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Alumna Upholds Family Pharmacy Legacy Through Service

Wilma Wilbanks followed her father's example to a successful career

APRIL 29, 2022 BY PATRICK SMITH

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Wilma Wilbanks (second from right) spends a moment with family members (from left) Virginia Booth Horne, Bob Wilbanks, Wilma's husband; nephew Emory Booth; and Elen Ann Johnson, Wilma's mother. Submitted photo

OXFORD, Miss. – For Wilma Wilbanks, pharmacy runs in the family. Both her father and grandfather were pharmacists along with other family members. This made any family get-together a pharmacy affair.

"I think back to Thanksgiving and Christmas," Wilbanks said. "For every part of the family that was there, there was a drug store represented."

Growing up around so many pharmacists created memorable moments for Wilbanks. She fondly remembers playing with her brother and cousins in her family's pharmacy, Peoples Drug Store, in Leland.

"It was like Disneyland to us growing up," Wilbanks said. "For us children, it was a fun and happy place."

With all that positive exposure, it's no wonder that Wilbanks was inspired to pursue her own pharmacy career. She went on to attend the **University of Mississippi School of Pharmacy**, where she received her bachelor's degree in 1981.

Her love for the school hasn't stopped since she graduated. Wilbanks and her husband, Bob, also a UM pharmacy graduate, recently were honored as the school's 2022 Distinguished Alumni, highlighting their dedication to pharmacy education as preceptors and commitment to the profession.

After graduation, Wilbanks returned to Leland to begin her career at Peoples Drug Store. She worked alongside her father, Clint Johnson, where she received even more valuable lessons.

One such lesson was her family's dedication to community service. Following the example of her mother, father and grandparents, Wilbanks knows that the work of a pharmacist isn't limited to business hours.

"In my opinion, pharmacy is a service ministry," Wilbanks said. "Pharmacy is how you make your living, but service to your community is how you make your life."

Wilbanks and her husband live in the Delta town of Cleveland, where she practices pharmacy at

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OXFORD, Miss. – Eleven University of Mississippi students spent their winter break learning about the people who work behind the scenes of the American government in Washington, D.C. Lead by Jonathan Klingler, assistant professor of political science, the students of Pol 391: Applied Politics met not with candidates, but with the people who make candidates'

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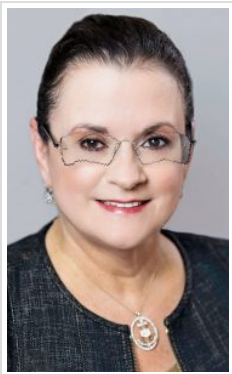
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Walgreens. Wilbanks credits the experience of working with her family for her successful career.



Wilma Wilbanks

"I watched how my father practiced, and that's the way I practice," Wilbanks said. "That's the way my grandfather practiced as well.

"Walgreens not only allows me to practice the way I do; they encourage it. They appreciate the training I got growing up in pharmacy."

The family's pharmacy legacy is continuing with her younger cousin, Emory Booth, who is a first-year Ole Miss student pharmacist. Wilbanks was overjoyed for Booth when she learned about his decision to attend pharmacy school.

"When he told me he wanted to go to pharmacy school, I was so thrilled," Wilbanks said. "Pharmacy is such a good life."

While Wilbanks has been happy to give Booth valuable advice, she encouraged him to find his own path and fulfillment in the field.

"I don't want him to limit himself because the practice of pharmacy is evolving," she said. "He is so gifted that he can do anything he wants to do."

For his part, Booth said that the example displayed by Wilbanks and other members of the family provided all the inspiration he needed.

"There was never any pressure for me to become a pharmacist, but having exposure to so many pharmacists that I loved and respected really shaped my view of the profession," Booth said. "Seeing how my personal traits aligned with other people from my family showed me that pharmacy is something I could really enjoy and find success with."

Wilbanks' commitment to service also extends to her membership in the Delta Gamma sorority. As a student, she found that the sorority's mission to do good lined up with the lessons learned from her family.

"They really reinforced and validated everything my parents and grandparents taught me about life and service," she said.

Wilbanks has remained heavily involved in the sorority over the years and serves as the international president. She plans to continue her work with the organization after her term ends.

Throughout all the family memories and professional experiences, it's the opportunity to serve that has made Wilbanks' career fulfilling.

"I've never gone to bed at night and wondered if I've done any good that day," Wilbanks said. "I always feel gratified when I go to sleep at night because I know that I've made a difference."

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