

Giving a little, year after year, is how he says thanks for 70 years of excellent care

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John Killebrew, rear, enjoying a favorite pastime with his grandson, Patrick Stallings, age 5.

If you find yourself sitting next to John Killebrew in a waiting area during your next visit to Campbell Clinic, strike up a conversation. Then sit back and get ready to be entertained.

John enjoys telling stories about his experiences at Campbell Clinic through the years. And considering the fact that his first visit was in 1937, more than 70 years ago, John has plenty of stories to share.

A retired cabinetmaker who lives in Itta Bena, Mississippi, Killebrew was only five years old when he rode with his father from Martin, Tennessee, to Memphis to bring his mother to see a doctor. Mrs. Killebrew had developed a tumor on the leg where a horse kicked her during childhood.



Dr. Willis C. Campbell and Dr. Spencer Speed

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“Dr. Campbell and Dr. Spencer Speed removed the tumor, which was benign,” John said. “My mother thought they were great surgeons and great men.” Mrs. Killebrew was also a patient of Dr. Speed’s in 1947 and 1957.

A WIDE-SPREAD REPUTATION

During his early adulthood, John lived in Helena, Arkansas. In one of the jobs he held, his duties included driving an ambulance.

“When someone had broken bones, a lot of the time we’d bring them to Memphis to be treated by Campbell Clinic doctors,” John said. “Most rural areas didn’t have an orthopaedic doctor then. But most everybody had heard of Campbell Clinic, even people in small towns. They knew Campbell Clinic was the best place to go.”

Killebrew’s father was a Campbell Clinic patient in 1958, when he had surgery for a broken foot. Twenty years later, John’s first wife was treated at Campbell Clinic for bursitis in a heel.

After years of driving other patients to Campbell Clinic, John finally became a patient himself in 2001. One day while building a cabinet, he got a splinter in his hand. A local doctor failed to locate the small piece of wood. When the splinter began pressing against a nerve, causing his fingers to draw, John made the three-hour drive to Memphis to visit Campbell Clinic.

“I saw Dr. Mark Jobe, a hand specialist,” Killebrew said. “He found the splinter, did an operation, and my hand was as good as ever.” Later that year Dr. Jobe performed surgery to remove bone chips from Killebrew’s elbow.

IT’S WORTH THE DRIVE

In 2004, after a lifetime of working on his feet, Killebrew needed knee replacement surgery. Although an orthopaedic surgeon was available closer to home, Killebrew decided to have the surgery done at Campbell Clinic.

“Letting somebody go in and replace your knee is pretty serious business,” John said. “I got to thinking, it’s Campbell Clinic that writes the book on orthopaedic surgery. With my family’s experience of good care, I decided to go on trusting Campbell Clinic.”

Dr. David LaVelle performed replacement surgery on one of John’s knees in 2004. In 2005, he replaced the other knee. Today John keeps busy doing chores around the house, working in his yard, driving into Itta Bena every morning for coffee and conversation with a group of old friends, and fishing on Grenada Lake.

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Dr. David LaVelle

—JOHN KILLEBREW

JUST A LITTLE CAN HELP A LOT

After Killebrew read about the work of The Campbell Foundation in a newsletter, he called to ask what was the minimum donation the Foundation would accept.

“I don’t have a lot of money like some of the donors,” he said, “but I could see that this was a good cause. Well, the lady at the Foundation said even \$1 would help. So I’ve been giving a little all along since then.”

The Foundation’s support helps make Campbell Clinic the strong, reliable source of quality care that it has become for patients throughout the region, according to Killebrew.

“People all over know there’s no better place in the country to deal with bones than Campbell Clinic,” he said.