

A Moment of Silence for Dr. William Rehm

Editorial Staff

The founder of the Association for the History of Chiropractic, William Rehm, DC, 71, died in his native Baltimore, Maryland on March 11. A chiropractor in the city for 43 years, he was nationally recognized as one of the first premier historians of the profession. Services were held March 15 in Baltimore.

Last year, following several years of research and documentation and several trips throughout the Midwest, Dr. Rehm published his seminal work, *Prairie Thunder: Dr. Leo L. Spears and His Hospital* (AHC Books, 2001). This was a reconstruction of the life and times of the controversial Denver chiropractor who built the largest hospital in the profession and influenced a generation of practitioners.

William Rehm, the son of a Baltimore attorney, entered the former Columbia College of Chiropractic in that city in 1951, and two years later transferred to the National College of Chiropractic, graduating from the old Chicago campus in 1955. In 1956, he went to Denver, interned at Spears Hospital and married Jean. The couple returned to Baltimore the next year, where Dr. Rehm would practice through the end of 1999.

Entering a parallel career of research and documentation of his profession, he founded a quarterly, the *Mid-Atlantic Journal of Chiropractic*, and began one of the most extensive biographical projects ever undertaken in chiropractic, the compilation of hundreds of profiles of contemporary chiropractic leaders. Bill and Jean Rehm also compiled an extensive necrology of the profession. These were published in 1978 as *Who's Who in Chiropractic International*. An expanded 400-page second volume was published in 1980, which had the necrology, and a special history and educational profile of the colleges. It became one of the first serious source reference books on the profession, and found its way to many reference and medical libraries.

In October 1980, Bill Rehm's activism led to the foundation of the Association for the History of Chiropractic at an organizational meeting hosted by Spears Hospital. The next year, the first annual scholarly conference was held at the National Museum for American History, and after that at every chiropractic college campus in North America through the end of the century. The professional papers which were delivered at these conferences were published in the annual journal, *Chiropractic History*, which became a biannual in 1987.

Bill was elected the first president of the AHC and later served for several years as its unpaid executive director, eventually becoming a director emeritus. In the first years of the association, Bill made contact with the medical history section of the National Museum, and was able to secure the first chiropractic exhibit at a federal museum. Later he was instrumental in eliminating the chiropractic designation as a subsection under "Fads and Quackery," to achieve its own status as an alternative healing profession.

The 15 years of scholarship at AHC constituted the basis for the historical research that existed at the Chiropractic Centennial, held in Washington, D.C., and Davenport, Iowa in 1995. Dr. Rehm wrote the "Chiropractic Pathfinders: Images and Legacies" chapter for *Chiropractic: An Illustrated*

History (Mosby, 1995), and was invited to be on a panel on chiropractic at that year's conference of the American Association for the History of Medicine.

Palmer College awarded Dr. Rehm an honorary Doctor of Chiropractic Humanities in 1996. In addition to several papers in *Chiropractic History* and other journals, he was also a contributor to four books.

Dr. Walter Wardwell, emeritus professor of medical sociology at the University of Connecticut, who served on the AHC Board with Dr. Rehm for several years, summarized his contribution to the profession: "Little was known and recorded with any objectivity before Bill published his work. He became the bedrock for serious chiropractic historical research in the second century of the profession."

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