

We Get Letters

Sixty-one Years Ago, Our Chiropractic Forefathers Brought forth unto the land the Largest Gathering of Supporters

To the Editor: It is the prerogative of an editor/headline writer to place an emphasis on a lead story. That should not, however, substitute for fact.

Such may be the case in point for DC's headline for the Nov. 5 issue (11:23) on the front page: "The Largest Gathering of Chiro Patient Ever!"

While that importance may be overstated, the assertion itself has been the subject of previous discussion and debate in Chiropractic History in recent years (1990, 10:1 and 1990, 10:2).

Qualifying "chiropractic patients," or "supporters" and the like would further engage in subdebate, but for those interested, I can refer them to not only both 1990 numbers of the journals, but the Archives display at the library of New York Chiropractic College in Seneca Falls, NY.

On display is a huge wide-angle photograph of an estimated 16,500 assembled in Madison Square Garden in Manhattan by the old American Bureau of Chiropractic on Jan. 23, 1932 to support its founder Albert Warner, recently released for "practicing medicine without a license" and for the cause of chiropractic legislation.

None of which to take away from the Nassau Coliseum event of last Oct. 14, when 6,000 assembled. That remarkable gathering is to be admired. But the event for Dr. Warner 61 years previous truly earned the plaudits of headline writers in 1932. Both in their own way were exceptional outpourings of patient involvement in different times in our history.

Russell W. Gibbons
Editor
Chiropractic History

"... the first 100 years are the worse."

To the Editor: In the Oct. 8th issue of Dynamic Chiropractic (p. 3), you stated, "The call I never made." That brought to my memory a quotation that you may or may not have seen or heard:

"The clock of life is wound but once, and no one has the power to know just when the hands will stop, on what day or what hour. Now is the only time you have, so live it with a will. Don't wait until tomorrow, the hands may then be still."

I am one of the pioneers who spent 84 days in jail so that chiropractic might survive.

Editor's note: Dr. Stiers sent us a description of his imprisonment ("Our Heritage") which we're printing below. Dr. Stiers, who will be 95 on Jan. 23rd., added this postscript to his letter: "From a

joking point of view, the first 100 years are the worse."

Our Heritage

It was in 1923 that the Ohio State Medical Board declared war on the chiropractors in this state and planned to exterminate us by arrest and harassment. We were easily convicted by a law that states that chiropractic is one of the branches of medicine and surgery.

The laymen were not aware of the contents of this law, which stated that a person convicted under this law could be fined \$25-500, a portion of the fine to be sent to the medical board to help carry on the warfare against us. So, if a chiropractor was found guilty and decide to pay the fine, he would not only be digging his own grave, but paying his own funeral expenses at the same time. The law must have been planned by a shrewd group of men, probably lawyers, to have the chiropractors exterminate themselves.

Four of us in our county decided to lay out our fine in jail in preference to letting the Ohio State Medical Board use part of the fine to arrest other chiropractors. We were fined \$50 and costs, and were allowed to lay out our fine at the rate of 60 cents per day. In other words, we had to spend 84 days in jail.

We were tried by a judge who had a son who was studying to be a medical doctor at that time. When I heard that, I told the boys we had about as much chance as a canary bird before a jury of tom cats.

Dr. Ben Miles was our state publicity directory. Whenever someone went to jail, Dr. Miles would go to that town and quickly organize the laymen and patients and put on a public meeting to urge the people to call on the judge to release these innocent chiropractors. In most instances it was to no avail. The city solicitor in our county let it be known that if we got out of jail before our 84 days were up, we would have to crawl through the key hole of the jail.

When Dr. Miles came to visit the four of us, he remarked that he had visited many jails in Ohio where the chiropractors were incarcerated. Next to the Canton Workhouse, our jail was the "worse hell hole" in the state.

There were over 300 chiropractors in Ohio arrested in 1923. The city of Toledo had the distinction of having the most chiropractors in jail at one time. There were 24 men and two women in that jail. I feel that when a chiropractor goes to jail for the principle for which we were fighting, he has paid the supreme price for the right of the sick to get will by the doctor of their choice. Without any reflection on anyone, I wonder how many chiropractors in Ohio today would have the guts to go to jail so that chiropractic might survive?

