

CHIROPRACTIC (GENERAL)

## The Chirons: Images from World War II and Afterward

Joseph Keating Jr., PhD



*This cartoon image appeared repeatedly during and following World War II.*

They are senior citizens now; men and women who donned the uniform of their nation more than half a century ago to join in the conflagration of global war, known as "chirons" during World War II. They were doctors of chiropractic one and all, and members of the Americana Society of Military Chiropractors (Evert, 1947). Although much appears in the chiropractic press nowadays about current campaigns to include chiropractors as commissioned health care providers in the military

and to qualify chiropractic services to veterans for reimbursement (e.g., Stearns, 2000), it's a very old crusade (Keating, 1994). Chiropractors have participated in most, if not all, of the American military conflicts of the twentieth century, although without official recognition of their special skills. The stories of World War II chiro-veterans are slipping away as more and more of these brave souls draw nearer to Valhalla. Someone needs to take responsibility for preserving their tales before the opportunity is lost.

A bit of the saga of chiropractors in World War II is preserved for posterity in the pages of the *Journal of the National Chiropractic Association* (then called the *National Chiropractic Journal*). In addition, the surviving photographic collection of the editor of the *National Chiropractic Journal*, Loran M. Rogers, DC, includes several forgotten snapshots from the era of the chiron.

When Hitler invaded Poland in 1939, thereby drawing Britain and its commonwealth into war, American chiropractors began to prepare for their role in the conflict. At its 1940 convention in Minneapolis, the National Chiropractic Association (NCA) adopted the following resolutions:

#### Resolution on Army and Navy Commissions

WHEREAS, many ex-service men are chiropractors who fought for their country in the last war and would again fight for the defense of their country, if necessary, and

WHEREAS, these chiropractors, through years of research and experience realize the results of Chiropractic for the sick and disabled, and

WHEREAS, chiropractors would gladly enlist to care for service men either in the army or navy in times of peace or war, provided they were granted commissions in the army and navy on the same basis as medical practitioners, and

WHEREAS, the National Chiropractic Association is working militantly to accomplish these ends in the interests of national unity and the health and welfare of our armed forces:

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the formation of a Chiropractic Ex-Service Men's League in every state of the Union and in every province of Canada, aiming to accomplish these ends, be given approval by the National Chiropractic Association in convention assembled in Minneapolis, with the hope that a Chiropractic Ex-Service Men's League will be formed in every state of the union and in every province of Canada, or in any other territorial jurisdiction in which Doctors of Chiropractic, who are ex-service men, reside...

#### Resolution on Disabled Veterans

WHEREAS, we believe that many of the disabled veterans who have failed to respond to the medical treatment now afforded them could be rehabilitated through Chiropractic treatment, and

WHEREAS, we further believe that the veteran should be accorded the same rights and privileges as enjoyed by every other citizen of the United States in the choice of the doctor and method of treatment, and

WHEREAS, many state and local veterans' organizations have passed resolutions petitioning the Veterans' Bureau to provide Chiropractic treatment in Veterans' hospitals on the same basis as medical treatment, and

WHEREAS, considerable of the taxpayers' money could be saved by the rehabilitation of veterans through the employment of chiropractors in veteran hospitals:

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the National Chiropractic Association cooperate with the disabled veteran by bringing the above facts to the attention of the various veterans' organizations and the Veterans' Bureau in Washington, D.C...

#### Resolution on War Veteran Groups

WHEREAS, it is evident that war veteran groups have done exceptional work in Washington to help disabled veterans of the World War of 1917-18, and

WHEREAS, these war veteran groups are laboring untiringly for the welfare of the widows and orphans of war veterans; BE IT RESOLVED that the National Chiropractic Association, in convention assembled here in Minneapolis, endorse and commend the work done by these veteran groups in Washington, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the National Chiropractic Association extend its every effort in helping these veterans groups gain the consideration and recognition they so richly deserve, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the National Chiropractic Association, through its legislative representative in Washington, extend its full strength to assist these veterans groups to procure those things which to them will enhance their future health and happiness, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of these resolutions be sent to the headquarters of the American Legion, Disabled Veterans of Foreign Wars, and the Army and Navy Union. Similar resolutions and petitions to President Franklin Roosevelt were evident throughout the profession. Many chiropractic college periodicals published lists of their students and graduates on active duty. Literature from the Cleveland Chiropractic College of Kansas City repeatedly noted the need for DCs in the service, and college leaders called upon the federal government to make use of this indigenous healing service (e.g., Cleveland, 1942; Ratledge, 1943). At the Interstate Chiropractic Congress held in Kansas City on 30 June 1943, college co-founder and president Carl S. Cleveland Sr., DC urged cooperation between straights and mixers in their appeals to federal and military authorities:

#### Recommendation No. 2: War Recognition

WHEREAS, the Chiropractic profession has offered the services of its members in the capacity for which our men have been trained in both World War No. 1 and World War No. 2; and such specialized professional services have been rejected on the grounds that not sufficient practitioners were available within the age limits qualifying them for War Service,

THEREFORE, BE IT RECOMMENDED: That the Army follow their usual procedure as in cases where manpower in certain specialized services are necessary and desired; that being the training of additional men at Government expense.

