

# 40 year SMH veterans reflect on years of service

NASSAWADOX – There was a time, not so long ago, when it was common for folks to spend their entire careers working for a single organization or company, often doing the same or a similar job. In today’s work environment where “job-hopping” has become the norm, it is remarkable to find two employees celebrating 40 years of service as was recently the case at Shore Health Services. Interviews with Roy Johnson and Sue Savage offer insight into the qualities that characterize individuals with such long tenure and dedication.

*Roy Johnson* began working for the hospital when he was just 16. Pleased that Joe Larry hired him, he earned a reputation for hard work and reliability during his 7 year stint in the kitchen. After a transfer to Housekeeping (now known as Environmental Services), Johnson discovered that he got a lot of pleasure out of making the floors shine – still does. As a matter of fact, after recent knee-replacement surgery, he’s itching to get back to work. Always cheerful and willing to lend a hand, Johnson was chosen by his peers as Employee of the Year in 2003, and the plaque he received still hangs proudly in his living room.

*Sue Savage* started working in the Operating Room when she was 19. She credits the OR doctors for giving her an all-around education and instilling in her the desire to reach higher and learn more. She remembers each of those influential doctors and their special areas of expertise. Dr. Sturgis shared his love of English, history, literature and music. Dr. Milton Kellam was a genius at creating and adapting equipment for the OR’s specific needs. Dr. Denoon could quote Gray’s Anatomy by page number, and Dr. Henderson was a model of efficiency in the handling of materials and in defining and solving problems.

Although the course of their careers has been very different, there are striking commonalities that might explain Johnson’s and Savage’s longevity at SMH. For both, the hospital has been central to their lives. Johnson met his wife Ann at the hospital and enjoys the company of his co-workers. Savage comments that her relationship with Shore Memorial has outlasted any others in her life, including parents, children and husbands.

Pride in their work is another quality that comes through loud and clear. Johnson not only loves to see his floors shine, he’s also never late, often coming in before his shift starts to help out in the kitchen.

Savage has honed her sensitivity to the doctors' OR "style" to such a degree of sharpness that she can intuit what they are going to need by watching their body language.

Perhaps most important of all, each of these veterans has achieved a healthy balance between steadfastness and adaptability. Their tremendous respect for the old days doesn't prevent Johnson from being impressed with his new "oxidized zirconium" knee replacement, nor does Savage look back longingly for the days before disposables in the OR, when masks and gowns needed to be sterilized and needles were sharpened by hand and reused. Both have achieved a kind of wisdom based on depth of experience – a wisdom worth treasuring and learning from.