

Mary Aldridge-Cluts' childhood injury marked the beginning of this Mississippi homemaker's 55-year history as a Campbell Clinic patient.



No stranger to pain, this resilient senior relies on a positive attitude — and Campbell Clinic

Maybe her upbringing in a big, hard-working farming family is what keeps Mary Aldridge-Cluts from complaining about the many bone- and joint-related problems she's experienced in her 72 years.

Maybe it's her faith, or her independent spirit, that keeps Mary upbeat. One thing's for sure: Considering the pain and injuries she has endured in her lifetime, Mary has earned the right to grumble. But she doesn't.

"So much is in your attitude," Mary said. "There have been a couple of times when I've been down, but I got back up."

The joint injury she suffered in childhood had ramifications that have trailed and tormented Mary for a half-century. Through it all, Mary relied on Campbell Clinic to provide her with the most effective treatment and quality care.

AN ADOLESCENT COLLISION

Mary was 13 when she and a cousin collided while playing softball in a field in rural Tate County, Mississippi. Mary's left knee popped out of place, and swelling followed. A local doctor told her to stay off the knee until the swelling went down.

In high school, Mary's weakened knee was vulnerable to injury. "I could actually hear my knee grinding as I climbed the stairs at school," she said.

Three days after high school graduation, Mary underwent knee surgery. Seeking the best care in the region, her family took her to Campbell Clinic in Memphis, 40 miles away. Dr. Fred Sage removed her patella, a common procedure at the time when a damaged kneecap dislocates easily and repeatedly.

"Dr. Sage had red hair, and a big, booming voice," Mary said. "I had a long scar, and he used to tease me saying he had left his mark on me. I didn't know it then, but I was going to see a lot more of Dr. Sage in the years to come."

A LITANY OF INJURIES

Bone and joint injuries, arthritis, osteoporosis, and other musculoskeletal conditions are the most frequently reported health problem in America. They are a major cause of pain, medical expenses, lost wages, and reduced quality of life.

The joint injury she suffered in childhood had ramifications that have trailed and tormented Mary Aldridge-Cluts for a half-century. "My children have memories of me out cutting the grass with a push mower, dragging along a cast on my leg," she said. "There was a time when I went to work in a cast and propped my leg on a wastebasket so I'd be more comfortable."

Some of the reasons for her visits to Campbell Clinic through the years include:

- About a year after her first knee surgery, wires inside the knee snapped. Another surgery was required.

- When she was pregnant with her third child, Mary fell going out a door and tore muscles in her leg.

Dr. Sage performed another surgery.

- Because of the pain in her left knee, Mary began favoring her right leg. In time, her uneven gait led to pain in both legs. By the time she was 40, arthritis had set in. Then came back pain.

Through it all, Mary relied on Campbell Clinic to provide her with the most effective treatment and quality care.

"I've always had so much confidence in the doctors at Campbell Clinic," she said. "In addition to Dr. Sage,

stamina, could work in her garden again, and enjoyed more activities with her grandchildren.

In 2008, Mary fell at a church event and broke her leg. Dr. Crenshaw repaired her femur that had broken above her total knee, using a long plate and screws. In December 2009, Mary fell again, this time fracturing her left hip. Dr. William Albers repaired that fracture with a short intermedullary hip screw device.

Today, because she is troubled by arthritis in her spine, Mary sometimes relies on the high-powered wheelchair Dr. Crenshaw recommended for use when she's cooking, carrying items, and

"Dr. Crenshaw, his staff — especially Pam, and all the people at Campbell Clinic have been wonderful. They are concerned about me; they really care. After all these years, they really do feel like family to me." — MARY ALDRIDGE-CLUTS



Dr. Andrew Crenshaw

I've been treated by Dr. (Andrew) Crenshaw, Dr. (Philip) Wright, Dr. (James) Calandruccio, and Dr. (William) Albers. They have always been so caring and concerned about me. I never doubted that, if there was something that would help me, they would recommend it."

NEW TREATMENTS, DEVICES HELP

In the last decade, Mary's visits to Campbell Clinic illustrate the progress that has been made in orthopaedic medicine in her lifetime.

In 2006, Dr. Andrew Crenshaw performed replacement surgery on the knee Mary injured as a child. After the surgery, Mary said, she had increased

when she must stand for an extended period. The wheelchair has a joystick for easy operation and a leg rest for added comfort.

Twice widowed, Mary enjoys helping others who were there when she needed support. Involved with her grandchildren and her church, she also writes an inspirational column for the local county newspaper.

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