

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 two families - The Thompsons and the Bows.



The Thompson Family

As a former St. Mary's County Commissioner and current Chairperson of the MedStar St. Mary's Hospital Board of Directors, Barbara Thompson has more than established roots in St. Mary's County. At the helm of the Board since the 2009 merger with MedStar Health, Barbara's leadership continues to guide the hospital into the next century of caring.

Although she says, "I'm not from here, I'm a 'come here,'" Barbara has lived in Hollywood, Md., with her husband, Mike Thompson, since the early 1980s - the area where he was raised. The Thompson family's lineage runs deep in the county where well over 100 family members, consisting of at least seven generations, have called Hollywood and the surrounding area their home.

The late Upton and Miriam Drury Thompson married in 1936 and had nine children, all of whom were born at St. Mary's Hospital. Three of their children, Mike Thompson, Franny Thompson and Pat Thompson Suit spent an afternoon recalling stories of their mother's childhood - stories that their "Mama" told them of the old St. Mary's.

As a young girl, Miriam attended

St. Mary's Academy in Leonardtown, the current home of the College of Southern Maryland. In the course of her hour-long lunch break, Miriam would head to her home just across the street from the St. Mary's Hospital on Peabody Street. From there, she took food to her mother's assigned hospital patient. "During that time, the ladies in Leonardtown were all assigned a patient to feed," said Franny. "It wasn't necessarily a big deal," added Mike, "It was just something that was done."

Growing up across the street from the hospital made for some memorable moments. Miriam and her mother, Lillie Drury, are said to have kept watch over the hospital's patients each Tuesday while the hospital superintendent kept a standing commitment to play cards. This meant Miriam made many friends with the hospital's staff and patients. But, if there was one downfall to living so close to the hospital, it was the sound of patients yelling coming from the open windows.

Miriam's story with the hospital continued years later when she gave birth. Times were certainly different then. "Mom was anesthetized for each birth," said Mike. And, Franny added, "Mama was gone for at least a week for every one...it was a way for the mother to get her strength back." Today, most mothers are discharged after 48 hours.

Both Franny and Pat spent

*Above: Grandchildren, great-grandchildren and one great-great grandchild.
Left: Upton and Miriam's children and their spouses.*

summers working at the hospital in their teenage years. Franny spent the summer of 1957 helping her aunt, Miss Kitty Thompson, RN, in the medical records office. "The records were packed in boxes and not organized in any fashion," recalled Franny. "But, I was fascinated by them. That's actually how I found out what time I was born." Miss Kitty maintained the hospital's medical records department from its inception in 1958. She and Dr. John Roache developed the hospital's Tumor Registry in the early 1970s. Surveyed in 1977, the program was accredited by the American College of Surgeons on their first visit - an astonishing accomplishment for a small hospital.

Following in her sister's footsteps, Pat worked part-time as a ward clerk while attending college from 1967 to 1971. She helped where needed taking doctor's orders, answering the intercom and transporting patients. She fondly recalled transporting an expectant mother who was just moments from giving birth. "That was a long elevator ride," reminisced Pat.

Throughout the decades, the Thompson family has had many personal interactions with the hospital. They've watched it grow from an "adequate and clean, but very basic hospital," said Barbara, to a "state-of-the-art facility with technology that's more advanced than what you would find in a bigger hospital." But one thing remains the same - the people. "They are very cordial," said Mike, "they are special that way."

