

# Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Dr. LaSalle D. Leffall, Jr.

PERSON

Leffall, LaSalle D.

**Alternative Names:** Dr. LaSalle D. Leffall, Jr.;

**Life Dates:** May 22, 1930-May 26, 2019

**Place of Birth:** Tallahassee, Florida, USA

**Residence:** Washington, D.C.

**Work:** Washington, D.C.

**Occupations:** Medical Professor; Oncologist; Surgeon

## Biographical Note

Dr. LaSalle Doheny Leffall, Jr. was born May 22, 1930, in Tallahassee, Florida, but grew up in Quincy, Florida. His parents, Lula Jourdan and LaSalle Leffall, Sr. met at Alabama Teachers College. Leffall graduated from Dr. Wallace S. Stevens High School at age 15 years in 1945. Awarded his B.S. degree summa cum laude from Florida A & M College in 1948, Leffall at age twenty-two earned his M.D. from

Howard University College of Medicine. There, Dr. Burke Syphax, Dr. Jack White, Dr. W. Montague Cobb and the celebrated Dr. Charles R. Drew taught him.

Upon earning his M.D., Leffall continued his medical training as intern at Homer G. Phillips Hospital in St. Louis; assistant resident in surgery at Freedman's Hospital from 1953 to 1954; assistant resident in surgery at D.C. General Hospital from 1954 to 1955; chief resident in surgery at Freedman's Hospital from 1956 to 1957 and senior fellow in cancer surgery at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Hospital from 1957 to 1959. Beginning his military service at the rank of Captain, M. C., he served as chief of general surgery at the U. S. Army Hospital in Munich, Germany, from 1960 to 1961. Leffall joined Howard's faculty, in 1962, as an assistant professor and by 1970, he was chairman of the Department of Surgery, a position he held for twenty-five years. He was named the Charles R. Drew Professor in 1992, occupying the first endowed chair in the history of Howard's Department of Surgery.

Leffall has served as visiting professor at over 200 medical institutions in the U.S. and abroad and authored or coauthored over 130 articles and chapters. He is a diplomate of the American Board of Surgery and a fellow of both the American College of Surgeons and the American College of Gastroenterology. His professional life has been devoted to the study of cancer, especially among African Americans. In 1979, as president of the American Cancer Society, Leffall developed programs and emphasized the importance of this study for the benefit of the African American population and other ethnic groups. Cancers of the head and neck, breast, colorectum and soft part sarcomas are his main areas of interest.

Surgeon, oncologist, medical educator and civic leader, and the recipient of many awards, Leffall has taught over 4,500 medical students and trained at least 250 general surgery residents. In 1995 he was elected president of the American College of Surgeons and in

2002 was named chairman of the President's Cancer Panel. He and his wife, Ruthie have one grown son, LeSalle, III.

Leffall passed away on May 26, 2019.

## Related Entries

**William S. Stevens High School** [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

**diploma**

**Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University**

[STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

**Howard University College of Medicine** [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

**William S. Stevens High School** [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

**Homer G. Phillips Hospital (St. Louis, Missouri)**

[EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1952 to 1953]

**Intern**

**Freedmen's Hospital, Howard University** [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1953 to 1957]

**Resident**

**Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center** [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1957 to 1959]

**Fellowship in Cancer Surgery**

**Howard University College of Medicine** [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1962 to ?]

**Howard University College of Medicine** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1962 to 1966]

**Assist. Prof. of Surgery**

**Howard University College of Medicine** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1966 to 1970]

**Assoc. Prof. of Surgery**

**Howard University College of Medicine** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1970 to 1995]

**Chairman, Surgery Dept. Howard**

**Georgetown University** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1970 to ?]

**Professorial Lecturer**

**Howard University College of Medicine** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1992 to ?]

**Charles R. Drew Professor**

**Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences**  
[EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1997 to ?]

**Distinguished Prof. of Surgery**

**American Cancer Society** [MEMBEROF]  
[from ? to ?]

**President**

**American College of Surgeons** [MEMBEROF]  
[from ? to ?]

**President**