

Leaders for Our Second Century

THIS IS YOUR WAKE-UP CALL

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The passing of John Grostic, DC, and Carl Cleveland Jr., DC, as we approached the beginning of our second century, brought a somewhat foreboding undercurrent to the hoopla of centennial celebrations. It was a harsh reminder to all of us of our own mortality. The reality is that on average, most of us have between 70-80 years on this earth: not much time to accomplish the private and professional aspirations of our lives.

Listening to the private comments of many of today's chiropractic leaders, I've heard some recurring themes. They're a little worn out. They talk about wanting to spend more time with their families; they speak about being overcommitted. Their slogan for the many professional demands many will seek to foist on them in 1996 appears to be, "Just say NO!"

Conversely, these are the very same leaders that answer the call each and every time the need arises. They travel on weekends, work late into the night, and meet the deadlines. These are the people this profession has depended upon for many years. Win or lose, they are always there.

But as our profession has expanded, so have our challenges. In the past, our biggest war was with the American Medical Association. The media practically ignored chiropractic. Our patients supported us and that was all we needed to keep chiropractic growing at a slow but steady rate.

Today, there are hundreds of smaller battles that affect every DC in every town. With recognition has come the cold war of interdisciplinary acceptance. The media is looking for our blemishes. Everywhere we turn (or tune in), chiropractic is being referenced, from Nintendo games to Acura ads.

"Manipulation" has grown in popularity for almost all health care providers. MDs, DOs, PTs and even nurses are recognizing the benefits of the chiropractic adjustment and trying to copy us.

Managed care and health care reform are depleting our practices and stealing our patients. One ponders how many true chiropractic patients will be left after the patient reshuffling into various health care programs.

When I went to college, a single computer's worth of hardware still required a climate controlled room. The electronic calculator was just becoming available (for about \$100), and the world wide web could have been the title of a horror movie about the proliferation of gigantic arachnids.

Times have changed. Problems have grown more complex. Solutions require greater focus and more determination. What worked 20 years ago isn't even a consideration today.

This profession faces some very serious challenges over the next few years. The men and women (DCs and non-DCs) that will see us through over the next 20 years must step forward and begin earning their stripes. We need tomorrow's leaders now.

In many cases the same old names are holding the same positions (or rotating through the list of

officers for the 10th time). Maybe they are waiting for you to prove yourself. Perhaps they are waiting to see if you have the commitment before they pass the baton.

If you are called to be a chiropractic leader in our second century, it won't come easily. Today's leaders didn't work those many years to see it squandered by others who don't have the determination needed to see this profession to victory.

As our profession grows, so does our need for leadership. We need leaders who can work with other leaders as members of coalitions, councils and congresses. The days of the self-proclaimed mavericks who can't get along with other chiropractic leaders is over. Without unity, we will not survive.

Every DC has a role to play in the future of this profession. You may only be able to write letters to politicians and corporate advertisers. You may only be able to give a little time and a little money. If that is your present situation, do what you can, but be true to your profession.

But a few are called to give greater time and energy (and money) to the future of chiropractic. If you have been sitting on the fence waiting to be asked, now is the time.

The call is clear. The chiropractic profession needs you now.

Without the critical mass of leaders, chiropractic can't accomplish all it has before it. We can't afford to miss a single opportunity. It's time for you to begin to take your place in the history of chiropractic. It's time for you to become one of those DCs whose name will be honored at the Chiropractic Bicentennial Celebration.

DMP Jr.

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