#### Recommendation No. 3: War Recognition

WHEREAS, At the close of World War II there will undoubtedly be many ex-service men who will request to study Chiropractic as a rehabilitation occupation, THEREFORE, BE IT RECOMMENDED: That all such request be allowed by the National Rehabilitation Committee without interference of choice of Chiropractic school or college, that being left entirely to the decision of the ex-service man or woman, himself or herself.

#### Recommendation No. 4.

NOW THEREFORE, be it recommended that in the interest of unity, the science and art of Chiropractic shall be considered to be the adjustment of vertebral subluxations of the human spinal column.

Recommendation No. 5.

WHEREAS, the National Chiropractic Association and the International Chiropractors Association filed separately appeal briefs with the War Manpower Commission and did otherwise separately approach the Commission in efforts to secure recognition on the War Essential Activity List, and

WHEREAS, Such Briefs and appeals to the War Manpower Commission were not one and the same and resulted in considerable confusion within the Commission and in the profession as to actual needs and desires, and

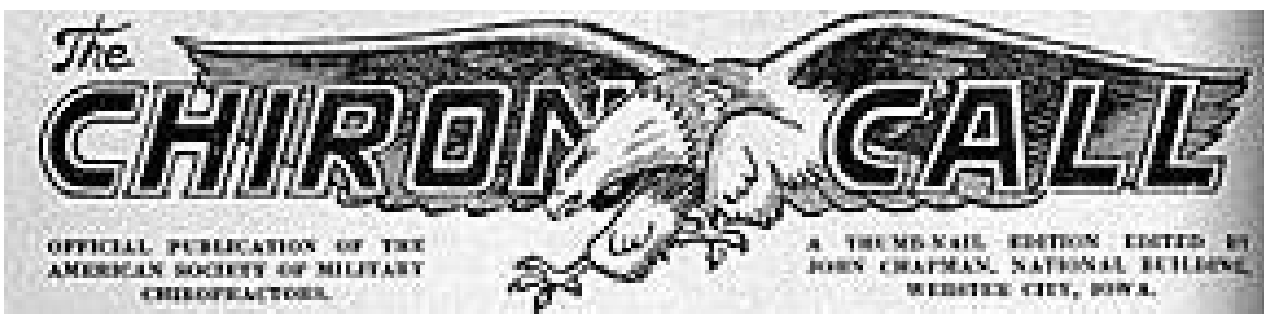
WHEREAS, At other times different Government Agencies have been separately approached by the N.C.A. and I.C.A. on matters vital to the welfare of the profession, and

WHEREAS, Such different approaches to Government Departments have not at times been in accord resulting in some confusion as the desires of the profession and much controversy within the profession over the differences, and

WHEREAS, The present emergency demands united action on the part of our profession, if we are to properly meet the problems confronting us and attain our proper place in the field of healing arts; and all differences and controversy must be eliminated so that such unity may be brought about, So,

BE IT RECOMMENDED, that the Council of Chiropractic Schools, National and State Organizations, appeal to the National Chiropractic Association and the International Chiropractors Association to name a joint committee of the strongest men in each association and that such committee be charged with working out united appeals and approaches on all major problems and efforts of the profession for the duration of the present war emergency. And be it,

FURTHER RECOMMENDED, that: A copy of this resolution be forwarded to the President and the Secretary of the N.C.A. and to the President and the Secretary of the I.C.A.



The Chiron Call was distributed free of charge to all active duty servicemen and women at home and overseas, and helped to maintain a connection with the profession. It featured short news items about the activities of chironers, and published their letters to the homefront. A smaller version appeared as a regular column in the National Chiropractic Journal.

Respectfully submitted, Dr. Julius W. Bechtold, Chairman, Dr. C.S. Cleveland, Secretary, Dr. Wm. Hugh Warden, Dr. George F. Kelley and Dr. Max C. Hintz.

But chiropractors found themselves repeatedly rebuffed in these efforts. The services of

chiropractors would not be officially recognized, and DCs sought alternative means of maintaining cohesion and serving their nation. Some 700 American chiropractors served in the Armed Forces (Rogers, 1945b).



Rebuffed in their efforts for official recognition, many DCs served as enlisted men (e.g., corpsmen, x-ray technicians, pharmacist's mates, physiotherapists, orthotists) in the medical divisions of the various branches of military service. Unofficial (and sometimes clandestine) manipulative treatment was often sought and received by grateful soldiers, sailors and airmen. Others served in combat units as officers and enlisted personnel. Some of their stories were told in the monthly *"Chiron Call."* *National Chiropractic Journal* editor Loran M. Rogers, D.C. reported:

At long last the famous war correspondent, Ernie Pyle, has discovered a chiropractor in the service, and made not of it in the news. Yes, there are hundreds of chiropractors in the service, but somehow or other the correspondents usually pass them by. Writing from the Marianas Islands and using the title "Spine Bender" in his article, Pyle described meeting Sgt. Joe Corcoran, a chiropractor who before the war practiced at Jamaica, Queens, for three years. Sgt. Corcoran is a side gunner on a B-29, and when Pyle asked him how he happened to be in that position, his answer was "damned if he knew." At any rate, according to Pyle, Corcoran still gives many of the boys chiropractic treatment (Rogers, 1945a).



*"America is Calling" proclaimed this image from the cover of the September 1942 issue of The Chiropractor, published by the Palmer School of Chiropractic.*

Editor's note: Part II of "The Chirons: Images from World War II and Afterward: will appear in an upcoming issue of *Dynamic Chiropractic*.

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