

## Who was Joseph R. Lawton?

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Who was this man who left a legacy of \$1.25m to alleviate suffering of needy people? Let me repeat for you a few words spoken by others that describe the kind of man Joseph Lawton was. "A gentleman, humble, caring, private, loving, conservative, neat and honest man. A devoted husband, a good neighbor and a good citizen with a sense of humor".

Joe was a friend and neighbor to me for over 30 years. He was born in 1907 in the small town of Urbanna, VA near the mouth of the Rappahanock River on the Chesapeake Bay. Joe grew up on the water and never got it out of his blood. He graduated from NC State University and went to work in Richmond Virginia for DuPont in 1929. There he met and married Elizabeth Anderson, a nurse who was forever to be known as "Andy" to her friends. Joe and Andy were extremely devoted and long time members of Red Clay Creek Church. Joe and Andy were never blessed with children.

One great joy in the lives of Joe and Andy was a cottage in Stone Harbor, NJ. Joe spent a lot of time on the water in his small boat catching flounder on the ocean beach surf fishing for blue fish and striped bass. Joe retired in 1969 partly because Andy had crippling arthritis and needed help at home. For years he accepted increasing responsibility in the care of Andy at their home as she became more and more incapacitated. Joe eventually had almost full responsibility for the home and the personal care of his wife. When Andy pass away in 1991 Joe was absolutely devastated, a condition from which he never fully recovered.

Selling his home and moving to the Methodist Country Home on Kennett Pike was probably a mistake for Joe. He was never very happy there and continued to feel that he had made a mistake disposing of his home and belongings. Joseph. R. Lawton died in 1993.

Joe and Andy's gift demonstrated their true concern for the needs of people less fortunate than themselves. They felt comfortable that after their death Red Clay Creek Church would carry out their wishes regarding the disposition of income from the trust they established. We have a tremendous responsibility to the Lawton's and to the needy. Conversely, we now have an opportunity and funds unmatched by few churches to become more involved in a very personal way by administering to the needy locally and beyond. Thanks to Joseph Lawton, his love of God and his concern for human suffering, an increasing number of needy people will be helped each year. Although only the income from his trust can be spent, the invested principle could increase to \$30 million over a period equal to the accumulating years of Joseph Lawton's life at which time the income to be used to alleviate suffering could be almost a million dollars per year. Thanks be to God for this opportunity to serve some of His most needy children, and thanks be to Joseph and Andy Lawton for their help in making it possible for our church to be involved.

by W. L. Michleinie, 7/24/1995