

## Bynum completes PT doctorate degree

### High-tech distance learning, desire to grow play important role in WGH staffer earning new University of Mississippi diploma

By Sean Dunlap

The educational process has certainly changed through the years — much like the field of physical therapy and rehabilitative services — according to Wayne General Hospital's Billy Bynum.

Bynum has successfully completed his physical therapy doctorate degree through the University of Mississippi — thanks in large part to the accessibility of courses through distance learning.

"Thirty years ago, the degree you could earn in physical therapy went about as far as the bachelor's level," Bynum said. "Through the years, it grew to master and doctorate levels, and I've tried to keep pace with the changes in the field."

Bynum said today's distance learning — notably taking course work by computer and emailing back and forth with an instructor — is a far cry from his days in the classroom back in the 1970s.

"There's a lot to be said about distance learning ... especially for those who are working during the day and are studying at nights and on weekends like I did," he continued.

"It certainly made it possible for me to get a doctorate degree while I was able to work at the hospital and have time with my family."

Jokingly, Bynum said his brand new degree won't mean any new duties at the hospital. "If you think I'm going to be doing what the medical doctors are doing ... I won't because I'm already pretty busy," he said with a chuckle. "I'm very happy to be in physical therapy ...

this degree just gives me the additional credentials so that I can be at my best through my work."

Another benefit, according to Bynum, was his computer proficiency, which has grown thanks in large part to the course of study.

"Rather than sitting in a desk and chair in a classroom, you can be in class in front of whatever computer you're sitting at," he said with a laugh. "With a computer, you either sink or swim ... I had to become a lot more proficient than I was when I began."

Starting in June, 2006, Bynum kicked off the process of earning his doctorate degree, and over the course of two and a half years — taking one and two classes per term and during the summer months — he was able to wrap up another professional milestone.

His newest diploma sits in a place of honor on his office wall inside the WGH Rehabilitation Center beside his other degrees.

"It was something that I wanted to do ... to try to better myself and what I can provide to my patients," Bynum said. "My family was very supportive of my efforts, especially my wife, Missy."

He also has two sons — one is an engineer, and the other is studying to become a physical therapist.

Bynum said he is also appreciative for the support of his peers and colleagues at Wayne General Hospital, where he has been a part of the staff since the late 1970s.

"From the administration to the hospital board, and to the doctors, nurses and staff, their support and friendship over the years helped to

make this possible, too," he said. "These are some great people to work with, and they genuinely care about the people they serve ... that's what make this feel like home to me."

Bynum's road to becoming involved with physical therapy began when he was injured playing high school football, and the effort to restore mobility in others suffering from a variety of problems took root thanks to a physical therapist he met along the way.

Bynum went on to study in the field in Meridian, and would even interview at Forrest General Hospital in Hattiesburg before he heard about a possible opening at the Waynesboro community hospital in the 1970s.

"I thought I would stop by and see about the job ... I had to get directions to find it," he said. "I ultimately got the job, and more than 30 years later I'm still here."

"Wayne General was one of the few rural hospitals in Mississippi that saw a need for physical therapy services back then ... and that outreach has steadily grown through the years. They had a real vision of what physical therapy needs would exist, and they are still looking to the future."

From literally being a one-man show, Bynum's operation has grown to include two physical therapists, two PT assistants, three technicians, speech and occupational therapists as well as the hospital's popular Wellness Center over the years.

"We have a really tremendous staff ... some of the best people you

could ever work with," he noted. "They really believe in delivering care that is second to none anywhere ... that's what makes this a fun place to work."

What has also made physical therapy even more of a service in demand under today's medical umbrella is public education.

"People know more about the benefits of physical therapy than ever before," Bynum said. "They know that physical therapy can benefit a number of health concerns and mobility issues ... with an emphasis on becoming more independent."

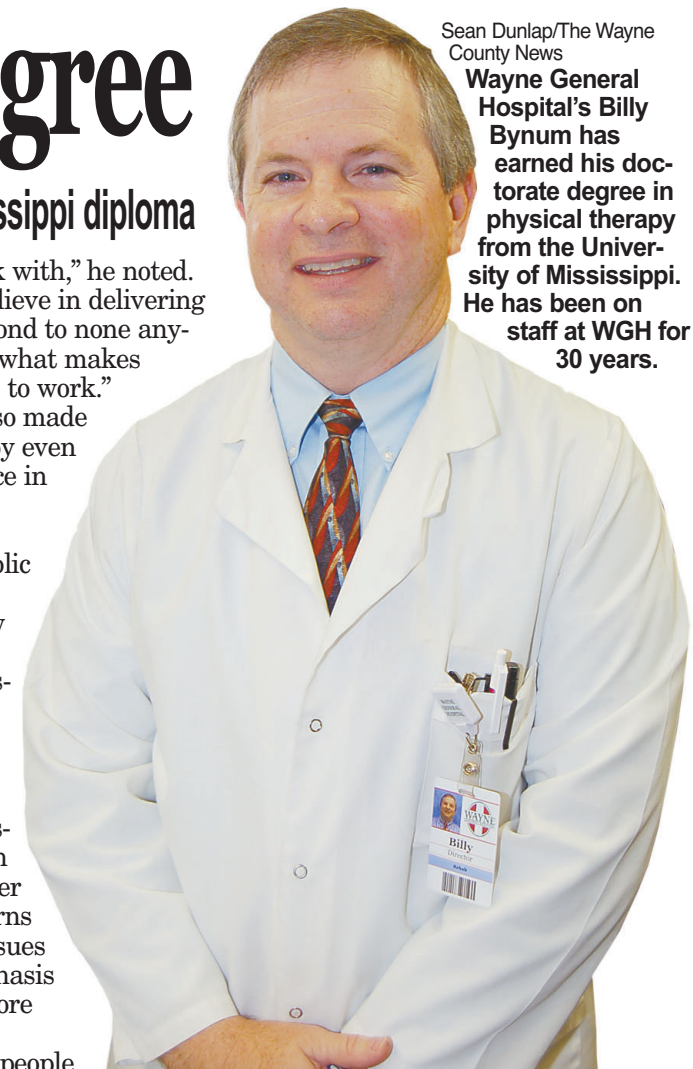
"In the past, people didn't know the value of physical therapy, but today they see what it can mean — everything to recovering from a sports injury to dealing with the aftermath of a traffic accident or say a stroke or heart attack."

That said, Bynum noted this is just one of the main reasons physical therapists are constantly considered one of the top 10 professions — now and in the future.

"We deal with young people and the elderly, and everyone in between," he said.

"In an average day, physical therapists deal with everything from

Sean Dunlap/The Wayne County News  
**Wayne General Hospital's Billy Bynum has earned his doctorate degree in physical therapy from the University of Mississippi. He has been on staff at WGH for 30 years.**



joint problems to hip fractures ... the problems are sometimes as unique as the individuals.

"A lot of what we try to do is structure a course of action that will meet the needs of the individual, to help each person back to a level that can give them back as much freedom and mobility as possible."

"That's one of the main reasons I've been in this as long as I have ... helping people deal with their situations. I enjoy working with people, and that has not changed over the years. I look forward to each day's challenges."