Biography of Selma H. Calmes, MD.

Selma Harrison and her two brothers are polio survivors.   Even though she had never heard of a woman doctor, the help she had received during her own illness became her inspiration to study medicine. She applied to Baylor College of Medicine in 1961 and was accepted as one of three women in a class of eighty-four.   In the summer after her first year she married a classmate, becoming Selma Harrison Calmes in 1962.

Dr. Calmes graduated in 1965, and began an internship in pediatrics at hospitals affiliated with Baylor College of Medicine. She planned to combine her career with having a family. Pediatrics was the most common specialty for women physicians to pursue at the time, but in her senior year she read an essay by Dr. Virginia Apgar promoting anesthesiology as a good specialty for women with children.

Dr. Calmes decided to follow Apgar's advice and train in anesthesiology, beginning her residency in 1966. For one year, she was the only woman resident at the 1000-bed Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania, the leading place for anesthesiology training at the time.

Dr. Calmes has taken great inspiration from the achievements of other women physicians. She has written a number of articles on Dr. Apgar and the history of women in anesthesiology, and in 1982 she co-founded the Anesthesia History Association.

In 1970, after working as a staff anesthesiologist and instructor in Pennsylvania, Dr. Calmes moved to California to take up a position as staff anesthesiologist at Valley Children's Hospital in Fresno.

1986 - Chair of the Department of Anesthesiology at Kern Medical Center.

1988 - Chair of the Department of Anesthesiology at Olive View-UCLA Medical Center.

1994 - Vice-Chair of the Department of Anesthesiology at UCLA School of Medicine.

She still held both positions until her retirement in 2007. Two years later, she became the anesthesiology consultant for the Los Angeles County Medical Examiner-Coroner, reviewing deaths possibly related to anesthesia care.