

Broadcast-‘Lunch Ladies’ Recall Nearly Three Decades Together

Delores, Muriel, Hazel and Dianne didn’t care what was on the menu, they knew nothing was going to keep them from their standing appointment.

The four ladies met up daily for lunch every day for nearly 30 years while they worked at Kewanee Public Hospital which was the early incarnation of OSF HealthCare Saint Luke Medical Center.

Kewanee Public Hospital took 15 years to build, mostly due to fundraising issues but opened the doors for its first patient April 17, 1919. So, 100 years later to the date, OSF HealthCare celebrated its early beginnings with an anniversary celebration, including a luncheon for retirees.

Collectively, Delores Shimmin, Hazell Boswell, Muriel Jackson and D. Dianne Lindstrom represent more than 120 years of combined service and they relished being back together again for one more lunch.

SOT-Hazel Boswell, former business office worker at Kewanee Public Hospital

“Starting on that old manual typewriter ... plunk, plunk, plunk. And, then we got the electric one. And then finally, you know, the computer. It was fun. It was busy!” (:09)

Dolores started in the Business Office and with the advent of data processing that used punch cards, she began sending them to a Saint Louis company which read them and then printed bills. Eventually a computer was brought in house and she became, as she called it, director of computers.

SOT-Delores Shimmin, former director of computers for Kewanee Public Hospital

“If the girl at the outpatient desk had trouble with her computer, the terminal, I’d have to go in and re-start it, reboot it. So, I was all over that hospital in the middle of the night. I knew it very well,” Dolores shared. :14)

Muriel Jackson put in 27 years in the Business Office and is the only one of the ladies who was still working in 2006, when the decision was made to build a full replacement hospital at the new location on South Street in Kewanee. Jackson said her biggest challenge was during January of 1979. Kewanee received 30 inches of snow.

SOT Muriel Jackson, former business office employee at Kewanee Public Hospital

Jackson remembers, **“We had snow –very, very deep snow. There was a week where I did not even get in to work. There was just no way. And, people in town went on snowmobiles to pick some of them of them in so they could work.” (17)**

Many others who were around for the early days of what became OSF Saint Luke Medical Center gathered around scrap books and viewed memorabilia in a large meeting room on the first floor of the state-of-the art building. 89 year-old Frances P. Smith’s most vivid memory was working as night nursing supervisor when there was no emergency room.

Patients needing help rang a bell at the reception desk that was unstaffed overnight.

SOT-Former Kewanee Public Hospital nurse, Frances P. Smith

“The person would be standing there ringing the bell waiting for someone to come. If you were busy on the floor, someone would try to contact you and say ‘you have an admission so you know you have to hurry down and admit this person.’ Yeah, it was so different Frances recalled. (:19)

On April 1, 2014, Kewanee Hospital affiliated with OSF HealthCare and became OSF Saint Luke Medical Center. Many know Luke as the apostle of Jesus who spoke about issues of helping the poor. He is also known as patron saint of physicians and surgeons.