

The Country Chiropractic Power Within

Willard Bertrand, DC

"Most people, non-consciously, live in a prison."

-- B. J. Palmer

Her strength ebbs as she grayly pushes the aluminum walker ahead to her car; with each step flows another moment between the present and her past that endowed her with power to walk, even to dance. Time slips through your fingers when you try to grasp it. At 44, her life has become a pattern of increasing restrictions instead of the bloom she imagined in her childhood victory garden. Like keeping your eyes closed after a pleasant dream hoping to drift back to sleep, she engaged in an adaptive period of denial that she wished would only last a bit longer until, begrudgingly, she started walking with the wooden cane.

"I have no place for a cane," she thought, but her physical weakness actually required one of those horrid walkers and so the cane would suffice. Too shortly came the time when a walker would be an improvement over staying home; she foresaw that each day would bear heavier upon her, yet somehow she was relieved and strengthened when it had passed.

With weakening muscles, a simple walk to her car becomes what the 26th mile is to a marathon runner. After a short walk comes intense fatigue and, replacing the runner's awards at several races a year, hope that today's perseverance creates the harbor for a pacific future.

From the driver's seat the rain taps gently on her car window; each drop weaves a weary path down the glass forming a soothing pattern on the window. She looks out to the quiet porch of the country chiropractic clinic. She visits this chiropractor for that special something that might strengthen her hope -- often fleeting like the sunshine through the rain.

The ache in her hips kindles heavy-hearted thoughts about her family. The children remain shyly innocent of the choice they may have to make between their freedom and her prison. "Keep them close or set them free," she thinks as she reaches to open the car door. They deserve the best, she loves them so, "but this life is a timeless miracle from which no prison can hold me," she almost states out loud as she pulls the walker out of the passenger seat and lowers it to the graveled parkway.

Hope is a journey powered by love, she remembers from a romantic novel she'd read on the banks of Catherine Creek while her children played frisbee with her husband in the wooded meadow. She steps up to the clinic porch now and puts the walker aside to open the screen door. The clinic has a cowbell that jangles when you open the door. She makes her way to the waiting room.

She finds a chair to sit and then remembers her bladder; her incontinence is as routine as is her weakness. After a brief rest in the chair she pulls her willpower and makes the stand to walk to the restroom before her doctor's visit. This restroom, like all public facilities, poses the problem of entering in dignity. "Quality of life is not measured by how well you can enter the bathroom," she thinks. She tries the door hoping not to be noticed if she makes a clumsy entrance; the nurse signals that her treatment room is ready when she is.

"Friends help," she thinks on the way into the treatment room. The wonderful interplay that friends and lovers share weaves vitality into mere existence -- a moment where nothing else matters except to laugh or to dream.

"How are you doing today?" I said.

"Fine," she said.

"Bladder holding up?"

"Those electroacupuncture treatments make a difference."

"Are you exercising?"

"Yes, but it wipes me out for the day."

"And your diet?" I said.

"Holding steady," she said.

Once I read a paper by a chiropractic neurologist that recommended chiropractors should refer patients with multiple sclerosis to medical neurologists. That I have done, and I have skeptically watched the side effects of prednisone many times and learned that doctors of medicine are unable to recognize the horrors the medication visits upon those intended to be helped. I think the hope of recovery is worth a trial of medication, but after the trial who will restore the freedom? To live in a world of weird side effects is no place for friends of mine. While medicine certainly has a most powerful influence on the body, chiropractic with the least power also does the least harm, leaving the patient to make peace with her God-given limitations and turn her from the ineffectual struggle to live out the otiose lifestyle of her peers, to the accomplishment of expressing what she is innately designed for -- a life steeled by hope in harmony with the inevitable forces of change.

Her natural condition generates change just as the heat of the furnace melts the ore. To be responsible for so much change is enough to make her seek refuge in hermitage. Each uncertain step when noticed by another person bends them instantly to revisits to their principled foundations. Those who cannot focus when she is near become frightened and fear the changes she represents. Her effect is of such depth that some seek out a clergyman to come to terms with the result. She can dismantle the finest medical credentials in a single appointment or she can forge a chiropractor into an expert. As the Chinese would say, "In weakness is the ultimate strength."

She, the utterance of frailty, focuses the child on its source of nourishment. Her family experiences this the most strongly. Routines like the children's chores are changed from a parental demand to a motherly need. Her children will grow up with values unattainable without the crucible of their mother's life. As they grow to adulthood, they will witness their mother's commission and they will know its worth; she will ask them to leave home to live their lives even though she desperately needs their aid. With each expression of her overpowering love, she seals their fate with hers. The ultimate act of love is giving up the love she receives in hope that those she loves will be more.

Patients with her abilities built our chiropractic profession. Not by simply allowing us to improve health where medicine failed, but sharing and thereby strengthening our realization of the wonderful innate intelligence God placed within his creatures that endures the test of time and disease; and by focusing with us upon the minor miracles that nurturing of this body human, we were encouraged that there was an essentialness to their condition, that their innate recuperative powers were still wonderfully made to shelter them from their worst fears. Together we came to

recognize that the finest health care would enhance what was within the body, rather than seek to alter, remove, or replace it with a scaled-down, man-made alternative.

While the strong jump for the brass ring, the weak are forging golden ones.

What is guiding us? If every medical doctor dropped down on one knee before your front door and people lined up for miles to make an appointment, could you do more for your patient? The power surging innately within her is far greater than your educated abilities.

By her selection, this article is written. Within her and other chiropractic patients like her, rests the power of healthcare that is expressed through chiropractors and then is manifested in the world at large. No other avenue exist. From above down, within out.

APRIL 1990