Just to give you an idea of the conditions that existed in our jail, I can truthfully mention that the mattress and pillows in our cells were filthy. The first night in jail was an unforgettable one. The bed bugs had a ball. None of us could sleep because the bed bugs were crawling all over us. One of the boys turned on the light in our cell and we could see the bugs crawling all over our bunk and many of them crawling up the steel wall. The next day the sheriff furnished us with some kind of a liquid that we sprayed on our pillows and mattresses. There were also many sewer bugs that were at least one and a half inches long.

There was only one bath tub for 50 prisoners. Two men were reported to have gonorrhoea and another had syphilis. We would take a sponge bath in our cell with soap and a wash cloth. The water pressure was very low in the jail and when someone had a bowel movement, it would sometimes take five to ten minutes before it would be flushed. We didn't even have a wooden seat

on the toilet. It was just iron.

The mice had a ball as soon as we turned out the lights at night. They would even crawl over us in bed. I couldn't sleep one night, so I got up and decided to see if I could kill some of the mice. We had what I called a stool, which was nothing more than an old chair with the back knocked off. I turned this stool upside down in the corridor and found a small piece of wood about four or five inches long. I tied a piece of cord onto the small stick, placed the stick under one end of the stool, and placed a small piece of dry bread under the stool for bait. When a mouse would start eating the bread, I would pull the string and the stool would fall on him; then I would step on the stool and mash him. I caught seven mice in about 15 minutes and had the luck of catching two at one time.

We used to hide bread in our pillow cases to eat when and if we got hungry and had nothing else.

I hope I have not bored you with this resume of what we experienced in 1923, but these are the facts.

W. F. Stiers
Zanesville, Ohio

"The ACA did not 'endorse' unlimited or compulsory immunization."

Dear Editor:

I very seldom write letters to the editor. I could not, however, help but respond to Dr. Fred Barge's most recent ACA bashing article, "The Last and Final Straw" that appeared in your October 22nd edition. In my opinion, there has not been "ENOUGH SAID." I know the dedicated chiropractors who make up the House of Delegates of the ACA and none of them need explain their devotion to this profession to Dr. Barge -- a person who becomes more shrill with each article -- apparently due to the burden of needing material to fill his column.

As usual, Dr. Barge repeats his old, time-worn story, about chiropractic following the path of osteopathy to anonymity, that he so enjoys writing and speaking about. Simply put, Dr. Barge is wrong about the ACA and he is wrong about the profession of osteopathy. Apparently, Dr. Barge is a disciple of the original osteopathic "philosophy."

"Still would synthesize some of the major components of magnetic healing and bonesetting into one unified doctrine. The effects of disease, as the former said, were due to the obstruction or imbalance of the fluids, but this in turn was caused by misplaced bones, particularly of the spinal column. At this point, Still had given birth to his own distinctive system."

-- Gevitz, Norman. 1982. *The D.O.'s: Osteopathic Medicine in America*

I wonder if Dr. Barge believes that original osteopathic philosophy was and is the correct health paradigm -- it would seem so from his lamenting of that profession's historical changes. Wouldn't that mean that Dr. Barge should more appropriately be an original osteopath, not a chiropractor, if the only truth is the historical osteopathic one and he can't see any reason for any of osteopathy's developmental changes? Or perhaps he thinks that, even if wrong, osteopaths had to go to their death defending the wrong, notwithstanding new research or facts. The point is that Dr. Barge has his mind made up and he doesn't wish to have fact interfere with that mindset.

My primary purpose in writing is to set the record straight, for your readers and Dr. Barge, about the Policy on Vaccination that the ACA HOD adopted during our July convention in Maui. We are chiropractors, Dr. Barge, not osteopaths.

Dr. Barge chose to leave out part of the initial statement of the adopted policy. He repeats the first part which states "Vaccination has been shown to be a cost effective and clinically practical public health preventative procedure for certain viral and microbial diseases." He did, however, leave out the last portion of that statement that says, "as demonstrated by the scientific community." You can't have it both ways, Dr. Barge -- that is: call yourself scientific while choosing to ignore scientific data. Most commentators agree that the swine flu program was poorly conceived, poorly managed and resulted in a debacle. Your reference to 901 persons injured by this debacle receiving \$359.6 million from the government is simply a scare tactic -- every health professional realizes there is a risk in almost every procedure. Of course, we grieve over every failed procedure -- whether by chiropractors or others. Nine hundred and one out of hundreds of millions may be way too many but it is not mind warping. We do not gloat about the risk -- we do our best to minimize it and determine a risk benefit ratio. Eradication or control of rabies, polio, german measles, small pox, etc., deserves better than some reference to a lack of perfection or even an occasional failure in the scheme.

