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## Local News

February 22, 2011

# Crockett helped change history

BY MARY WICOFF  
Commercial-News

DANVILLE — In his 81 years, Dr. Fred L. Crockett Jr. observed — and participated in — many of history's momentous events.

He was active in the NAACP, served during World War II and saw the country's first black president sworn in to office. He also was a general practitioner and surgeon for more than 30 years in Danville.

"He served his country, was an activist for the community, and a provider for his family — and he did it under the most difficult and dire circumstances," his daughter, Kimberly Crockett, said Monday. "He had an incredible life."

Crockett died Sunday at his home after a long illness.

In addition to his private practice, Crockett was on staff at Lakeview and St. Elizabeth hospitals and in 1976 was president of the St. Elizabeth Hospital medical staff. After he retired from private practice in 1987, he served as an emergency room physician and later was chief of health programs at the U.S. Penitentiary in Terre Haute, Ind.

Still, many people remember Crockett for his activism. He and his wife, Lou, were active in the civil rights movement, starting in the 1940s. When the couple moved to Danville in 1956, they couldn't find decent housing because Realtors wouldn't show blacks housing north of Voorhees Street.

They finally found a Realtor who would do so, and in 1969, the Crocketts became the first African-Americans to break the housing racial barrier, moving north of the city's invisible line at Voorhees Street. The family was the target of vandalism.

The previous year, on June 24, 1968, Crockett and others introduced several



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radical proposals at the NAACP national convention in Atlantic City, N.J. In an era of turmoil, they added fuel to the fire by calling the NAACP "too passive" and said the organization "was not responsive to the masses of black people."

Several of the resolutions were adopted and the course of the NAACP was permanently changed.

A highlight of his life came in January 2009, when he and several other family members went to Washington, D.C., for Barack Obama's inauguration.

"It was a momentous occasion for all of us," Kimberly said, adding that three generations of Crocketts witnessed the historic event.

In fact, Crockett lived through most of the milestones of the 20th century, his daughter said, describing him as part of the "great generation that has done so much for this country."

Dwight Lucas described Crockett as a mentor to young people in the 1960s and '70s, including himself.

"His presence as the only African-American physician instilled in young folks to think about what they could do for themselves," he said.

Also, in 1965, Crockett was a founding charter board member of the East Central Illinois Community Action Agency, which Lucas now leads. Lucas, now in his 30th year, is proud that the agency is still carrying on that vision.

In addition, Crockett worked with young people in the junior branch of the NAACP, and inspired the youth, including Lucas, to learn leadership and negotiation skills.

"He committed a lot of his time to making this a better community," Lucas said.

Crockett also served on the Vermilion County Board of Supervisors as an assistant supervisor of Danville Township. He was president of the Danville chapter of the NAACP in 1965 and was elected state president of the Illinois NAACP from 1966-69, focusing on breaking employment and housing discriminatory practices.

Among his many passions were bridge, jazz music and golf. In 1976 he was awarded life master rank from the American Contract Bridge League. At that time, of the millions of bridge players worldwide, only 22,000 had achieved life master ranking since it was established in 1935. Crockett began playing bridge as an undergraduate student and had previously won several regional championships. He captured first place at the 1985 North American Bridge Championships in Montreal.

In 1977, he was honored as one of the 10 most outstanding black alumni from the University of Illinois. In 1988, he was honored, along with Dr. W.G.D. Henderson, by Laura Lee Fellowship House for community service.

Crockett was a life member with the NAACP and held memberships with the American Medical Association, the National Medical Association, American Contract Bridge League, American Bridge Association and Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc. Beta Chapter.

Born July 31, 1926 in St. Louis, Mo., he was raised in the Chicago area. After high school he entered the U.S. Air Force in 1944 and served until 1946. Crockett was admitted into the last class of the Tuskegee Airmen, but the class was disbanded shortly thereafter due to integration of the Armed Forces.

After military service he attended the U of I in Champaign-Urbana and studied pre-med. He transferred to Meharry Medical College in Nashville, Tenn., and graduated in June 1955. He interned at Pontiac (Mich.) General Hospital and completed post-graduate work at Chicago Cook County Hospital in Chicago.



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Survivors include his wife, Lou, and five children, David (Nyla) of Gilbert, Ariz., LuJuane (Leroy) Elleby of Fairview Heights, Kimberly of Tempe, Ariz., Lori (Wilson) Harris of South Holland and Bobra (Randall) Hoggard of Chandler, Ariz.

Other survivors include sisters, DeLois Scott (Chet) of Lake Forest and Mary Alice Jackson (Charles) of Ossining, N.Y.; many cousins, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, nieces and nephews.

A private funeral service is planned. Leek and Sons Funeral Home is in charge of arrangements.

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### Local News

## Police, Fire Reports

February 23, 2011

**Primary narrows down candidates**  
Five mayoral candidates became four after Tuesday's primary election.



February 23, 2011 1 Photo

### Suspect apprehended

Indiana law enforcement officers chased a suspect wanted in connection with two separate shooting incidents across two counties before arresting him Tuesday afternoon.



February 23, 2011 1 Photo

### Board talks of election issues

City election issues were not far from the minds of aldermen at Tuesday night's Public Services Committee meeting.

February 23, 2011

### Names of outstanding women sought for awards

Five outstanding women who are making a difference in the Danville area will be honored April 2 at Turtle Run Banquet Center. Nominations for the Women of the Year Awards are being taken until March 2.

February 23, 2011

### Trustees move on water project

Rossville trustees listened to a proposal concerning the much-discussed water main extension project at Monday night's meeting of the village board.

February 23, 2011

### Commissioners hear about murals

The Fountain County Commissioners heard another offer Monday night to restore the murals in the Fountain County Courthouse.

February 23, 2011

### Man found dead in park

Emergency workers pulled the body of local ice

### E-edition



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