

## The Meaning of a Graduation Never Fades, Even After 50 Years

Guy Riekeman, DC, President, Life University

We hold graduation ceremonies at Palmer College three times a year. Though they happen with some frequency, they never become routine. Like all colleges of chiropractic, each ceremony at Palmer is unique, reflecting the distinctive, special group of students who toss their clinic cards in the air and get their chiropractic wings. Some graduations, however, are more memorable than others. Our most recent ceremony on June 16, 2000, was memorable in a very touching way.

A month or so before the June graduation, I received a letter from Dr. Jerilynn Kaibel, a practitioner with offices in Beaumont and San Bernardino, California. Her father, Dr. Bert Young, graduated from Palmer College 50 years ago - or rather, he graduated but was unable to attend graduation ceremonies and receive his diploma.

It seems Dr. Young was working second shift at a local factory to support his family while attending Palmer. He couldn't afford to take the time off work (and the subsequent loss of pay) to attend graduation.

While this didn't stop Dr. Young from setting up a practice and becoming a very successful chiropractor in Beaumont and Palm Springs, California, it always troubled him. In the back of his mind, he wondered if there was a way to walk across the stage and officially get his diploma, even after many years had passed.

Fifty years passed, and his daughter, a highly successful chiropractor in her own right, decided it was high time her father received his Palmer diploma.

"I can't tell you how much I have thought about how much my father has done for his profession, both in practice and supporting others," Dr. Kaibel said in her correspondence. "He has always done so quietly and with no fanfare. The realization that he had to skip his own graduation in 1950 because he could not afford to give up the \$12 he was being paid for his shift work has bothered me since."

On June 16, 2000, Dr. Bert Young took his place among the 125 doctor of chiropractic candidates during commencement ceremonies in historic Lyceum Hall on the Palmer campus in Davenport, Iowa. His was the last chair, and he was the last to cross the stage. Before his name was called, I spoke a few words on his behalf, then called his daughter Jerilynn to the stage. It was incredibly moving to see the emotion on her father's face as he received the Palmer diploma that meant so much to him, even 50 years after it was earned. When he and his daughter hugged on the stage, there wasn't a dry eye in the house.

"I was overwhelmed," Dr. Young said of that moment. "I never had such an ovation in my life. It was fantastic. My diploma means a whole lot to me because I was very close to B.J. and Bud Crowder and so many other leaders of those days. It was like one big family. To have that diploma with B.J.'s and Dr. Hender's name on it means the world to me. And to have my daughter set it all up was incredible. When I saw all of those people standing and applauding, all I could think of was

to bow in humbleness. Chiropractic means so much to me."

Prior to the ceremony, Dr. Kaibel expressed her gratitude to us this way: "Thank you for offering to let him 'graduate' in June, only 50 years late. This lifted an 'unresolved' issue from my heart. I will be forever indebted to you for your compassion."

All of this made me realize that a chiropractic diploma - in this case, a Palmer one - is much more than a piece of paper. It is a symbol of all that is best and brightest about our profession. It means our graduates are ready not just to be excellent practitioners of the philosophy, art and science of chiropractic. They are fully prepared to take their place as leaders of our profession.

With the passing of some of the great minds of our profession - Dr. Virgil Strang, Dr. Galen Price, Dr. Herbert Ross Reaver and others we've recently lost - the over 200 new students we enrolled in July (30 more than our goal in a declining market) must be ready to stand in the light these dedicated giants have cast and take our profession to new heights. A Palmer diploma proves to the world they are capable of doing just that - even 50 years later.

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