



Centenarian Gives Life Savings to Hospital



Economical in everything he did, Emery Kilmer often rode his bike all the way out to the Arva Flour Mill, where he picked up large sacks of flour for baking bread. Only well into his 90s did he begin to buy flour from a local bakery.

The life of Emery Kilmer exemplifies how a person of modest means can make a big difference. Kilmer, who recently died in his 102nd year, bequeathed almost his entire estate to London Health Sciences Centre for purposes of research. His gift is among the largest bequests ever made to the hospital.

Kilmer worked as a carpenter until he retired about 40 years ago. Both his wife and daughter died before him, leaving him with no immediate family. At the time of his death he was living on his own at his home in east London.

He lived his life frugally and self-sufficiently. His lawyer, executor and friend, Martin Stambler, now retired, remembers him as “fiercely independent.” He kept a vegetable garden, which made up much of his diet. He froze his berries, and kept carrots and beets in his root cellar. At age 100 he planted more strawberries, observing that he wouldn’t see them bear fruit for another two years.

Kilmer was a very sociable person who was generous to others. “He was an engaging, likeable guy, with a wry wit,” says Stambler. He played cards twice a week at the Community Centre on Hamilton Road. He helped his neighbours by shoveling snow, offering drives, or helping out when they were sick.

Even when his health began to fail, he tenaciously held on to his independence. Stambler remembers dropping by from time to time to bring him food, and make sure he was okay. Although grateful, Kilmer always made it clear that he was doing just fine on his own.

Reluctant to attract attention, Kilmer didn’t notify LHSC of his planned gift. Although the hospital often receives bequests it does not expect, Colleen DeJager, LHSC Planned Giving Officer, says that it’s nice to know ahead of time because it helps the hospital plan for the future. “More important, it gives the hospital an opportunity to recognize the person while he or she is alive,” she says. “We can also try to identify the area that is most in keeping with a donor’s philanthropic intentions.”

There are many ways that LHSC recognizes the generosity of donors who make planned gifts, says DeJager, and keep them informed about what’s happening. “We understand that it’s often a big sacrifice to give money to a charity, and we’re very grateful. We would have loved to have given a big thank you to Mr. Kilmer.”

A special thanks to London [Health Sciences Foundation](#) and their loving donors for sharing their story, © CAGP 2008