

Lager, Stout, Bitter and Ale

It used to be a convent, said my guide.

"Ah, so that explains the crosses and stained glass windows," I said. But the pub on the first floor told me that the nuns had long since departed.

It's the Anglo-European College of Chiropractic (AECC) in Bournemouth, England. My schedule was tight: a two-hour talk at the school Friday evening, and then the weekend 12-hour seminar ("The Natural Superiority of Chiropractic") at St. Catherine's in Oxford on chiropractic science, history, research, philosophy and mind/body healing. There was also a Saturday night reception at the Museum of Natural History.

I'd like to tell you all about the scenic drive I took through the English countryside from London to Oxford, but I can't. I fell asleep in the car (it was a long flight).

Dr. Richard Lanigan, a former professional soccer player and Olympic trainer turned chiropractor, organized the conferences. Soon we were walking through AECC's beautiful courtyard and buildings, up some marble staircases and into the lecture room.

It's a far cry from Brooklyn, I thought, as I looked over a packed house of students and faculty speaking with accents I'd only heard in movies. And it wasn't Spartanburg, South Carolina, either, where I went to chiropractic school. I couldn't find grits anywhere (not that I looked).

Many of the students seemed to think that chiropractic is a system of dealing with musculoskeletal conditions: back, neck, headache, etc. So there I was showing research and clinical observations on chiropractic and blindness; deafness; multiple sclerosis; HIV; ear-nose-and-throat infections; immune system enhancement; congenital conditions; mental health; brain function; I.Q., and on and on. When I talked about how the triune of life, the cornerstone of chiropractic, predicted cutting-edge research in psychoneuroimmunology, you could see their wonder. It was a unique way of looking at the healing art they were devoting their lives to practicing. They didn't know the power that they were being given as they learned to adjust the spine.

English reserve was nowhere to be found. The room seemed to explode in laughter at my jokes, and during the more thoughtful points you could hear a pin drop. "We are so hungry for this type of information," many students told me. So many of us are sleeping giants (healers unaware of our power), so we get burned out and bored and worn down by the day-to-day struggles. Without a higher wild romp out and work for insurance companies (for example) in a few years. I didn't want that to happen to those students before me. And from the extended applause, I think I reached some of them.

England is different enough from the U.S. to be novel, yet similar enough to be comfortable. Foreign travel is fascinating because everything looks so new. I discovered that the pubs are social centers. Everyone goes there, and without something in your hand, life didn't seem complete. My hosts made sure my hands were full of lager, stout, bitter, ale, beer and Guinness. There were many heated discussions of the pros and cons of the different drinks, as is this were something important.

After a late night at the school pub rubbing elbows with students and faculty, we went out for a typical English dinner. We went to an Indian restaurant (who conquered whom?). I saw my first bed in 30 hours (fortunately it was in my hotel room) and collapsed. In the morning it was off to Oxford.

Oxford is absolutely beautiful. The 36 separate colleges making up Oxford University include many buildings hundreds of years old. I imagined I was back in medieval day with knights and damsels trotting along as I walked down narrow cobblestone alleys talking about the king and the baron, and getting robbed and beaten in the true tradition of the Dark Ages. (I just imagined it; everyone was really very polite.) In the pubs I kept wondering if that nice young man or woman serving us might one day be a future prime minister, famous scientist, rock star or embezzler. Such were some of my Yank fantasies.

Chiropractic politics across the "pond" is intense. Many Europeans have been drifting toward a very musculoskeletal approach for years. I don't know why. There are debates about "treating" type M versus type O (musculoskeletal versus organic or visceral) conditions. Of course from a subluxation perspective it doesn't matter. Everyone who has a subluxation needs an adjustment no matter what symptoms or named disease the patient has. And the sicker the patient, the more they need to be subluxation-free. It's a simple concept that can get lost in this world of allopathic, mechanistic thinking.

At Oxford I concentrated on the wonders of chiropractic as described in the medical, osteopathic, and chiropractic literature; the relationship between the immune system and the nervous system; and I showed videos of leading edge scientists discussing the importance of the nervous system-immune system link. As at AECC we discussed new research on the powerful effects the mind/body has on healing.

I also discussed the mind/body work chiropractors have done over the years showing rare pictures of the many chiropractic sanitariums that existed across the country. As an added bonus, I showed about a dozen film clips of actors playing chiropractors in Hollywood movies, plus some rare B.J. Palmer footage.

The reception at the British Natural History Museum was unique. We dined under 70 million-year-old dinosaur skeletons and had the museum to ourselves. This museum is the place where Charles Darwin first gave his lectures on the Origin of the Species. After the reception we went to a pub (of course). As in Japan, the seminars continue after hours, but between speaking for hours and the noisy and smoky atmosphere, I was starting to lose my voice and called it a night.

The next day the room seemed to hold more people. I think some doctors told their friends to run over and have a listen. I loved it. We discussed the crisis in medical care today and the childhood vaccination controversy: powerful topics that touch everyone's lives, doctors and patients alike.

At the end of my talk a doctor came up and hugged me. Well, I guess I finally got the British to loosen up, I thought. She was from Italy. "You simply must speak in Italy, they'd love you there."

"I'd love to," I said. Having been brought up in Brooklyn, Italy couldn't be that much different.

A return trip to England, Scotland, Ireland, Amsterdam, and Copenhagen is being planned. This time the family is coming, as my wife refuses to be kept from the fun. "The children will be old enough to travel," she said. Only if they are heavily sedated.

But I know the real reason she wants to return to England. With my tight schedule I didn't get any shopping done, and she wants to make up for it.

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JULY 1998