

The Heart of Carolina

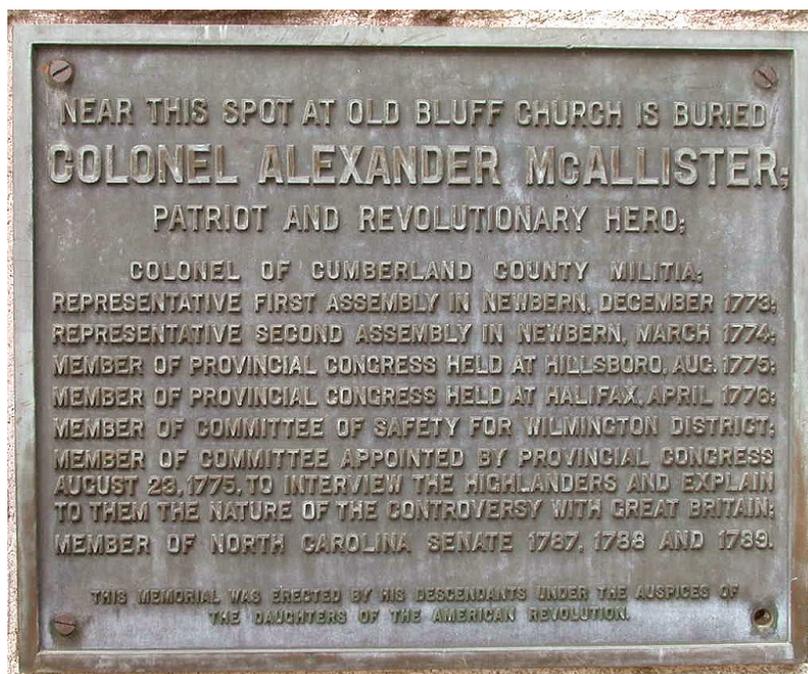
A Man Whose Heart Was Always In The Right Place Dr. Hugh A. “Chip” McAllister, Jr., MD '66 1939 – 2018

The UNC McAllister Heart Institute’s namesake, Dr. Hugh “Chip” A. McAllister, Jr., MD ‘66, was not only recognized for his national and international achievements in cardiovascular pathology but also his strong ties to UNC—a bond he shared with his father. Father and son are the only duo to have served as president of the UNC Medical Alumni Association and been recipients of the Distinguished Service Medal from the UNC General Alumni Association.

Dr. McAllister’s family influence, professional accomplishments, as well as his uncanny knack for being in the right place at the right time, spawned a celebrated career in medicine and an altruistic attitude that impacted the lives of those affected by cardiovascular disease.

The McAllister Early Years

Dr. McAllister’s deep roots in North Carolina span back to 1736 when his great grandfather, Colonel Alexander McAllister, traveled from Scotland to Wilmington and eventually settled in Bluff. A Revolutionary War hero, he helped guide the state in the transition from a colonial government. The McAllister family called the area around Bluff home for 100 years before moving to Lumberton in the mid 1800’s.



The McAllisters were cornerstones in Lumberton constructing the first Presbyterian Church, opening banks and becoming the first trustees of Davidson College. Five generations of McAllisters graduated from Davidson including Dr. McAllister, his father, Dr. Hugh A. McAllister, Sr., MD '35, and his two daughters.

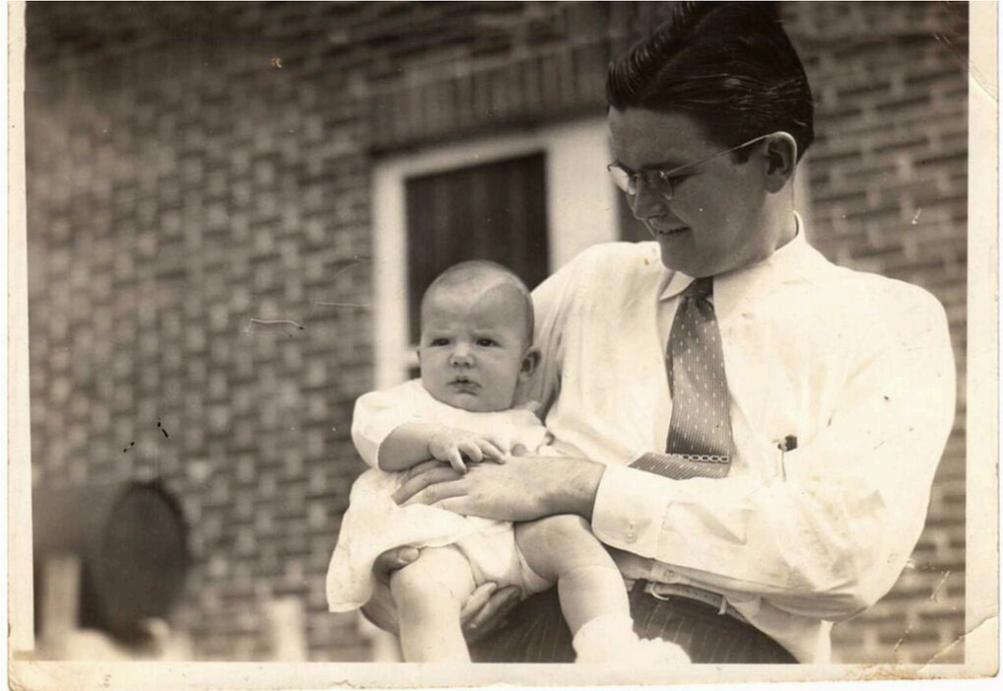
Davidson was not the only North Carolina school with the McAllister connection. Dr. McAllister and his father both graduated from the UNC School of Medicine 31 years apart.

