



Every issue of *Healthy Living* throughout 2012 will feature St. Mary's County individuals or families whose story has a connecting thread that links our county and our hospital histories together. You'll read about changes as seen through their eyes or marked through their experiences. In this issue we are pleased to spotlight the Burch family and the Mason/Holt family.

## The Multi-Generational Burch Family



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## A Strong Sense of Service

F. Elliott (Sonny) Burch, Jr. and his brother Donald (Buddy) talked about how four generations of their family took an active role in the community since the start of the family business in 1928. "My father taught Buddy and me about giving back to the community just as his father taught him," said Sonny, who has passed along this same lesson to his children and on down the line.

One way that F. Elliott Burch, Sr., son of one of the original founders of Burch Oil, served his neighbors was through community service. After graduating from the Charlotte Hall Military Academy (CHMA), he joined the family business. He served on numerous boards such as the CHMA, St. Mary's Hospital and Cedar Lane Apartments for the Elderly to name a few. He was elected to serve as a St. Mary's County Commissioner from 1962 to 1970,

serving as president during his second term.

Following in his father's footsteps, Sonny served on the St. Mary's Hospital Board of Directors from 2002 to 2007. "I remember when we added the third floor to the hospital," he said. "We knew the county was growing and that the hospital would need to grow with it." He also said it was an honor to serve with "people who were and are dedicated to this hospital and this community. But it's always been like that in the county." During Sonny's last year on the board he served as its president.

"People here want to help each other," said Buddy. "We all grew up together. Our families knew each other." As an example, he told the story about how the Burch brothers used to play ball with Dr. John Roache, who is on the hospital's Medical Staff. "He was the catcher," said Buddy, and for some reason everyone on the team used to call him 'Yogi' after the great New York Yankee, Yogi Beara."

In addition, Sonny talked about

Dr. Roy Guyther who used to be his family physician. He spoke about how Dr. Guyther was named Family Physician of the Year. The *Maryland State Medical Journal* ran a cover photo of Dr. Guyther and three children in an exam room in August 1982. "Those were my kids," said Sonny. "We just happened to be in Dr. Guyther's office when the photographer showed up."

Sonny's daughter, Sheri Burch Norris, chose to continue her father's legacy by serving on the Hospital Foundation board. "Things have changed so much since I was on the Foundation," she said. "I served during the earliest years of the Foundation's Gala and we didn't even hold the event in the county then." She added that in subsequent years the event was held at the Harry Lundberg School of Seamanship in Piney Point, Md. "We used to 'beg, borrow and steal' decorations for the event at the time and it was difficult to raise significant dollars. It wasn't anywhere

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near what the event is now," but Sheri is glad she had a small part in laying the groundwork. Her father mirrors that sentiment.

Seeing the hospital's new Outpatient Pavilion open its doors was gratifying for Sonny. "We were talking about it, planning for it and laying the groundwork for it when I was on the board," he said. "We were always looking ahead and tried to think about future needs." The board understood how being able to accommodate more outpatient services for the community was the right direction.

Having a total of nine children born at the hospital between 1955 and 1979 also kept the brothers' families in close

contact with the hospital and many of its staff. In addition, 12 grandchildren were born here. "We've always been well cared for at the hospital over all the years," said Buddy.

Even Sheri's daughter Lauren spent two summers at the hospital as an intern and also volunteered as a candy striper. "She learned a lot of very important life lessons while working at St. Mary's," said Sheri. "It was a wonderful experience," said Lauren. "I loved it. Everyone really wanted to help us [the interns]."

There is no denying that giving back to the community in numerous ways is a way of life for the multi-generational Burch family. In addition to their time and talent, Burch family

members gave a generous donation to the hospital during a capital campaign and dedicated a room to Sonny and Buddy's parents, F. Elliott and Elizabeth Burch, Sr. The family views it simply as another way to help provide for the hospital's continued growth. And, the Burch family was successful in obtaining a three-year grant donation for Hospice of St. Mary's. Sheri said the family nominated Hospice under the "Fueling Communities" program that British Petroleum (BP) offers its BP dealers. The program was initiated by British Petroleum following the Deepwater Horizon accident in the Gulf.

The strong sense of community within the Burch family seems to keep growing, just like the county itself.



## Family Matters

When Sarah Mason Milburn came to work as a nurse's aide in 1981, she wasn't thinking about how it might impact future generations within her family. She just wanted a job. "I'd worked at the nursing home and needed a change," she said. So, Sarah decided to follow her sister Mary Alberta's advice and talked to Mrs. Lane, the nursing supervisor at the time.

"Mrs. Lane asked me a few questions then said she'd be pleased to put me on her staff at St. Mary's Hospital. I told her I'd be doubly pleased to accept," said Sarah, who started working on the weekends. She then worked the evening shift for many years, doing "the bedpan boogey" as the aides used to call it. Sarah worked wherever she was needed but she especially loved her assignment with the Obstetrical Unit the last few years before she retired in 1994.

Mary Alberta (Bert) knew to send Sarah to Mrs. Lane because she worked in the hospital's kitchen for 29 years, many of those as the cook. She started in the old hospital in 1966 and got to

know just about everyone over time. "I worked about every position in the kitchen but I always loved cooking," commented Bert. "When our cook Maizie Blackston passed away I spoke up and told everyone I wanted that job. I figured if I cooked the food for them and did it right that they would love it," recalled Bert. And love it they did. Even today, associates at the hospital recall her homemade recipes, especially her bread pudding.

She may be retired, but Bert still loves to cook. Now it is for special family occasions or holidays such as Easter. Bert rents a place large enough to hold the multi-generational family members and cooks dinner for them all.

There is one patient for whom Bert's homemade cooking made a tremendous difference. She was delivering menus on the patient floors and she noticed he hadn't eaten any of his previous meals, so she started to talk to him. She said he was told that he only had so long to live so he gave up even trying. Bert went back to the kitchen and made that patient some homemade chicken soup, adding lots of love to it.

"When I brought him the soup, he

couldn't believe I had cooked just for him," she remembered. "I watched as he took some and then some more. He finished it all." The patient went on to recover and years later returned to the hospital just so he could find Bert and thank her.

"We had a lot of fun in addition to all the hard work," the sisters remarked. Except for one Christmas Day when Bert worked a double shift because the entire evening shift had called in sick, she was grateful for the job. Her first paycheck in 1966 was \$45.

But the legacy of employment with the hospital didn't stop with these two of the five surviving Mason sisters. Sarah's daughter and granddaughter followed in her footsteps.

It was 1967 when high school junior Sarah Milburn Holt started working weekends in the old hospital for 75 cents an hour. She worked in the Auxiliary snack bar where over the years she alternated between mornings and nights, working as a waitress and cashier. She became the snack bar manager in 1984 in the new hospital and remained there for another three years. When she left, she was earning \$5.25 an hour.

"I would fix and serve all the