

# Dr. Thelma Adele Patten-Law Physician--Wife--Mother

BY FINIS FONSWORTH STEWART

There are many pleasant memories one may have on retirement -- especially if you have fulfilled your life's ambition, knowing that you have served "your God, your profession and your fellowman well."

This sums up Dr. Thelma Adele Patten Law's life story as she retired from private practice as physician-surgeon on her birthday, Dec. 30, 1964

"My father, Mason B. Patten, was my inspiration, although he was not a physician but a rail-road postal clerk. My mother was a teacher. We lived in Huntsville, Tex. and I was one of four children, 2 boys one sister and I. My sister is Mrs. Elizabeth Patten Washington, who resides in Houston," said Dr. Law.

"I am going to spend my leisure time reading and tending my flowers in my yard and of course nursing my daughter and husband, as both have been ill this year."

Doctor's husband is the infamous James "Jimmy" Law of coaching fame. At one time he was coach of the Prairie View Panthers.

In 1929, he entered the city school system. He served as a director of athletics of city parks and was broadcaster of the city school games and over many particulars in connection with stadium activities. He is returning to his duties at Wheatley Senior High School on Jan. 25, following a sick leave.

Her daughter, Miss Pauline Anna Law, teaches art at Harper Junior High.

Evidence of how well Dr. Patten has served has been shown periodically by honors bestowed on her by many, during her period of service.

Dr. Law was educated in the Houston Public Schools (Valedictorian Class of 1917) Pre-Medical Training at Howard University; Doctor of Medicine, Howard University; Honor Award in Gynecology; Interned at Freedman's Hospital, Washington, D. C.; Licensed in District of Columbia, New York and Texas; Postgraduate Study at University of Texas.

Professional organizations to which she belonged were Houston Medical Forum, Lone Star State Medical Association, Post-Graduate Assembly of Negro Physicians, American Medical Women's International Association and Texas State Tuberculosis Association.

Professional service of which she was part were Southern Tuberculosis Conference, Harris County Medical Society, Texas State Medical Association, American Medical Association, Riverside General Hospital Staff, St. Elizabeth Hospital Staff, Prairie View Hospital Staff, Instructor in Pediatrics for Student Nurses of Prairie View, Out-Patient Pediatrics Clinics of Jefferson Davis Hospital, Director of Nutritional Centers for Negro Children of Relief Program.

Among the many civic organizations which she gave her service were the Governing Board of Negro Child Center, Florence Crittenton Home Committee, Director of Texas Tuberculosis Association, Blue Triangle Branch of YWCA, Planned Parenthood Center, Texas Inter-racial Commission, Houston Inter-racial Commission, Girl Scouts, NAACP Chamber of Commerce, Executive Committee of Health Section of Community Council, Board of Health of City of Houston.

FRATERNAL AND SOCIAL  
She was Grand Medical Examiner of Court of Calantiss of Texas, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, The Links Inc., and a member of the Bachelor Benedicts Bridge Club.



THELMA PATTEN-LAW

She is a member of St. Luke's Episcopal Church of which Father Perkins is pastor and the Women's Auxiliary of St. Luke's Parish.

She was cited by the Houston Chapter of Links, Inc. of which she is a past chapter president in December of 1961. On Monday, Oct. 29, 1962, the Houston Branch NAACP honored Dr. Patten with a Life Membership Testimonial Dinner at Antioch Baptist Church. In March of 1962, she was selected as "Woman of the Year," and so honored by the Houston Chapter of the Zeta Phi Beta Sorority. She was also cited by her sorority, the Delta Sigma Theta.

In 1963, Jan. 29, the Planned Parenthood Center of Houston honored Dr. Patten for 25 years of outstanding service to the center. She stated that she has found that Planned Parenthood to be very essential in the lives of the average family to insure and secure essentials needed.

Dr. Patten estimated she had delivered over 5,000 babies during her career and recalls an event in which she said a patient from Baytown came to her office for treatment of a nagging ailment. She was the mother of two children, ages 20 and 21. Upon examination, she announced to the patient that her ailment was "a third child." This was very shocking to the patient, of course. It turned out that the patient's other ailments necessitated her entering the hospital during her 7th month pregnancy and at the time of the 11th month delivery by cesarian, was presented with a 9lb baby boy. As the doctor recalled, he should be about 15 years of age.

Then she remembered once on her daughter's birthday she had a party for all her "babies" on the lawn of the Houston Negro Hospital, now Riverside General Hospital, where the number was numerous.

In the life of a physician, she has seen and rejoiced at life's beginning and felt inner sadness as life has ebbed away -- so as Dr. Patten tends her flowers and relax among the many pleasures of being at home with her husband and daughter -- she will remember many little items tucked far back in her memory and may they bring her that inner satisfaction to which she pledged when she took the "Doctors Oath" many years ago.