**John Hollis Lawrence**

John Hollis Lawrence, age 93, who counted his years leading the Monticello-Jasper County Chamber of Commerce as the most fulfilling of his work life, died peacefully Tuesday, Feb. 4, 2014 in Atlanta.   
  
Funeral services for Mr. Lawrence will be held Friday, Feb. 7, 2014, at 11 a.m. at Monticello Presbyterian Church, followed by a reception in the church fellowship hall.   
  
Visitation will be held on Thursday, Feb. 6, 2014, from 4:00 until 6:00 p.m. at Jordan Funeral Home.  
  
The family requests donations to the Georgia Wildlife Federation, 11600 Hazelbrand Road, Covington, GA, 30014, in lieu of flowers.  
  
Mr. Lawrence led the Monticello-Jasper County Chamber of Commerce in the early 90s. During that time the number of chamber members grew steadily and his innovations included a Fourth of July fireworks celebration in Monticello. His most coveted honor came when the chamber named him Citizen of the Year in 1994—a total surprise to him.  
  
“Hollis wore out more than one pair of shoes walking the square in Monticello, calling on businesses and asking them to join the chamber,” recalled Don Morgan of Cal-Maine Foods, who was treasurer of the COC at the time. “And he made it fun. He loved people.”   
  
Mr. Lawrence was also a founding member of Jasper County’s 911 commission and a board member of the Jasper County literacy commission. He also served on the board of the Turtle Cove Association.  
  
For the last 26 years of his life, Mr. Lawrence lived in Turtle Cove on Jackson Lake among a tight-knit circle of friends. His wife, Beverly, was with him until she died in 2002. They were married 56 years.  
  
Mr. Lawrence also served as a bailiff for the Jasper County courts for a time.   
  
In his leisure time he enjoyed gardening, traveling, refinishing furniture and fishing for crappie in Jackson Lake. He played bridge at the Turtle Cove clubhouse into his 90s. He was a raconteur who enjoyed telling stories dating to the 1920s. He served in the Navy in World War II and then graduated from Tulane University with help from the GI Bill.  
  
John Hollis Lawrence was born the fifth of seven children on May 17, 1920, in the home of his parents Overton and Leidus Sigman Lawrence in Mansfield. His father farmed cotton and other crops and served as mayor and chairman of the school board in Mansfield, and his son Hollis developed a lifelong interest in politics.  
  
During young Hollis’ early years the boll weevil ravaged Georgia’s cotton crop, and he recalled arsenic powder being directly applied to cotton as a pesticide. His father called him his “boll weevil baby.”  
  
In addition to milking the cows and other home chores, Hollis became the school janitor, lighting the fires each morning at Mansfield High. He also passed out the teachers’ paychecks, which didn’t hurt his popularity. He played center on the basketball team. But he was so shy when he graduated that he did not process with his 12 classmates, instead slipping in with the group on the stage.  
  
As a teenager he also worked on Saturdays at Bledsoe Grocery on the square in Mansfield. Occasionally on Sundays, Mr. Bledsoe would ask him to drive his wife and him in his open-topped car through the North Georgia mountains.  
  
As a young man Mr. Lawrence made his way to Atlanta, where he learned clerical skills at Southern Business University and supported himself with a newspaper route for the Times-Georgian. He remembered being in the crowd outside the premiere of Gone With the Wind, and riding the streetcar to Atlanta Cracker baseball games on Ponce de Leon Avenue.  
  
His first job was in the office of the National Paper Company, and he then worked for the National Casket Company.  
  
As World War II approached, he volunteered for the Navy. His clerical skills shaped his service as he was the only recruit in his group who could type. So he became a yeoman, later rising to chief petty officer. After initial duty in Norfolk, he served in the Pacific and was on the staff of Admiral Chester Nimitz, commander-in-chief of the Pacific Fleet.   
  
His life reached a major turning point when he was assigned to the commissioning crew of a Landing Ship Tank and transferred to New Orleans. At a dance he met Beverly Grace Cox of New Orleans and it was love at first sight. After a brief courtship they were married in Miami on August 15, 1945.  
  
After the war they returned to New Orleans and Mr. Lawrence graduated from Tulane in 1949 with a degree in business. He became a commissioned officer in the Navy Reserve. He and Mrs. Lawrence moved to Atlanta where Mr. Lawrence began a 29-year career with Southern Bell. He became the phone company manager in Savannah and was active in the First Presbyterian Church and the Kiwanis Club. The family lived there until 1965, by which time they had four children—Jay, Jennifer, Janice and Jeff.  
  
Returning to Atlanta, Mr. Lawrence became the phone company manager in Tucker, with the family living in the Clarkston area. After retiring from Southern Bell, he worked for the IRS in Atlanta for eight years.   
  
After they moved to Turtle Cove, the Lawrences were active volunteers for Zoo Atlanta, which was then in resurgence. They also volunteered at the Charlie Elliott Wildlife Refuge and Dauset Trails. They enjoyed entertaining and traveling with friends and welcoming family to their lake side home.   
  
At the time of his death, Mr. Lawrence was an active member of Monticello Presbyterian Church.

He is survived by his sons and daughters-in-law and daughters, Jay Lawrence and Sally Dunn of Atlanta, Jennifer Lawrence of Charlotte, North Carolina, Janice Lawrence of Stone Mountain, and Jeff and Linda Lawrence of Woodstock; grandchildren, Sam Lawrence, Jack Lawrence, Andrew Lawrence, Sarah Lawrence, Megan Lane Hart, Angela Lane McLaughlin, John Lawrence, and Rachael Lawrence; great grandchildren, Lucas Gleason-Lawrence, Eleanor Hart, and Hollis Franklin Hart; and numerous nieces, nephews and cousins.

Jordan Funeral Home is in charge of arrangements.