

Commitment to the Big Dream

Editorial Staff

Editor's note: This marks the half way point in our series of 12 brief interviews with the corporate sponsors of the chiropractic centennial. In this issue we recognize The Quest Alliance for its Platinum Club Crown sponsorship and its commitment of at least \$50,000 to our centennial.

"DC": Please tell us about The Quest Alliance's commitment to chiropractic.

Dr. Riekeman: When we started Quest, we were concerned with the change that was going on in the health care system. What we have seen evolving over the last couple of decades is that people are primarily moving away from a crisis approach to health care and are looking to models of prevention and wellness. We wanted to produce an organization that would train chiropractors for this changing health care field. In doing so, we began to train doctors to educate their patients so that their patients could make rational decisions. We've seen studies recently that more people going to alternative health care practitioners, even those with serious conditions, such as cancers; that the people who are going are people who are more highly educated. People are choosing health care differently, and we wanted to prepare chiropractors to be able to give educational programs, produce reports, and offer health care classes that would give people options on what kind of health care they choose for themselves and their families. We wanted to produce staff training that would accommodate more long-term wellness, care-oriented business and practices. We wanted to support research within the profession, both on a technical and a basic science level that supported long-term wellness care.

My background is with Disney. We took my Disney background of management, which is called "Management by Values," and applied that to this wellness concept in chiropractic as a training basis for chiropractors to function and be successful in the upcoming health care markets.

"DC": Tell us why The Quest Alliance decided to become a Platinum Club Crown Sponsor to the chiropractic centennial.

Dr. Riekeman: Someone might ask, "Well, is it of any value to you from a marketing standpoint?" We haven't seen that, nor is that the reason why we got involved. The centennial was going to happen with or without us. What it really came down to for us was that I decided that chiropractic has given me the lifestyle that I have, which I consider to be magical. I can't believe that as chiropractors that we get paid for getting up every day, going to work, and helping people, and winding up 12th on the list of financial earners in the world. I guess it wasn't even a choice or a discussion that we had to have. We just felt that chiropractic has given us so much that this was a way that we could give something back to the profession, especially in this critical year.

My father is a chiropractor and he graduated in those large classes from Palmer College right after WWII. These people practiced at a time when there was not insurance. There was not big money associated with being a chiropractor. I know the worst day of my Dad's life was the day when he physically could not go to work any longer; when he just couldn't stand up and take care of patients. I guess, if anything, one of the reasons why I think it is so important that we celebrate this centennial is that the day when my father retired, there was no one to mark that day in history:

the 40 years that he put into the profession. There was no one there to put his name in a textbook to recognize what I believe is one of the greatest things that ever happened to health care, which is chiropractic. One of the things we are here to do this year is to mark the moment for all of those chiropractors who no one ever thought to stop and thank at that time for what they were doing.

The second thing is that my mentor was Walt Disney. Just before Walt Disney died, the company had just purchased the last piece of land in Orlando, Florida. He took all of the people who had been working on Epcot for a couple of decades down there and stood them out in this field, and explained where everything was going, as if they had never heard this before. They all thought he had flipped out a little bit. At the end of his explanation, he went out and stood nose to nose with every one of them in this field, with tears streaming down his face, and said: "I'm asking you to make me a commitment not to let my dream get messed up." And they started crying, and so they promised him in that field that they wouldn't.

I guess that I feel one of the other things that we need to do, besides marking the moment for all of the chiropractors who can't do that anymore historically, we need to stop this year and look in the mirror to all of those chiropractors who started this profession and make a commitment to not let the big dream, the big idea, get messed up for short-term gain. That is what I believe the centennial is all about and why we are sponsoring it.

"DC": Now that chiropractic is entering its second century, what do you think the future holds for the chiropractic profession?

Dr. Riekeman: I think our profession has a major decision to make about whether we want to stay as a subspecialty within the current medical philosophy of treating problems after they show up, or whether we want to become a leading profession in the evolving wellness care systems. The quickest analogy that I can make is when my wife and I were delivering our first child in 1974, 50 percent of the births in Kansas City were C-sections; episiotomies were done in 100 percent of the births; they used drugs, silver nitrate; they wouldn't let the mothers nurse and kept the newborns in the hospital for three days. We just had a really hard time with these procedures and we felt that there were other people like us, not radicals, but just people who wanted a birth process that was more natural and sensitive. We couldn't find it at the time, it was really difficult.

Today when you look at birth, hospitals are advertising the sensitivity of their birthing centers, all women expect to give birth naturally, husbands are expected to participate these days, almost without question. It's a whole different birth environment. The obstetricians are not the ones who made this change: the parents made the shift in birthing. Obstetricians either adapted and gave them that, to function in the system, or they died out.

We believe that the same thing is happening within the chiropractic profession. Do we attach ourselves to the current system of medical delivery which waits for people to get sick and then treats the sickness, and be a subspecialty taking care of low back pain? We believe that system is going to collapse. The other choice is to take on a leadership role in where people in our society are moving: trying to maintain health; doing the things that create a more natural lifestyle; eating better; birthing their children differently. We believe that is where chiropractic, philosophically, politically, and scientifically is going to see the culmination of the chiropractic dream.

So if you ask me what chiropractic is going to be doing in the next century, I think it's either going to wind up as a subspecialty of the medical community, or it's going to become the leading authority in health and wellness care and therefore, the leading authority in the developing health care system. Which one is going to happen? I don't know. We're in the battle every day, it's kind of like fighting for the hearts and souls of the profession and depending on whether we go for short-

term or long-term gain, will determine what the outcome of this profession is going to be.

"DC": Thank you for your sponsorship.

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