

# Cordell Christian Home's Resident's Digest

Cordell Christian Home is rooted in a strong history of showing compassion for, and providing loving service to the elderly. This tradition dates back to the early 1950s, when the *Cordell Church of Christ* first began to explore ways it might address the needs of elders in the community. A couple in that church had opened a residential home for seniors, but limited funds and little space meant serving only a small percentage of the elderly community... they wanted to do more. Jack Cox was the minister of the *Cordell Church of Christ* at the time and saw the effort his congregates were putting into the idea of a home for the elderly. Understanding the positive impact a home like this could have on the community, he strived to make the dreams of this Christian community come true.

There were many obstacles while trying to get a home established. Attempts were made to purchase the Lake Valley School property for conversion into a retirement home. At that time, the State Department of Health felt a retirement home could not be located so far from a physician's clinic or hospital. Other locations and funds were minimal at this time and options were running low. With so few options, it seemed that those who wanted the home so badly could only pray that God would help them with their efforts.

In 1959 those prayers were answered. The Federal Government enacted the Housing Act of 1959 which set aside twenty million dollars for elderly housing. State Congressman Victor Wickersham heard of the church's interest in creating a home for the elderly and felt this new program was the perfect thing for them. He suggested that the church apply for this program, and in 1961 they were awarded a \$400,000.00 loan. With great optimism, the *Cordell Church of Christ* created and founded the Cordell Christian Home.

Construction of Cordell Christian Home began in March of 1961. Several construction companies competitively bid for the chance to build this wonderful home, with Construction Company, Inc. of Norman Oklahoma hitting the mark for the founders. Construction costs were kept to a minimum, ensuring that adequate funds remained to provide for other necessities associated with opening the home. Initially, the 28,730 square foot home included 63 resident rooms and 12 additional rooms for offices and storage. The Construction on the Cordell Christian Home took a short year and a half to complete and was ready to open its doors on February 1, 1962. It was the first project completed under the Housing Act of 1959 and, thanks

to the dedicated Board of Directors and employees, is one of the only beneficiaries of those funds remaining in operation today.

With its origination in the *Cordell Church of Christ*, the founding Board of Directors consisted of the six Cordell Church of Christ elders including Clint C. Cooke, P. K. Preskitt, R. R. Redwine, R. J. Wesner, C. G. Propps, A.F. Reeder. This board oversaw important decisions, finances, and held meetings, just as they do now, with the home's Administrator.

The first Administrator for CCH was Lowell Donley. Mr. Donley and his wife Janis, had huge hearts for people in need and deservingly became the faces of the Cordell Christian Home. Lowell Donley served as CCH's administrator for 29 years until his retirement in 1990. Mr. Donley became a resident at the Cordell Christian Home in 2001, living there until he passed away in May of 2005. His wife, Janis, continues to play an active role in the life of the home and currently serves on the Board of Directors.

Many others played a crucial part in the early days of the home, including Mr. Donley's team of dedicated staff members. Some of those include Pratt Baldwin (maintenance); Esther McNeal (nurse); Edith Sturgeon, Hazel Auld and Zoe Cooper (cooks); Helen Brown, Pearl Hardin and Rhonda Guest (attendants); And, Opal Cook, Loretta Franklin, Vera Best, and Marilyn Pethil. These committed people, along with the board of Directors, other members of the Church of Christ family, and community friends made the goals and wishes of the Cordell Christian Home come true and last.

In 1962, the goal of the *Cordell Church of Christ* upon opening the Cordell Christian Home was to give the elderly in the area the best possible care available. They knew that they could make a tremendous difference in people's lives... and they did. When the home opened, people called it "the finest and most complete home they had ever seen." With plans for a new building on the horizon, it is the goal of the current board and staff that people have this same reaction when the new building project is finished.

We are proud to say that even though we might be updating and changing the walls that surround us; our love for our residents and the entire community has stayed and will stay the same as it was when we first opened. We still live by our original mission statement and that is something we refuse to change.

-It is the mission of the Cordell Christian Home, through Christian service, to provide and maintain the highest possible level of care and service to its residents.-

"We acknowledge that technology will never replace the warmth of the human touch or the pleasant sound of a human voice. Only people, one to one, can provide many of the essentials for a quality life."