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Biography

The Courtship of Two Doctors: A 1930s Love Story of Letters, Hope & Healing
Martha Holoubek Fitzgerald
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Imagine discovering eight hundred love letters written by your parents during their two-year courtship. At first Martha Holoubek Fitzgerald was reluctant to read the letters, to intrude on her parents' private thoughts and feelings. But, with her father's permission and support, she began a book about their devotion to medicine during the late 1930s, and to each other, based on these letters and the diary her father kept during his medical training.

Alice Baker and Joe Holoubek met during a summer fellowship program in 1937 at the prestigious Mayo Clinic. Separated during the next two years at different medical schools—he at the University of Nebraska, she at Louisiana State School of Medicine—they were able to see each other only a few times. But they each wrote faithfully twice a week, sharing their medical experiences and discovering their love for each other.

Their goal after graduation was to be together, hopefully returning to Mayo Clinic, where they had met. But serious illness and career setbacks during the run-up to World War II caused their plans to falter. The story of how "Dr. Alice" and "Dr. Joe" created their futures together and became honored and respected physicians is often poignant and dramatic, reflecting an era before antibiotics, when serious illnesses like tuberculosis were rampant and health-care professionals were often exposed to infection and disease.

The letters were condensed and edited by Fitzgerald, their youngest daughter, for clarity and to avoid redundancies. The resulting letters are filled with history of the times, medicine as it was then, the challenges and faith the couple shared, and their growing feelings for one another. As the book progresses the reader might feel the urge to gloss over the paragraphs of expressed devotion, yet that also makes their love feel more real.

The letters are the body of the book. A prologue and epilogue, partly from Joe Holoubek's diary, set them in context.The epilogue also continues the doctors' stories from the time of their wedding in July 1939 and throughout their long, illustrious medical careers.The

duo raised four children and remained devoted to each other and to their religious faith

A former columnist and associate editorial page editor for the *Shreveport Times*, Fitzgerald has shaped a well-written, interesting book about two remarkable physicians and loving parents.

Penny Hastings