

Miami Nice

by Jayne Cannon

Photography by Megan Frazier



Tony Bennett may have left his heart in San Francisco, but Bill Osborn found his in Miami.

Miami, Okla., that is. And before you learn a little about Bill, you need to understand a little about Miami.

Here's what you need to know first – the pronunciation. It's Mi-am-UH, not Miam-ME. Two cities, separated by 1,430 miles. One is tropical and beachy; the other hugs the northeast corner of the Oklahoma plains. Two different worlds.

But it's Bill's world. The new NCPA president, installed at the Annual Convention in October, was born in Miami 58 years ago. To say

They're rock stars in Miami. Here, Bill Osborn (center) and his team cross Main Street.





Photography by Erin Schrad

2018-2019 NCPA President Bill Osborn

About Bill Osborn

Hometown: Miami, Okla.

Education: PharmD, University of Oklahoma School of Pharmacy, 1984.

Family: Father, Willie Osborn, recipient of NCPA's Willard B. Simmons Independent Pharmacist of the Year. Wife, Jane, since 1985; sons Ben and Jack.

Business: Owner, Osborn Drugs, Miami, Okla. Years ago, Willie Osborn started taking on partners to help pharmacists who were interested in ownership. The business model expanded, and now Osborn has partners in 24 stores across four states.

Super fan: He's passionate about the Miami High School Wardogs and the Oklahoma Sooners.

Music man: He loves to crank up the Earth, Wind and Fire music.

Bet you didn't know: His position as NCPA president involves quite a bit of travel, but he took his first flight at age 25 when he was his brother's "plus one" at an event in Durango, Colo.

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he's a die-hard community booster is an understatement. He's all about local projects, committees and civic endeavors. Three of his four siblings live in Miami. His mom, Zella Jane Osborn, is still there, but his dad, Willie Osborn, passed away in 2014. Zella Jane and Willie were sweethearts at Miami High School, where, like their children and later, most of their grandchildren, they cheered on the Miami High School Wardogs.

Fifty years ago, Miami High produced a Heisman Trophy winner, the University of Oklahoma's Steve Owens, and the city recently raised money for a tribute and statue and an honors plaza at the local football stadium. Guess who chaired the \$75,000 fund-raising drive? Yep, it's Bill, who took on the role with gusto – and ended up beating the goal by \$50,000.

"There is nothing more Miami than honoring Miami's favorite son," Bill says.

Bill did leave Miami, but just for college and pharmacy school. He always wanted to be a pharmacist. His father was a pharmacist, and Bill looked up to his father. He enjoyed working alongside him, learning from him about pharmacy, business, and life. Of Willie Osborn's five children, Bill is the only one who followed in his dad's footsteps. His brothers, twins Mark and Clark, and Matt are physicians, all practicing in Miami. (Sister Amy is a health care attorney in Dallas.) The Osborns like to needle each other, and Bill loves to say that his brothers all wanted to be pharmacists, but they couldn't hack pharmacy school, so they settled for medical school.

He did spend a few years at OU in Norman, Okla., but when it came to marriage, he again followed in his dad's footsteps and married a hometown girl, also named Jane. But Bill and Jane weren't high school sweethearts; she was two years younger

and he didn't meet her until he came home on a break from college.

Bill always thought he'd end up back in Miami, but there was a time in pharmacy school when he had some doubts. Friends encouraged him to spread his wings and work for someone besides his dad. His father wanted him to do whatever he wanted to do. So, Bill mentioned to a family friend, another pharmacist, that he was thinking about going elsewhere for his first career stop.

"I'll never forget it," Bill says with a laugh. "He looked at me and said, 'What in the hell are you thinking? Do you know how many people would love to have the opportunity you have?'"

It woke Bill up. He decided to head back to Miami, but he had some talking to do first. He and Jane weren't married yet, and she wasn't so keen on going back home. "The greatest sales job I ever did was convincing Jane to go back to Miami," he says, quickly adding that she's never regretted the move. "She loves it here as much as I do."

The Osborns have two sons, Ben and Jack, both of whom attend the University of Oklahoma. Their years in Norman have given Bill the opportunity to go all in on Sooner football. He didn't miss a home game in 2018. He hauls his 6-foot-by-12-foot trailer to every game and more than 100 people, including his sons and their eight cousins who attend OU, gather for epic tailgates.

His Saturdays belong to the Sooners but pharmacy is first through the week – next to family, that is. Osborn owns his pharmacy in Miami and has partners in 24 stores in four states. One of his partners,

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Osborn sees challenges, but also opportunities

Bill Osborn assumes the presidency of NCPA at a time of challenge – and tremendous opportunity — for independent pharmacy. Osborn, installed as NCPA's 115th president at the Annual Convention in Boston last October, looks ahead with an overwhelmingly positive outlook. He grew up in a pharmacy, and he knows that challenges can be conquered with smart solutions.

He remembers going to his father and mentor, Willie Osborn, more than 30 years ago, with a concern. He'd read an article that said community pharmacy was on its last legs, and he was worried. Were the Osborns putting time and money into a business with no future?

The elder Osborn chuckled, telling his son that he'd read that same article in some form or fashion for 25 years. All businesses change over time, he told his son. But smart owners adapt — and thrive.

Osborn has put that philosophy into practice, building on the business his father built through strategic partnerships.

"Our profession has had many challenges in the past and we have persevered," Osborn said in remarks to NCPA's House of Delegates in October. "We can continue to persevere with the ongoing development and expansion of the CPESN network, improved quality outcomes, operating at our full scope of practice, and other practices allowing pharmacists to make a positive difference in people's lives. People are looking for answers and we need to be ready to help. As pharmacists, we can lead the way."



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Steve Pryor, of Enid, Okla., has known Bill and the Osborn family for more than 40 years. Not only is Bill a trusted business partner, Pryor says, but "he's the closest to a brother I have outside family," Pryor says. "He's up front and honest. He means what he says."

Miami City Manager Dean Kruithof lived next door to Bill when they were growing up. Kruithof's career took him all over the Midwest and when he returned a few years ago, he saw that "Bill had assumed Willie's role" as the beloved, friendly, trusted pharmacist. "I thought this is how it would be if Willie were here, and believe me, that is a high compliment."





Bill is the first to give his dad a lot of credit for the pharmacist and owner he is today. "I have no secrets," he says. "Everything I know I learned from someone else."

Pharmacy ownership is important, Bill says. "It's the future of our profession. If at the end of my term here, I can look back and say there's a future in pharmacy ownership, then I call it a success. I see a positive future for pharmacy."

Every day, he sees the impact of community pharmacy in Miami. The relationships keep him going, he says, and they'll keep community pharmacy everywhere going, too.

"It's all about people. One day recently I got a call from a patient. She told me that she'd had a dream about my dad," he says, adding that

Osborn has assumed his late father Willie's role as the friendly, trusted local pharmacist.

she then told a story about a time that she wanted to make a long trip that everyone was discouraging her from making. She stopped by the pharmacy to pick up her prescriptions, and she told Willie about her plans. He was worried about her making the trip, but he sat down with her and wrote down when and where she should stop for gas, rest stops, and meals. He told her to keep her purse close by. "'He cared,' the woman explained. It was a memory that's still clear to her 30 years later.

"I loved hearing that story. We can't let that be taken away from us, the ability to have those relationships. We've seen patients be taken away,

by PBMs, by technology, by insurance. Our patients aren't just a data point, they're not just a number on a spreadsheet. They matter. They are our business." ■

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