

If Only We Could Hear Them

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This article is being written just two days after the death of Dr. Carl S. Cleveland Jr., who joins John Grostic, DC (and many other chiropractors that have dedicated their lives to this profession) in that "better place." For myself, I like to think of the early DCs watching over us.

When my father died, I felt that immediate loss. But over time, I began to recognize his presence in the organization he built, the causes he led, and the people he worked with. He isn't really gone, I just have to be a bit more sensitive to recognize his presence.

If you can imagine our chiropractic pioneers looking in on what we are doing, what do you suppose they might be saying about us now?

Maybe Charles Schillig, DC, who was arrested numerous times and spent six months in jail for his dedication to his patients, is a little dissatisfied. Perhaps he is telling the others: "DCs today have it easy. They aren't arrested, don't have to spend time in jail, and their lives aren't threatened. They have insurance reimbursement, government recognition and independent research to support them. What more could they ask for?"

Perhaps Drs. Carl Cleveland Jr. and John Grostic would help the old timers understand: "Yes, things were tough back in your time. You were the pioneers who made the sacrifices to keep this profession going. True, the 1980s were a time when chiropractic thrived, but times are still tough. DCs today are facing dramatic health care reform, managed care is running rampant, and the MDs, PTs, DOs and othopractors/NACM are trying to take the adjustment away from us. Many DCs are facing 30 to 40 percent reductions in their practices. This is a new testing time for chiropractors."

Sylva Ashworth, DC, the matriarch of the Cleveland family whom Dr. Schillig succeeded as president of the Universal Chiropractors Association (the predecessor of the ACA), might remind Carl Jr. about his early years. She might speak about the needs of the patient: "People came to chiropractors because what we did worked. Sure, the science is important, but our patients came, whether chiropractic was illegal or not, because we took care of them. They got the results and chiropractic grew. The same is true today, these young DCs have just forgotten. Many of them have lost the spark."

D.D. Palmer might be worried: "But will they carry on the tradition? Are they dedicated enough to go through the fire? Or will my work be lost to other professions who don't even know why they adjust, let alone where?"

B.J., of course, would be ready to chastise us whether we needed it or not: "It isn't enough to be dedicated to chiropractic, you must put that dedication into action! Each DC must tell every patient, every other health care provider, the butcher, the baker -- everyone -- about the wonders of chiropractic! Once they know, they will become patients for life!"

My father would be sitting off to the side, taking notes and writing an article in his mind. Sad, because no one would be able to read the comments and hear what these great pioneers have to say.

Or can we?

Their bodies may be gone, but their writing, their understanding and their inspiration is still with us. As you care for your patients today and throughout the week, think about the men and women who made this profession great in spite of many tribulations.

Perhaps during that moment when the patient is in the right position, your hands are about to deliver that quick thrust that will bring the results you seek, you will hear something of what the pioneers would say to you: about your patients, about your practice, about your attitude.

The pioneers have gone through the fire. They know what we are feeling. They know what it takes to break through.

They have much to tell us, if only we would listen, then we will hear them better.

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