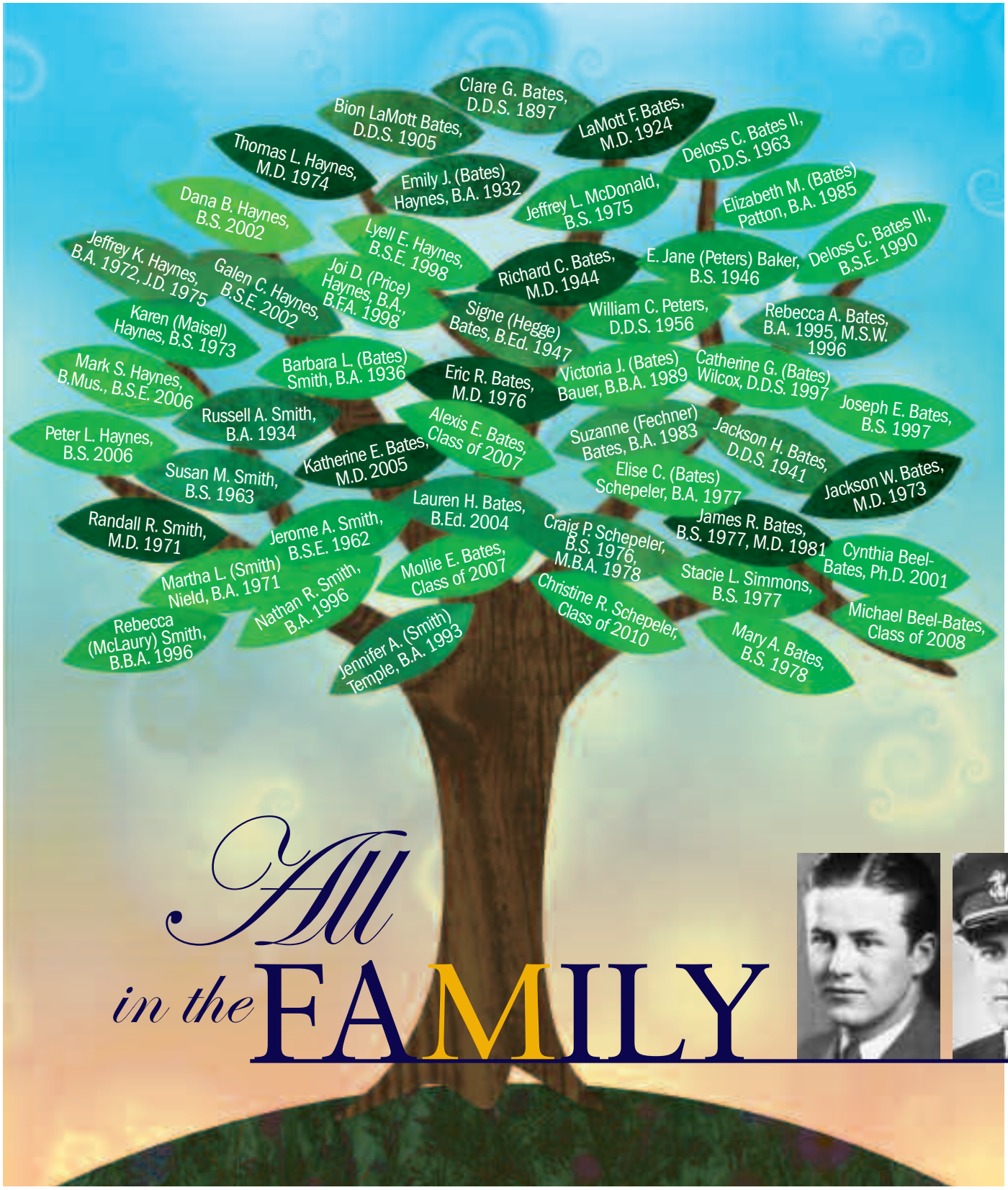
Illustration: Kathy Moody



All in the FAMILY

When Lamott G. Bates, age 8, came to Elsie, Michigan, via ox-cart from the rail-head in Fenton in 1855, he could not have imagined that a century and a half later he would have 160 descendents in six generations, among them 36 dyed-in-the-maize-and-blue University of Michigan graduates. Add in the four who presently are enrolled at the U-M, as well as the 10 alumni who married into the family, and the grand total astounds: 50 members of this extended family have Michigan degrees — or will soon.

