

A Moment of Silence for Dr. Joseph Mazzearelli Sr.

Editorial Staff

Dr. Joseph P. Mazzearelli Sr., died Friday January 6, at Our Lady of Lourdes Medical Center in Camden, New Jersey. His passing followed a second bypass heart surgery and an extended illness.

Dr. William Holmberg, president of the Chiropractic Centennial Foundation, who visited with Dr. Mazzearelli a few weeks before he died, said that he had always considered Dr. Mazzearelli a mentor. Dr. Holmberg commented that he will remember him "as a true gentleman" who "set an example of leadership, aggressiveness, and positive attitude."

"We were deeply grieved to hear of the passing of Dr. Joseph Mazzearelli," said ICA President R. James Gregg. "He was a courageous and determined individual who devoted his life to the chiropractic profession." Dr. Mazzearelli served as ICA president (1974-79) and chairman (1979-81). "Through Dr. Mazzearelli's efforts," Dr. Gregg noted, "ICA became the first major association to support the landmark antitrust suit against the AMA. Under his leadership the first federal funds ever awarded for chiropractic research were obtained by the Foundation for the Advancement of Chiropractic Tenets and Science. He was also the driving force behind the establishment of ICA's political action committee. Dr. Mazzearelli was a man of vision and courage. He will be sorely missed," concluded Dr. Gregg.

Dr. Mazzearelli was a first generation Italian-American, the son of Domenico and Anglaroso Mazzearelli, who settled in Camden, New Jersey after immigrating from Teramo, Italy in the early 1900s. He is survived by his wife, Ann; his daughter JoAnn Mazzearelli Heidenreich of Nashville, Tennessee; two sons, Dr. Joseph Mazzearelli Jr., of Cinnaminson, New Jersey, and Dr. Frank Mazzearelli of Tampa, Florida; and two grandchildren, Anthony and JoAnn.

A 1947 graduate of Palmer School of Chiropractic, Dr. Mazzearelli maintained continuous private practice until 1991, first in Camden and later in Pennsauken, New Jersey. He was appointed to the Palmer College Board of Trustees in 1975. He was elected vice chairman in 1976 and chairman in 1978, a position he held until 1985. He was the key mover in the transformation of Northern California College of Chiropractic into Palmer College of Chiropractic West, which he served as chairman of the board. PCCW President Peter Martin, DC, recalled Dr. Mazzearelli's dynamic influence: "I will remember Joe for his profound interest in the advancement of the profession and the science of chiropractic."

Dr. Mazzearelli was an active member and past president of the PCC International Alumni Association, and a fellow in the Palmer Academy. A close friend of Dr. David Palmer, Dr. Mazzearelli was deeply involved in the fund raising for the construction of the David D. Palmer Memorial Auditorium.

Dr. Mazzearelli served the chiropractic profession in ways too numerous to recount. A partial list includes: president of South Jersey Chiropractic Society, New Jersey Chiropractic Society, International Chiropractors Association, and the Foundation for the Advancement of Chiropractic Tenets and Science (FACTS). He served as chairman of the Palmer College Anton Meister

Auditorium Fund and the ICA Board; he also chaired the ICA committees on peer review, legislative action, malpractice, and anti-trust.

Some of his honors include: New Jersey Chiropractor of the Year, 1953; Palmer College Distinguished Service Award, 1965 and 1966; ICA Representative Assemblyman of the Year, 1968; ICA Chiropractor of the Year, 1972; Distinguished Service Award of the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges, 1986; the ICA Excellence in Service Award, 1987; Doctor of Chiropractic Humanities, honorary degrees from Columbia College of Chiropractic, Palmer College of Chiropractic West, 1983, and Palmer College of Chiropractic, 1985.

Dr. Joe Mazzarelli was introduced to chiropractic as a serviceman in WWII. While stationed in the Caribbean with the army and waiting for transport to the European theater, he contracted malaria. It was Ray Johnson, a Palmer graduate working with the medical corps, who gave Joe his first adjustment. His recovery sparked an interest in chiropractic that would frame the rest of his life. When the war ended in 1945, Joe and Ann Settecerci married and moved to Davenport, Iowa, where the GI Bill provided significant resources for the kid from Camden to become a doctor while wife, Ann, worked in the B.J. Palmer Clinic until graduation in 1947.

Often he was the president or chairman of an organization; invariably he earned those titles with his intense involvement, hard work, vision, and dedication. Cases in point: during the struggle for licensure recognition in New Jersey, Dr. Mazzarelli's participation led to a touch of civil disobedience and his arrest. His early support of anti-trust suit effort, at a time when many thought it an impossible dream, was a key factor in its survival and growth. Palmer College of Chiropractic West would not have become a reality without his vision.

Dr. Virgil Strang, president of Palmer College, said Dr. Mazzarelli "exemplified the qualities of leadership and commitment that our profession must sustain." Michael Crawford, chancellor of the Palmer Chiropractic University System, said Dr. Mazzarelli's made a "significant contribution to the cause of Palmer Chiropractic, for which all of us can be grateful."

"Joe worked hard and was always fully dedicated to chiropractic," said Dr. George Banitch, a long-time ICA friend said. He was an astute student of the profession and though we didn't agree on everything, he was always a good friend."

Dr. Mazzarelli's daughter JoAnn said her father "treasured his profession, but it never compromised his love of family and friends, and nothing stood in the way of his love of life." She remembered her father as "a gentleman, a quick wit, a passionate storyteller, a well-read and polished man."

A favorite Mazzarelli story, that reveals the character of the man, tells of his experience in Trinidad during WWII. It seems there were two chiropractors on the island, one in the north and one in the south. They were from different schools, belonged to two different national associations, used different techniques, and "didn't get along with each other." Joe said he tried very hard to change that last part. He continued that effort throughout his life.

For those who wish to make a memorial contribution, the family has created the "Dr. Joseph P. Mazzarelli Memorial Scholarship Fund." The address is:

The Dr. Joseph P. Mazzarelli Memorial Scholarship Fund 171 Haines Drive Moorestown, NJ 08057

Editor's note: We wish to thank John Miller, former president of the Council on Chiropractic Education, the people at Palmer Chiropractic University, and ICA President Dr. R. James Gregg for their contributions to this tribute to Dr. Joseph Mazzarelli Sr.

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