

## HOW MARCH 30TH CAME TO BE DOCTORS' DAY

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Anesthesiologists feel a proprietary attachment to March 30, Doctors' Day, because they have learned that the date was selected in recognition of Crawford W. Long's first use of diethyl ether as a surgical anesthetic in 1842. Since the time of the first public salute to doctors by the ladies of Barrow County Medical Auxiliary on that date in 1933, Doctors' Day has become a national event and is now gaining even broader interest. On the 150th anniversary of Long's first surgical anesthetic, Emory University, The Medical College of Georgia, the Georgia and Greater Atlanta Societies of Anesthesiologists and the Anesthesia History Association will welcome physicians and historians from several countries to The Third International Symposium on the History of Anesthesia (TISHA) in Atlanta, Georgia March 27-31, 1992. Because anesthesiologists attending the symposium from other regions will have historical interests focused on the origins of our specialty, they may not immediately appreciate the high regard for Dr. Long's character that has been maintained for more than a century in the

southeastern United States. Last year I sensed how deeply the memory of Dr. Long is revered by southern physicians during a social evening in an unusual setting — a palace in Kuwait more than 7,000 miles from Long's native state of Georgia.

On March 30, 1991 a Kuwaiti family invited five doctors of the 377th Combat Support Hospital of Chattanooga, Tennessee, to their home to celebrate "futur," the evening feast which follows a day of fasting during Ramadan. After dinner the quintet of stocking-footed, battle-dress-uniformed doctors joined the elegantly robed men and women of the family on couches which circled a lavishly decorated room. Servants silently served beverages. After toasts were exchanged to recognize the leaders of the United States and Kuwait, our orthopedist proposed that, as this was Doctors' Day, we salute Crawford W. Long. When called on by our host to explain why Crawford Long should be remembered, the orthopedic surgeon responded by describing not only Long's achievements, but also his selflessness, patriotism and generosity. He told

the Kuwaitis that in southern grade schools all children of his generation had learned of Crawford W. Long and that the doctor was widely revered as a man of noble character. The conversation in Kuwait excited my curiosity. I wanted to learn more of the nature of the anesthesiologist who was so respected.

After we returned to America, my telephone calls to southern libraries brought convincing evidence that Crawford Long remains an object of great regional pride. While librarians often display a professional objectivity in replying to questions regarding archival information, in several instances their initial response was the forceful assertion: "Crawford Long was a good and caring doctor who was a fine southern gentleman, Sir." Their declaration taught this northern questioner that Long is respected for his character as well as his achievements.

#### **The Crawford W. Long Museum, Jefferson, Georgia**

The life and times of Crawford Long are well demonstrated in the exhibits of the Crawford W. Long Museum located on the site of Long's office on College Street in Jefferson, Georgia. While delegates to TISHA will travel together to view this fine collection, all anesthesiologists travelling north of Atlanta on Interstate Highway 85 are encouraged to visit Jefferson to see the community and its nationally-known museum. Many fine old buildings grace this quiet town. A few residents even boast: "In 1842 Crawford Long not only put James Venable to sleep, he anesthetized the whole town and some parts have never awakened yet."

A sense of the spirit of antebellum life in this area begins while driving along Highway 129 toward Jefferson. Doctors in practice now may consider how different and difficult every element of a physician's life would have been 150 years ago. How laborious travel would have been before railroads or all-weather roads served the countryside. How isolated doctors would have felt without an opportunity to transfer a critically ill patient to a metropolitan

hospital. How hard life would have been for a dedicated physician such as Long who was so respected as a surgeon that he was often called by colleagues to ride great distances to operate upon their injured patients.

The Crawford W. Long Museum has been expanded to capture the spirit of Long's life and historical period as well as to present exhibits of the history of anesthesia since 1842. Visitors will be pleased to meet the executive director, Ms. Susan B. Deaver. She enjoys sharing her expert knowledge of the life of Dr. Long who was born in 1815 in nearby Danielsville, GA. His family encouraged a good education for him at Franklin College (now the University of Georgia). After studying medicine informally with Dr. Grant of Jefferson, he entered the medical school at Transylvania, Kentucky, but later transferred to the University of Pennsylvania and then "walked the wards" of New York hospitals before returning to Jefferson to begin his practice. While many have become familiar with Long's documented use of ether on eight occasions before 1846, as well as his reticence in publishing his discovery and of the Congressional contentions that followed, the story of Crawford Long has other facets.

Susan Deaver, James Harvey Young and other scholars have continued to study the life of this man who has been consistently regarded as an exemplary physician and citizen. Despite being nearly impoverished after the devastating war of 1861-65 that is remembered in Georgia as "The War of Northern Aggression," Long, at that time practicing in Athens, Georgia, satisfied his debts at great personal cost yet, when he died in Athens, GA in 1878, scores of his professional accounts remained unpaid. He was also remembered as a compassionate physician who had remained in practice until his last illness. A report exists that while he was attending a woman in labor, he collapsed from a stroke. He insisted that attention be given to the mother and newborn infant before anyone aided him. Sixty-four years later, at the time of the Long Centennial celebration in Jefferson, a lady stated that she had been that infant and that the

story was verified by her family. Personal accounts such as these by patients, friends and family members contributed to the development of an intense regional pride in the noble character of Dr. Long.

Whether these stories are accurate remain points of conjecture, but it is certain that few other physicians have been as enthusiastically supported by their contemporaries or by succeeding generations as has been Crawford W. Long. In 1877 a leading surgeon, J. Marion Sims, wrote a strongly worded essay supporting Long's achievement. In the decades to follow memorials were erected at locations associated with his career.