Two of Lamott's sons, Clare G. Bates and Bion LaMott Bates, were the first in the Bates family to attend college. They earned University of Michigan dentistry degrees in 1897 and 1905, respectively, and went on to have long and successful careers. They also had numerous children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren — many of whom traveled to Ann Arbor to receive their educations and earn U-M degrees — including eight who attended the Medical School to become physicians.

Richard "Dick" Bates (M.D. 1944, Residency 1951) is retired from a long career as an internist in private practice in Lansing, Michigan. His story illustrates how a love for Michigan has been passed from generation to generation in the Bates family. He recalls growing up admiring his older cousin, Lamott F. Bates (grandson of Lamott G. Bates) — a 1924 U-M grad and Michigan-trained surgeon who practiced near Flint, Michigan. Dick Bates decided to follow suit and earned his medical degree at the U-M. During his internal medicine residency at University Hospital, he met and married Signe Hegge, who received her bachelor's degree in 1947. Their son, Eric, was born at University Hospital in 1950 and, except for a minor detour to Princeton for his undergraduate degree, Eric stayed true to the family calling. He earned his Michigan medical degree in 1976, completed his residency here in 1981, joined the faculty and now is a professor of internal medicine in the Medical School.

THE GRAND TOTAL ASTOUNDS: 50 MEMBERS OF THIS EXTENDED FAMILY HAVE MICHIGAN DEGREES — OR WILL SOON.

Other Bates physicians — all descendents of Bion Bates — are Randall R. Smith (M.D. 1971), a retired anesthesiologist who lives in Redding, California; Jackson H. Bates (M.D. 1973), an internist based in Marietta, Georgia; Thomas L. Haynes (M.D. 1974), an addiction specialist based in Grand Rapids, Michigan; James R. Bates (M.D. 1981), an internist in Port Orchard, Washington; and the first woman doctor in the family — Katherine E. Bates (M.D. 2005), who currently is a pediatrics resident at the U-M.

The descendents of Lamott G. Bates also include seven engineers, six dentists, six teachers, a lawyer and a nurse — all trained at the University of Michigan.

Members of the family are quick to point out that it is Michigan's excellence rather than any perceived pressure to fulfill a family legacy that lures them here. "This is a top-10 medical school and a top-five public university," Eric Bates says. "I wouldn't want to go anywhere else."

His father, Dick Bates, obviously has given the matter a lot of thought. "That an occasional family scion escapes to graduate from such outliers as Michigan State, Indiana, Virginia, the University of Chicago and Princeton has reassured us that we aren't forcing our young people into the U-M mold, but it wouldn't be entirely tragic if we did," he observes.

And what's the take of the new generation? Christine R. Schepeler is a U-M freshman enjoying her first year living in South Quad and leaning toward a communications degree. She spent her childhood in West Bloomfield, Michigan, where an awareness of the U-M was a happy constant. When she was 14, she says, her family moved to Connecticut and she soon realized just how much Michigan — and the U-M — felt like home. When it was time to apply to college, she knew what to do.

"I didn't have to come here," she says. "I made my own choice, and so far it's everything I expected. I guess coming to Michigan is really a tradition in our family and I can't see that trend ending anytime soon."

When Schepeler graduates in 2010, she will be the 50th member of the Bates family to earn a degree from the U-M. And No. 51 is not far behind. Eric Bates' son, Evan, recently was accepted to the University and will begin studies here in the fall of 2007.

—Whitley Hill with Meghan Holohan

From left: **LaMott F. Bates (M.D. 1924); Richard C. Bates (M.D. 1944); Randall R. Smith (M.D. 1971); Jackson W. Bates (M.D. 1973); Thomas L. Haynes (M.D. 1974); Eric R. Bates (M.D. 1976); James R. Bates (M.D. 1981); Katherine E. Bates (M.D. 2005)**

Photos: Courtesy the U-M Bentley Historical Library