We do not gloat about the Challenger incident or use it to argue that humans should not have pushed their visions into space. That is the system of science -- you learn from the data. Sometimes what you learn is that you may be mistaken, even grossly mistaken -- then you must readapt to the new information. Very often, as our profession is learning, science tells us and other health professionals how to be more effective -- what works and when -- and then everyone benefits. Ignorance benefits no one.

The ACA Statement on Vaccination was carefully drafted and debated by the entire House of Delegates at length. The ACA did not "endorse" unlimited or compulsory immunization. We decry unnecessary or unproven immunizations or frivolous risk taking in any health procedure. Like most members of this learned profession, we expect systematized research and carefully controlled studies to guide us in our duty to try our patients and in our relationships with other professionals.

If Dr. Barge does not feel the scientific method has value, then he should say so. If he feels that philosophy cannot adapt to fact, or change to accommodate accumulated knowledge, then Galileo was rightly imprisoned and Dr. Barge should join the Flat Earth Society. Beware, Dr. Barge, your numbers are shrinking.

To admit that medical science has succeeded in some instances, in no way weakens our position as a profession -- rather, it strengthens it. It means that we are part of the responsible world in public health matters.

To concentrate on the failures of others is no different than the rest of the health community ignoring the successes of chiropractic and concentrating on our failures. That somehow seems to upset us. Do we have a double standard?

A spoiler can sit in the corner and grumble and watch the world go by. A spoiler can contribute negative thoughts to every process. A spoiler can quote and requote himself until even he gets bored. But a spoiler cannot halt the progress of the profession of chiropractic.

Just for the record, the policy that was adopted by the ACA HOD was authored by Dr. Herbert Vear and wasn't copied from the ICA Handbook. Dr. Vear is, no doubt, one of the best sources this profession has on the pros and cons of vaccination.

Dr. Barge, more than half of the ICA members voting for merger voted to democratically determine the profile of this great profession. A law requiring a two-thirds majority for the ICA vote prevented the merger. You voted on the side of the minority -- apparently because you did not feel that your dust-enshrouded views could convince anyone to adopt them. Please do not feel, however, that your "majority of yourself" takes on added meaning merely because your views appear in print. They are still superficial and wrong. If you feel otherwise, join the ACA and do something constructive.

To the disappointment of Dr. Barge, the ACA did not get the idea of "freedom of choice" from reading his columns and articles, or from "pressure from its members," unless a democratic vote is "pressure." I believe the ACA's stance on and continued fight for "freedom of choice" is historically documented enough that Dr. Barge can hardly take credit for imparting the idea to us.

Finally, I am proud to be a member of the ACA. Its members are not afraid of science nor do they have minds closed to new knowledge. They know we are not alone in the never-ending struggle to improve the health of our patients and the quality of life of all humankind. We do not enter the second century of our profession as a withdrawn fringe group, voicing irrelevant cliches, but as representatives of a dynamic, participatory group of professionals excited about and ready to do what is necessary to assure this profession's rightful and growing role in the nation's health care programs. The ACA represents doctors of chiropractic and is proud of it.

*Dr. Kerwin P. Winkler
Chairman of the Board
American Chiropractic Association*

"I'll pass again, thanks!"

Dear Editor:

I became very angry after reading the article titled, "Reasons for Selling Your Practice," by William Harris, DC, in the October 22, 1993 issue. Dr. Harris states, "Several years ago, I advised a friend practicing in east Atlanta to sell his practice because the area was changing. (emphasis mine) He didn't. In less than five years he had to close his practice entirely, because his practice had dwindled. He was forced to take early retirement."

It isn't difficult to have empathy for the Dr. whose practice dwindled, but let's not stop there! What about the poor unsuspecting purchaser? More than likely a recent graduate with a wife, several children, and several student loans. What advice would Dr. Harris give him when his practice, that he bought in good faith and probably paid for with money he borrowed from relatives, "dwindled in less than five years?"

Back in 1969, I was almost victimized in a deal like this, but a local doctor clued me in, and I passed.

If this is the type of advice given by a practice consultant who is a member of the Society of Chiropractic Management Consultants, and "assists new doctors in finding suitable existing locations" -- I'll pass again, thanks!

*Bruce A. Born, DC
Southfield, Michigan*

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