

IL-W4720

WEEKLY NEWSPAPER

PALOS CITIZEN
Palos Heights, IL

Circ— 4,610
Thu

JULY 23, 2009

Edmund G. Lawler Passes Away

Edmund G. Lawler (pictured), 80, former Administrator of Cook County's Oak Forest Hospital, passed away in his Palos Heights home on Friday, July 17.

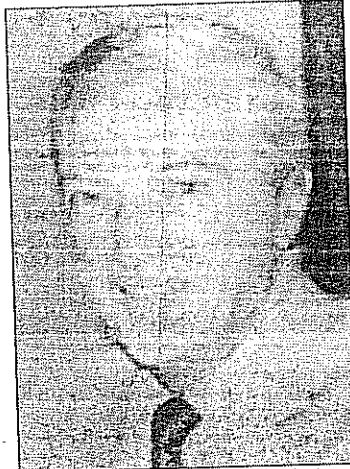
Lawler served as Administrator for Oak Forest Hospital from 1961 to 1993. Before his tenure, the hospital was a place where poor, sick people went to die. Once called the "poor-house" and the "county farm", the hospital—on its 340-acre site—was a home for the county's poor, elderly, mentally ill, chronically sick, and those stricken with tuberculosis. The hospital was self-contained with gardens, a bakery, chapels, and even a county store, and nearly 47 crowded dingy buildings were connected by long hallways.

Lawler received his degree in hospital administration from Northwestern University. The degree was one of the first of its kind. He took his knowledge, and turned Oak Forest Hospital into one of the most modern long-term care county facilities ever available to patients.

Lawler's rehabilitation of the county hospital was a multi-year plan, which cost approximately \$100 million for added staff and bed space. Buildings which could not be rehabilitated were torn down. Lawler created private and semi-private rooms to replace open wards, as well as revised accounting and purchasing procedures. With his introduction of modern technology, came state-of-the-art diagnostic and treatment equipment, air conditioning and color televisions—a giant step in those days.

One of Lawler's greatest accomplishments at the hospital was getting the facility a two-year accreditation in 1974 from the then Joint Commission of Accreditation of Hospitals. It was the first time that the hospital had received that rating.

Lawler was born in 1928 in Chicago. His father, Dr.



Edmund Griffin Lawler, Sr., was the former Chief of Pediatrics at Little Company of Mary Hospital. Three of his uncles were also doctors. Lawler knew that becoming a doctor was "not for him," so instead he pursued his hospital administration degree, which would allow him to be a part of the medical scene.

Lawler served during the Korean War with the US Army at Ft. Sill, Oklahoma. He was the assistant superintendent at Cook County Hospital when he was picked for the Oak Forest Hospital spot.

After his retirement, Lawler was a lobbyist for AARP, working on legislative matters in Springfield to advance health care and benefits for the elderly. He also became a consultant and instructor at Calumet College. He was a member of the Illinois Stroke Task Force. He was also active in the American Hospital Association.

Lawler was a long-time member of Midlothian Country Club, where he enjoyed golf, friends, and family gatherings for many years.

Mass was held at St. Damian Church in Oak Forest on Monday, with interment at Holy Sepulchre Cemetery. Donations may go to St. Damian School in Oak Forest or United Cerebral Palsy of Greater Chicago.

Lawler's survivors include his wife of 57 years, Jean; sons, Edmund (Priscilla), Timothy (Dona); daughters, Marianne (Joseph, MD) Durham, Eileen (Charles) Connolly, Elizabeth (Raymond) Scannell; and the late Eileen Mary and Daniel Joseph Lawler. He was the brother of Frances (Robert) Meyer, Jerome (Susan) Lawler, and the late James (Mary Kay), and Dr. Thomas (Petra) Lawler. He had twelve grandchildren, and many nieces and nephews.