Father and Son

After graduating from Davidson and UNC, the senior McAllister enlisted in the army and was assigned to Walter Reed Army Hospital. He met a nurse from Johns Hopkins Hospital. The two married and Hugh A. McAllister, Jr. was born. In 1940, the senior McAllister was offered an assignment at Pearl Harbor but chose to return to Lumberton to look after the family business.

Dr. McAllister, Sr. went on to set up a successful OB-GYN practice in Lumberton. “He delivered a baby every day for 39 years. There was even a joke that he single-handedly populated Robeson County,” said Dr. McAllister.

His father had a profound influence on his life as a doctor and as a pillar in the community. The many parallels between their lives demonstrated this influence.



Dr. McAllister attended Davidson College and then UNC School of Medicine. In 1966, he volunteered to join the Army Medical Corps during the Vietnam War. He completed three years of his residency in pathology at Walter Reed Army Hospital—the place where he was born and where his father was once stationed.

A true Tar Heel, Dr. McAllister often thought of the phrase “Tar Heel born and bred.” “It really bothered me for a while that I wasn’t born in North Carolina because I always thought of myself as born and bred in North Carolina,” said Dr. McAllister.

He eventually found out that because his father was commissioned in North Carolina but assigned to Walter Reed Army Hospital, his family paid North Carolina taxes and was considered their home of record. According to all paper records, Dr. McAllister truly was a “Tar Heel— born and bred.”

Heart Calling

Dr. McAllister spent many late nights in the medical library at Walter Reed Army Hospital pouring over journals trying to determine the path for his medical career. His general interest in cardiology and the fact that every male in his family had died from heart disease led him to focus his career in cardiology.

After three years of residency in pathology, Dr. McAllister spent his fourth year at the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology (AFIP) where he was appointed the Director of the Division of Cardiovascular Pathology. In 1971, Dr. McAllister became the Chair of the Department of Cardiovascular Pathology.

While at AFIP, Dr. McAllister continued studying cardiovascular disease and focused on cardiomyopathy, cardiac tumors, coronary diseases of diverse origins and sudden death in young soldiers. He wrote extensively about his studies and authored three textbooks as well as 39 chapters in additional medical books. In 1978, Dr. McAllister and Dr. John Fenoglio compiled *Tumors of the Cardiovascular System*, which is recognized today as the definitive publication on cardiac tumor research.

Throughout his army career, Dr. McAllister held academic appointments at the Uniformed University of the Health Sciences, Georgetown University School of Medicine, George Washington University School of Medicine, John Hopkins University Hospital and the UNC School of Medicine.

After rising to the rank of colonel at age 36, and serving 22 years in the military, Dr. McAllister retired and left AFIP in 1984. Dr. Robert Hall, former Chief of Cardiology at Walter Reed Army Hospital during Dr. McAllister's residency, had become the first medical director for the Texas Heart Institute in Houston. He knew first hand of Dr. McAllister's character, contribution to cardiac pathology and his leadership skills and asked McAllister to join him at the Texas Heart Institute as the founding Chair of the Department of Cardiovascular Pathology.

While at the Texas Heart Institute, Dr. McAllister collaborated with the directors of other cardiovascular programs and significantly contributed to the Institute's research and educational structure. He expanded his interest to include the pathology of heart transplantation and developed a system for grading cardiac allograft rejection. This system became the cornerstone for the Institute's clinical management of transplant patients and the model for the grading scale adopted by the International Society for Heart Transplantation.

Before retiring from the Texas Heart Institute in 2000, Dr. McAllister held appointments as Clinical Professor of Pathology at Baylor College of Medicine and the University of Texas Medical School. He also served on the editorial board of the *Texas Heart Institute Journal* and on the board of *Circulation*, where he edited the "Images in Cardiovascular Medicine" section for many years.

Recognition

Dr. McAllister received numerous awards recognizing his contributions to cardiac pathology including the Casimir Funk Award for outstanding work in the field of cardiovascular disease and the Silver Medallion of the Instituto Nacional de Cardiologia de Mexico, honoring him as a distinguished investigator in the field of cardiovascular disease.

He received the "A" Professional Designator Award for his accomplishments within the Army Medical Department from the Surgeon General of the United States Army and the Legion of Merit of the United States of America Award for outstanding service. In 2001, the Society for Cardiovascular Pathology recognized him with their Distinguished Achievement Award.

Dr. McAllister also received outstanding teacher awards from cardiology fellows at both AFIP and St. Luke's Episcopal Hospital in Houston.

