

A Moment of Silence for John B. Wolfe, 1914-1998

FOUNDER AND PRESIDENT OF NORTHWESTERN COLLEGE OF CHIROPRACTIC
FOR 43 YEARS

Editorial Staff

Dr. John B. Wolfe, the founder and first president of Northwestern College of Chiropractic, died on Tuesday, Nov. 24, 1998. He was 84 years old.

A visitation was held Monday evening, Nov. 30 in St. Paul, and funeral services were held at St. Gregory's Catholic Church on Tuesday, Dec. 1. A memorial service for Dr. Wolfe was held in the Northwestern auditorium Dec. 1, 1998.

"The chiropractic profession has lost one of its most thoughtful leaders," commented Jim McDonald, vice president of institutional advancement at Northwestern.

"I'll remember him most for his high intellect and strong, persistent leadership," said John Allenburg, the president of Northwestern since 1992.

The Education of a DC

Dr. Wolfe graduated from the University of Minnesota in 1936 with a degree in civil engineering. Fortunately for chiropractic education, his interests turned to the healing arts. He earned a chiropractic degree from Palmer College, and then returned to Minnesota. In Minnesota DCs were required to pass a basic science exam, so Dr. Wolfe attended the Minnesota Chiropractic College and earned a second DC in 1940.

Founding a College

Dr. Wolfe, the leader of a group that included another DC and three MCC students, founded Northwestern College of Chiropractic in June 1941. The school was on the sixth floor of a department store in downtown Minneapolis. Dr. Wolfe became the college's first president and remained so until 1984.

"Dr. Wolfe was a visionary, but he also had the persistence to make the vision happen," observed Jim McDonald.

As history would have it, June 1941 was not a propitious time to begin a new college. The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941 guaranteed that the college established on Nicollet Ave. would suffer enrollment pains.

Once the veterans returned, the college, like so many aspects of the postwar era, was revitalized. By 1949, enrollment had grown to 280. The college became a member of the Council on Chiropractic Education and adopted a nonprofit status. Dr. Wolfe remained as president, with a board of trustees mainly composed of members from the Minnesota Chiropractic Association and the Minnesota Chiropractic Foundation. The college soon moved to a campus on Park Ave. in Minneapolis, purchased with funds raised by the alumni association.

Just as the college was getting on its feet, the Korean War (1950-53) set the enrollment back, but again, the postwar G.I. Bill gave the school new life.

In 1965 a two-year preprofessional requirement for all incoming students was inaugurated, and a six-year academic program was adopted. At the end of the '60s the college inaugurated a seven semester program that included lab classes at St. Thomas College. By 1971, the college was granted accredited status by the Council on Chiropractic Education's Commission on Accreditation. Dr. Wolfe, Dr. Orval Hidde, president of the CCE, and college presidents Dr. George Haynes (LACC) and Dr. Joseph Janse (NCC) were pivotal in the CCE being recognized in 1974 by the U.S. Office of Education.

The growth spurts of Northwestern required two more campus changes: the 1974 purchase of the St. Paul campus and the discontinuance of off campus labs; and the 1983 relocation to the 25-acre Bloomington campus, which today is home to Northwestern College of Chiropractic.

In 1984, Dr. Wolfe retired after 43 years as president. Dr. Donald Cassata became the second president of the college.

Dr. Wolfe is survived by his son, Dr. John Wolfe Jr., his daughter-in-law, Elizabeth Wolfe, and his two grandsons, John Wolfe III and Robert.

A remembrance fund honoring Dr. Wolfe has been established in his name at Northwestern College of Chiropractic. At the request of the family and Northwestern, all gifts will be dedicated to establish the John B. Wolfe Memorial Fund.

Dr. Allenburg said it best. "The history of Northwestern is one to be very proud of. It is something we earned. It is Dr. Wolfe's legacy. Let's build upon that legacy."

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