### **Long's Statue in the National Capitol**

In 1864 the U.S. Congress invited each state to present statues of two of its distinguished citizens who were "worthy of this national commemoration" to be placed in the Capitol. Most states did not respond until this century. Crawford Long's name was selected in 1910. After the sculptor's commission was paid by a public subscription, the statute was dedicated on March 30, 1926. There was a delay in selecting the name of the second Georgian deemed worthy of national honor. Georgia finally settled on Alexander H. Stephens, who may have been Long's roommate at Franklin College and who had been the Vicepresident of the Confederacy, to be their second permanent representative in the Capitol.

Anesthesiologists who tour the Capitol will find that Long is the only figure representing their specialty. They will also count seven times as many statues of lawyers (44) as there are doctors (6). Of the six physicians honored, three are not recognized for their service as clinicians. John McLoughlin was the chief administrator of Oregon before that territory was claimed by the United States. John Gorrie developed refrigeration in Apalachicola, Florida, with the initial aim of cooling the rooms of fever patients, but left practice as he sought wider commercial applications of his patents for the making of ice. Florence Sabin is remembered by Colorado for her work in embryology and

public health; she is the only 20th Century physician of the six. Of the six physicians honored, only three, Crawford Long, Ephraim McDowell, and Marcus Whitman attended the sick until the end of their careers.

Dr. Long has received other significant tributes. Visitors to Georgia who travel between Savannah and Florida are encouraged to drive slowly as they enjoy the rural scenery of his namesake, Long County. In 1930 his name was given to the Crawford W. Long Hospital in Atlanta when that institution became public. The Long Museum in that hospital's lobby warrants an hour of study. In 1940 Long became the first pioneer of anesthesiology to have his portrait presented on an American postage stamp. An eponymous lectureship has been maintained by Emory University for 26 years. Films such as the 1953 TV movie, "Bless the Man," have reviewed his career. One year ago his name was selected as a charter inductee to the Atlanta "Walk of Fame." This month Long's pioneering use of ether will be a focus of the Third International Symposium on the History of Anesthesia. His contributions will also be a featured part of Doctors' Day observances in all corners of the nation on Monday, March 30, 1992.

### **The Origin of Doctors' Day**

For many years doctors in our southeastern states have been presented with red carnations on the occasion of Doctors' Day. The custom was first recommended by the Southern Medical Association Auxiliary in 1935. They had voted to pass a motion presented by the Georgia State Medical Auxiliary who had endorsed a resolution prepared in 1933 by their Barrow County members which read: *"Whereas, the Auxiliary to the Barrow County Medical Society wishes to pay lasting tribute to her Doctors, therefore, be it resolved by the Auxiliary to the Barrow County Medical Society, that March 30, the day that famous Georgian Dr. Crawford W. Long first used ether anesthesia in surgery, be adopted as 'Doctors' Day,' the object to be the well-being and honor of the profession, its observance demanding some act of kindness,*

*gift or tribute in remembrance of the Doctors."* Perhaps some of the enthusiasm for the selection of March 30 may have been related to the publication of a popular biography, "Crawford W. Long and the Discovery of Ether Anesthesia," written in 1928 by his daughter, Frances Long Taylor.

The custom spread gradually to other areas. In 1958, the U.S. House of Representatives passed a resolution recognizing Doctors' Day. More recently, the U.S. Congress again considered the issue in 1990 in the form of Resolution 366 under the sponsorship of members of the Mississippi delegation, Senator Thad Cochran and Congressmen Michael Parker and J.V. "Sunny" Montgomery. The Bill was considered and passed the House of Representatives on "Ether Day," October 16 which, by coincidence was the occasion of the 144th anniversary of W.T.G. Morton's first public anesthetic. President George Bush signed Public Law 101-473 on October 30, 1990 to designate March 30, 1991, as "National Doctors Day."

Because most actions of historical significance arise in the mind of an individual, I've been curious to learn, "Who first thought of naming a day to honor doctors? What events motivated that person?" The first answer can be found on a bronze marker placed in 1989 by the Southern Medical Association (SMA) Auxiliary near the courthouse in Winder, Georgia, the county seat of Barrow County. Beside a picturesque representation of a carnation the inscription reads, "*To Honor Mrs. Charles B. Almond, Originator of Doctors' Day March 30, 1933.*"

The SMA Auxiliary also published "The History and Handbook of Doctors' Day" which

describes the lady's motivation. From the time of her early childhood in rural Ft. Lamar, GA, Eudora Brown had admired the gentle kindness of her family doctor. In 1920 Eudora married Dr. Charles B. Almond and, believing that healing the sick was man's greatest profession, became convinced that medical practitioners deserved a day of recognition. She selected March 30 to honor the man she considered Georgia's most famous son as she knew his first anesthetics had been administered in nearby Jefferson. After her resolution was passed by the County Auxiliary, the day was marked by mailing commemorative cards to the county's physicians and their wives, laying flowers on the graves of Crawford Long and other doctors and by a formal dinner. During the meal several toasts were offered to encourage the continued observance of Doctors' Day.

It is unlikely that Eudora Brown Almond or any of the other guests who saluted the first Doctors' Day in the residence of Dr. and Mrs. William Randolph could have imagined the consequences of her action. I doubt that they would have forecast its extraordinary growth. It is unlikely that they would have anticipated that the President of the United States would sign an Act to establish a National Doctors Day and that on the day of its first observance after the law was enacted, a toast to Crawford Long and Doctors' Day would be offered during a sumptuous dinner in Kuwait. Her kind action will be remembered again on March 30, 1992 at the Crawford W. Long Memorial Lecture on the occasion of the sesquicentennial of the first documented ether anesthetic, an event that will be commemorated during the Third International Symposium on the History of Anesthesia.