

Charles E. (*Charlie*) Knight

dob 09 November 1994

Orderly skills.

As college courses had ended Charlie started looking for employment for the summer. He saw a maintenance worker at a local hospital in Pittsfield, St. Luke's, and went for an interview. They were impressed and wanted him instead to be trained as an orderly.

He agreed and started the training. It was not terribly formal and he trained under a male nurse. But the hospital did have a loose leaf 3 ring binder in which they kept the hospital rules and procedures. That binder was kept in the "sun room" that the employees might use when "on break" or at lunch. Charlie would study that book and had most rules pretty much memorized.

He learned to care for patients' needs, to be an emotional support for them, treat them like a guest or a loved relative visiting with you. He was taught how to bath a person in bed, the way to change sheets with the person still in the bed, proper lifting techniques and when to get assistance from another staff person. One of the special skills was in the shaving of male genitalia in preparation for an operation.

In addition to the duties performed today, I assume an orderly can still administer a catheter. We were taught various nursing skills and assisted doctors in many procedures. Sometimes I would be called upon to start an IV, or do other things that we were trained to do but now are done by nurses. This was a very good hospital and had a Nursing School attached to it, so hence it was also a teaching hospital. While there the hospital was obtained by the entity now known as Berkshire Medical Center. There were at that time three hospitals in the city of Pittsfield, MA.

Mr. Knight liked this job as he had interactions with people daily and assisted people to get well. However, where the hospital needed him was on the "dead and dying" floor in the 11PM to 7AM shift. In this case many of the people that got enough better to "go home" actually died a few weeks later and often they died in the hospital and he would need to tuff their orifices with cotton and take the body to the morgue after death. He did not like that portion of the job, much of its details are not remembered.

At one point a very heavy gentleman was frightened by the sound of the ambulance arriving and started to have his legs buckle and fall. Charlie stopped that fall and got the man to instead go back onto the bed. But the injury to his back was such that he soon could no longer do this type of work. The end came when a nurse ordered him to do something that was against hospital policy and he refused for that reason. She was very irritated and moved to have him dismissed. Sister Mary Christine said to Mr. Knight that he would have had to have been fired if he had done what the nurse said as it was against hospital policy, but due to the "pecking order" in the hospital she had no choice but to let him go. She also said his work was so good she would willingly write any sort of glowing recommendation for him in the course of his seeking employment.

At this point he just went back to college as it was nearing September.

The skills learned in this employment were used by Charlie Knight in taking care of his Mother when she entered a nursing home to help her get acclimated with him working there also. They were also used when he took care of his Uncle Harold after an accident and as he was dying of cancer and as he took care of his father. They also were handy when he was the Activities Director at the New Boston Nursing home while they looked for someone with a college credentialed degree for that position.