

## Dr. Thomas Lawrence, NCA and ACA Leader, Dies in Mississippi

Robert A. Leach

Dr. Thomas Lawrence, 87, died Thursday, June 16, 2005, in his hometown of Meridian, Mississippi. Known as "Dr. Tom" to his friends and colleagues, Dr. Lawrence's life was marked by great passion for education and development, within the chiropractic profession, as a national leader in the National Chiropractic Association (NCA) and the American Chiropractic Association (ACA); and in his local community, where just a few months ago, he was named an "unsung hero" by *The Meridian Star*.

Born on Feb. 17, 1918, Thomas Lawrence graduated from Carver Chiropractic College in 1938 and entered into practice with his father, Dr. Wilbern Lawrence (a chiropractic pioneer in Mississippi, delegate to the old ACA, a member of the ACA Board of Directors as early as 1928, and instrumental in the formation of the National Chiropractic Association, when ACA merged with the Universal Chiropractic Association). By 1940, the younger Dr. Lawrence had been elected to a position in the Mississippi Chiropractic Association (MCA); after service in the U.S. Army during World War II, he returned to MCA offices, serving as president of the association by at least 1951.

He served for over 20 years as the state delegate to the NCA, and later, to the current ACA, which he was instrumental in founding. He was recognized as a national leader at that time.

After a long, successful struggle to get legislation passed, Mississippi became the 49<sup>th</sup> state to attain chiropractic licensure in 1973, and Dr. Lawrence was there at the signing ceremony with Gov. Bill Waller, who later appointed him to the first Board of Chiropractic Examiners in the Magnolia State.

He practiced until his retirement in 1985. Named a Fellow of the International College of Chiropractors, Dr. Lawrence achieved many honors in his profession, including being named Chiropractor of the Year by the Mississippi Chiropractic Association.

A member of the W.D. Cameron Chapter of the Sons of Confederate Veterans, he served in many offices, including Camp Commander. He was proud of his work to preserve the Lauderdale Springs Cemetery in perpetuity; the cemetery contains the graves of soldiers killed during the War Between the States. He was also a member of the Jackson Civil War Roundtable.

Tom's love of the Revolutionary War caused him to become a member of the Patrick Boggan Chapter of the Sons of the American Revolution; he attended five national congresses as a delegate, and received the prestigious Meritorious Service Medal, awarded to only one Mississippi Society member per year.

He created the successful lecture series at Meridian Community College called "American History and Our Heritage," and personally recruited judges, history professors and noted authors to discuss the importance of learning American history. The series was well-attended and critically acclaimed. In

addition, he set up a lecture team to visit schools and talk about American history.

Last December, he was proud to offer the prayer when his grandson-in-law, Judge David Medina, was sworn in as a Texas Supreme Court Justice.

Dr. Lawrence was preceded in death by his wife, Betty Lawrence. Survivors include a son, Judge Tom Lawrence, and his wife, Mickey, of Houston, Texas; grandchildren, Bridgitt Haarsgaard, and her husband, Rob, of New York, Francisca Medina and her husband, Judge David Medina, of Houston, and five great-grandchildren; sisters-in-law, Sheila Peel and Nita Lawrence; cousin, Elaine Byrd, and a nephew, Dr. John Peel, of Maryland; a niece, Pamela Hallam of California; and several other cousins, nephews, nieces and great-nieces and great-nephews.

Memorials may be made to Lauderdale Springs Cemetery Fund, 5019 North Hills Street, Meridian, MS 39305.

*Robert A. Leach, DC, FICC\**  
*Starkville, Mississippi*

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