

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 stripper. "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

The Multi-Generational Mason and Holt Families



food, close out the cash register and whatever else needed doing during my shift," said Sarah. She also had a reputation for balancing the books to the exact penny. She couldn't stand to be even one penny off and would worry over the figures until she found it.

There were fun times, too, Sarah said, describing the time she was tricked into doing all the work for her own baby shower. "I was told to set up a birthday party in the snack bar for Miss Carroll. I made all the special sandwiches, handled the arrangements, cleaned and decorated the snack bar only to discover that the party was for me," she laughed. "I'll never forget that."

Sarah's daughter, Duana Holt, hadn't planned to follow in her family's footsteps. "I really just lucked out," she said. But, it must be in the genes because she is still working for the hospital 23 years later. "It's because of the people. It's always been like an extended family," she said.

It was Carole Nelson, executive assistant, who hired Duana in 1989. "I would take my notebook, purse and coffee mug and off I would go to my day's assignment," said Duana, who rotated among several different offices. "I loved it because I learned a great deal about the hospital."

Duana also worked in the

Laboratory and in Human Resources full time before she came back full circle to work for Carole in an administrative secretarial post in 1993. In the 19 years that Duana has worked in the Administrative offices she has worked for three vice presidents.

"I have seen so much change, especially in the tools that we use to accomplish our work and having state of the art facilities," said Duana. "We used to be somewhat behind the rest of the world but now we are right up there with the best." The days of working on a Macintosh computer and using square disks doesn't seem that long ago since technology has moved so quickly. "Work is definitely a busier place these days," she said and credits the expansion and the advancements the hospital has made to serving the growing county's needs properly.

In talking about growth and change, Sarah Milburn, Bert and Sarah Holt all recalled how much the county itself has changed. Houses stand where tobacco grew. Roads went from gravel to pavement and from two lanes to four lanes and more. Traffic was so light it was safe to walk into Leonardtown along Point Lookout Road. People left doors unlocked. Neighbors could walk into a house with no one home, drop things off inside or borrow something

and leave a note. "We could take a fresh egg to Stanley Johnson's store in Leonardtown and trade it for a bag of candy," recalled Bert and her sister.

Things were also different in the county and at the hospital before Civil Rights. "When we went to the movies in Leonardtown, we had to use the alley entrance," recalled the sisters. They also had to sit in the balcony, which they said actually had the best seats in the house.

As a nurse's aide, Sara could "wait on any of the patients" but she couldn't come in through the front door of the hospital. "We had to use the back entrance," she said. Sarah recalled that even the African American patient rooms were in the back of the hospital. "Integration was gradual. It wasn't a sudden thing."

The Mason sisters who worked at the hospital gave birth to nine children, with five of them born at the hospital. The younger of Sarah's two daughters were also born at St. Mary's Hospital. But the family doesn't stop there. Grandchildren, great grandchildren and great-great grandchildren grace the table when Bert cooks for their Easter gathering. And family is what these women still think of when they think about all the friendly people they worked with over the years.