Service to UNC

Dr. McAllister's love for UNC was in his blood—a bond passed down to him from his father. For both Dr. McAllisters, their time at UNC School of Medicine had a profound effect on them. In return, they have shown their appreciation in their service to the university.

Even while a medical student Dr. McAllister was recognized for his academic contributions to UNC. He received the Deborah Leary Award for outstanding student research and the Isaac Manning Award for most outstanding achievement by a graduating medical student.

In addition to serving as president of the UNC Medical Alumni Association, Dr. McAllister served as a member of the Executive Committee of the Medical Foundation of North Carolina and a member of the UNC Board of Visitors.

In 1999, Dr. McAllister endowed a distinguished professorship in obstetrics and gynecology in memory of his father.

In 2013, he received the Davie Award, the highest service award given by UNC's trustees.

An avid Tar Heel through and through, his driving force was to eradicate heart disease and partnering with UNC was his means to that end.

UNC McAllister Heart Institute

In 2009, Dr. McAllister made a significant donation to the UNC School of Medicine to fund cardiovascular research with the goal of creating one of the nation's leading centers for cardiovascular research. With that donation the UNC McAllister Heart Institute became a reality.

"They have an openness here that you don't find in many places, where there's interdisciplinary interaction between pathology, pharmacology, physiology, biochemistry and genetics. All of this is going to come together, I think, to bring very exciting changes in the morbidity and mortality of cardiovascular disease," said Dr. McAllister during a visit to Chapel Hill during the institute's beginning stages.

Today the UNC McAllister Heart Institute attracts more than \$15 million annually in research funding and hosts more than 45 labs that advance patient care. Its mission is to advance the care of patients with diseases of the heart, blood and circulation by encouraging basic, preclinical, and applied research to unravel the causes of cardiovascular disease and to provide new tools for its diagnosis and treatment.

Art To Heart

Dr. McAllister always saw a connection between the beauty in nature and science. As a young medical student he took photographs of slides under a microscope, enlarged the photos and framed them. Unsuspecting houseguests marveled at the beauty of the various shapes and colors adorning the walls of his kitchen. When asked what the photos showed, he simply smiled and said 'bacteria'.

Dr. McAllister's love of art also had deep roots in the beauty in nature he experienced as a child on his parent's property in Lumberton. As an adult in Washington, D.C. and Houston, Dr. McAllister missed the beauty of nature but ultimately reconnected with it in the art he saw coming out of Santa Fe.

He never considered himself an art aficionado but always appreciated Southwestern art and especially pieces that expressed "the endless possibility of life." Amassing a significant private art collection, Dr. McAllister spent decades collecting works representative of the Taos School artists as well as contemporary sculptures and Native American pottery and textiles.

"Early in my career I felt that if there was money leftover after paying my taxes and giving to charities that were important to me, then I could buy art," said Dr. McAllister. "I saw Southwestern art, at the time, as a small investment with a big return."

In 2011, Dr. McAllister gifted a large-scale bronze sculpture by the late American Chiricahua Apache artist Allan Houser to the Ackland Art Museum in honor of his father. The sculpture, *Next Generation II*, weighs 1,500 pounds and measures just over 5 feet high, 7 feet wide and 6 feet deep. It is now permanently displayed on the grounds of UNC Hospitals—close to the entrances of both the N.C. Women’s and Children’s Hospitals.

For Dr. McAllister, the abstract sculpture exemplified the values his father instilled in him and is symbolic of love and knowledge passed from one generation to the next.

“This abstract representation will be interpreted by each of us differently, whether that interpretation includes a parent and child, a teacher and student, a physician and patient, a caregiver and family member, a minister and congregant or simply two friends,” said Dr. McAllister at the dedication of *Next Generation II* in 2012.



In addition to *Next Generation II*, Dr. McAllister gifted over 150 additional pieces of art to the Ackland Art Museum. Some of the artwork will remain in the museum’s permanent collection while a large portion will be sold to expand an endowment that supports the UNC McAllister Heart Institute—a concept Dr. McAllister calls “art to heart.”

“I hope that the income generated from this gift will aid young investigators in the UNC McAllister Heart Institute to make advances in the prevention and treatment of arteriosclerosis and eventually reduce, and hopefully eliminate heart attack, stroke, aortic and peripheral vascular disease. Additionally I hope that when others see the impact of this gift that it will inspire thoughtfulness, selflessness, and compassion to give back in their own way as well,” said Dr. McAllister at the sculpture dedication.

Follow Your Heart

Dr. McAllister dedicated his life to protecting the lives of others through his military service, contributions to cardiovascular pathology, philanthropic gifts and his drive to inspire others to give.

“I think my greatest accomplishment is that I have had the health, the energy and the desire to continue to give back,” said Dr. McAllister. “If I just went through life accumulating things and not give back in some way, it would all mean nothing.”

Dr. McAllister’s generous spirit and love for UNC will continue to enrich the lives of North Carolinians for generations to come through the outstanding work being accomplished at the UNC McAllister Heart Institute.

Dr. Hugh “Chip” A. McAllister passed away at his home in Houston, Texas on Friday, June 14 at the age of 79.