

# Claude McNeill, old-school doctor, dies at 83

By Sherry Wilson-Youngquist  
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ELKIN

Dr. Claude McNeill, an old-school physician who treated many Elkin residents from cradle to grave, died yesterday at Hugh Chatham Memorial Hospital. He was 83.

McNeill graduated in the first four-year class at Bowman Gray School of Medicine in Winston-Salem in 1943 and began his practice in Elkin in 1947, a time when house calls were still made.

"When he came to Elkin, he would basically make a house call anywhere to build his practice. Frequently, he was paid in fruits and vegetables," said Mac McNeill, Claude's son.

"He delivered a lot of babies. In those days, we called it general practice. Today, you refer to it as family practice.

"And I think he took his profession with great seriousness," Mac McNeill said of his father. "He was a great listen-

er, and he would advise as well as treat. I think it's noteworthy."

McNeill was of an era that doesn't exist anymore, said Dr. Paul Gulley, a friend and the chief of family practice and internal medicine at Chatham Memorial.



CLAUDE McNEILL

"It was before corporate medicine and Medicare and insurance and third parties," Gulley said. "He did it all at that time. He was the cardiologist, obstetrician. He was the guy who took care of sore throats and pneumonia and everything in between."

At one time, McNeill served as the chief of staff at Chatham Memorial. He served three three-year terms as a member of the hospital's board of trustees. McNeill retired in 1988, hospital officials said.

"It was always a pleasure to see him in the hospital because he had so many

friends in the hospital staff," said Rich Osmus, the hospital's chief executive. "When he walked in, he always received so many hugs."

In the summer of 1976, McNeill allowed Gulley to shadow him when Gulley was a third-year medical student at Bowman Gray. Gulley said that McNeill made an impression, in part because of his bedside manner.

"It's one of those things that's hard to put into words because he was just such a people person. He had a way to put people at ease," Gulley said. "What makes a complete physician is not just their knowledge but it's how they convey the information, and you know, being able to hold people's hands and knowing what to say at the time."

A memorial service will be held Sunday at 2 p.m. at the First Baptist Church in Elkin.

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## MCNEILL

ELKIN — Dr. Claude A. McNeill Jr. died Aug. 16 at Hugh Chatham Memorial Hospital. Born Aug. 11, 1919, in Millers Creek to Claude and Daisy Hayes McNeill, he practiced medicine in Elkin for more than 40 years. Instrumental in the construction of Hugh Chatham Memorial Hospital, he served it as chief of staff and trustee. He was a member of the Elkin School Board, a deacon in his church, a director of Kiwanis, the YMCA and the Chamber of Commerce, and a United Way president. Dr. McNeill attended Elkin schools, after which he completed the BS in chemistry at Wake Forest College in 1940. He was a member of the first four-year graduating class at Bowman Gray School of Medicine and he served in the U.S. Army Medical Corps. He did his post-graduate work at Hartford, Conn., Hospital and at N.C. Baptist Hospital. In 1943, he married Barbara Bennett Hawkins. A fine student athlete, Dr. McNeill became an avid golfer and a patient fisherman, maintaining his love of the outdoors all his life. For more than 40 years he volunteered as team physician for Elkin High School. For 60 years, he and Barbara followed Wake Forest teams with great enthusiasm. Dr. McNeill served as Wake Forest trustee four times, and he was named Trustee Emeritus in 1999. Twice president of the Bowman Gray Alumni, in 1977 he was honored with the medical school's Distinguished Service Award. He was a member of the Surry-Yadkin Medical Society, the N.C. Medical Society and a charter fellow of the American Academy of Family Practice. Devoted to his family, to his friends and to his community, Dr. McNeill lived a life of service, generosity and humility. His wife of 58 years, Barbara survives, as do two sisters, Minnie Ruth Gentry of Mount Airy and Elizabeth Cal-

loway of Elkin; and a sister-in-law, Nan McNeill of Wilkesboro. He is also survived by a daughter, Ann McNeill Rogers and husband Jay of Norfolk; and a son, Claude A. McNeill III and wife Paulette of Elkin; three granddaughters, Molly Campbell and Barbara Rogers, both of Norfolk, and Lara Dickerson of Hamptonville. His three great-grandchildren were a particular delight to him, Taylor and Alex Dickerson and Isabel Campbell. His was a significant presence in the lives of his seven nieces and nephews who, with their spouses, held him in high esteem. In lieu of flowers, the family asks that memorials be directed to Hospice of Surry-Yadkin; First Baptist Church of Elkin; Bowman Gray Class of 1943 Scholarship Fund; or Hugh Chatham Hospital Foundation. The family will receive friends from 7 to 9 p.m. today at Hodges Funeral Home. A memorial service will be held at 2 p.m. Sunday at the First Baptist Church in Elkin.

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