



A treasured elder...

William McKillop

"Dr. Will" continues his service to others

Treasure
Our
Elders

At an age when many men are themselves dependent on nursing home care, 83-year-old William McKillop is in one too — as the administrator!

"When I first got here, I told the owners I'd stay for a few months until they got somebody permanent," McKillop recalled as a wry smile broadened across his face. "That was July 2000." Five years later, "Dr. Will" remains a daily presence at Lakewood Nursing Center in Crescent City and continues a distinguished career of more than 50 years in health education and administration. McKillop's career as a nursing home administrator began at age 63, when most men his age are thinking about retirement.

American dream

Born in Saltcoats, Scotland, McKillop immigrated to Chicago with his parents in 1925. Over the next 12 years, the family grew to include seven children as McKillop's father built a successful wholesale and retail bakery business. McKillop finished high school and was planning to study English literature in college when World War II intervened. For the next three years, McKillop served in France, Belgium, Holland and Germany as a U.S. Army medical corpsman. He vividly recalls accompanying an Army psychiatrist to Germany's just-liberated Dachau concentration camp in the Spring of 1945. When he got there, the chimneys of the crematory were still smoking. "Everywhere there were piles of dead bodies covered with lime and soldiers were busily unloading the sick and dying from the train cars."

After the war, McKillop married girlfriend Agnes (the couple will celebrate their 60th wedding anniversary in February), returned to Chicago, took a job as a shipping clerk and attended the University of Chicago on the G.I. Bill. He graduated in less than three years and later got a job as a remedial reading instructor in a vocational high school on Chicago's tough South Side. After two years, McKillop fled the blackboard jungle. "I figured sooner or later I'd get a knife in the liver and it's all over."

A job writing and editing articles for a publisher of professional health care journals led to a position with the Chicago-based



He's the Boss:

McKillop's easygoing manner works wonders with patients and staff. "I don't micromanage. I give an assignment and hold the person accountable for doing a decent job."

American Hospital Association, where he spent the next 12 years as an editor of its journal. By 1965, McKillop was Administrator of Hospital Affairs for the American Osteopathic Association, responsible for accrediting 200 hospital programs nationwide. In 1972, McKillop left his adopted hometown of Chicago for Tulsa and the 440-bed Oklahoma Osteopathic Hospital, where he was Director of Medical Education. He later served stints as a physician and nurse recruiter for a Texas "headhunter" company and a Florida-based hospital consultant-troubleshooter and mental health facility administrator. Along the way, McKillop earned a Masters degree in Business Administration and a doctorate in Science.

Starting out...again

While McKillop was building a successful career, so was wife Agnes, who had earned a Bachelor of Science in Nursing and became a successful gerontological nurse and director of nursing for nursing homes and other elder care facilities. It was her suggestion that he consider a career in nursing home administration that led to McKillop's traveling to Tallahassee in 1985 to take and pass his nursing home administrator license exam. He ran facilities in St. Augustine and nearby Ormond Beach, where he and Agnes still make their home. Younger brother Andy is the administrator of Okeechobee Health Care Facility, proving that service to the elderly must run in the family.

McKillop has seen profound change in elder care over the past 20 years. "Most

nursing homes back then were small 'mom and pop' operations with very little medical care. Today's nursing home provides a higher level of care than ever before. The staff is better trained and there is much more daily involvement with dieticians and physicians."

Making the rounds

McKillop moves easily among patients and staff at the homey 92-bed facility and uses a friendly, low-key manner to get things done. He stops by the nurse station to console a CNA whose grandfather died. He strolls the hall with his Office Manager while they discuss upcoming plans for Medicare Part D. As he proceeds outside to the spacious screened porch situated practically on the shore of 16,000-acre Lake Crescent, McKillop gently kids with a woman patient about her 50-year smoking habit. There is no need to ask if being elderly himself helps him better relate to those in his care.

"A doctor once told me that we were put on this earth to serve others. That's always been my operating philosophy," Dr. Will replies to a question about why he's still going strong well into his eighth decade. In person McKillop looks at least 20 years younger than he is, so few know (or for that matter, even care) about his age. "One time a man 15 years younger than me was telling me about his various aches and pains. He said, 'Doc, when you get to be my age you'll know what it's like.' I just smiled benignly and said, 'I guess I will.'"

FHCA honors William McKillop and treasures his many contributions to our nation.