

Dr. Rolla J. Pennell: A Champion of Chiropractic and the Human Spirit

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The chiropractic profession recently lost one of its great leaders, Dr. Rolla J. Pennell. He was an inspiration to thousands of chiropractors and students, and his contributions to the profession will be eternal.

Rolla was born in Independence, Missouri in 1929. As a small child, Rolla suffered a head injury that left him virtually blind. However, with the help of his family and teachers, he completed his elementary and high-school education, and with financial assistance from The Bureau of the Blind, enrolled in college with the intention of becoming an attorney.

Rolla then discovered the miracle of chiropractic. Whether by happenstance or fate, he began receiving treatment at the Cleveland Chiropractic College Clinic for his headaches. His headaches gradually lessened, and his eyesight improved. With the support of Dr. C. S. Cleveland, president of the college, Rolla changed his career path, enrolled in Cleveland Chiropractic College, continued to receive the great benefits of chiropractic treatment, and dedicated his life to helping others find chiropractic.

Immediately upon graduating in 1951, he opened The Pennell Clinic in Independence, Missouri. He was soon treating hundreds of patients and spreading the word that chiropractic could help, particularly those for whom other methods had failed.

But this was only the beginning. He wanted chiropractic to take its rightful place in the healing professions. He resented the fact that local laboratories and hospitals refused to provide the laboratory service his patients needed. In 1958, he established the first federally licensed lab for chiropractors.

About that same time, while attending a Parker Seminar in Fort Worth, Texas, he met a fellow chiropractor, Dr. Gordon D. Heuser of Colorado Springs, Colorado. They became close friends and over the next few years, as they attended and spoke at the Parker Seminars, they formed a business partnership that would span the next 25 years. It was their belief that only through the success of each individual practitioner could the chiropractic profession advance and expand. To this end, they entered the field of teaching and management consulting. Under their direction, the management companies (Clinic Masters, Business Masters, Ltd. [Great Britain], Practice Masters, Mind Dynamics, Strategic Management Systems, Inc., and Motivational Dynamics Corporation) provided practice and office management, and motivational training and support to more than 6,000 clients.

They also believed that chiropractic education was the foundation and future of the profession. Over the years, they contributed freely of their time, energy and money to support many chiropractic colleges. Rolla served on the Board of Trustees of Logan Chiropractic College for eight years, and on the Board of Trustees of New York Chiropractic College for 15 years. His devotion to Cleveland Chiropractic College continued as he taught the concepts of practice management at the college, and mentored many of the students.

Rolla was a prolific writer, authoring four books on chiropractic, pain control, and acupuncture. He traveled the world, spreading the word of chiropractic and learning about healing and treatment methods in over 50 foreign countries. He was instrumental in bringing acupuncture to the United States through an Exchange of International Information Program with leaders of acupuncture groups in Japan, Hong Kong, Taiwan and China, beginning in the mid- 1960s.

His integrity, honesty and kindness made him a magnet for new friendships and clients who became friends - friends who stayed with him all of his life, and who flourished in his presence. He challenged himself and those around him to be the best they could be. Part of the joy of being his friend was the things you learned whenever you were with him. Above all, Rolla was a teacher.

While his business activities were of great importance to him, they took a "back seat" to time devoted to family and friends. Rolla's two daughters are both chiropractors in private practice. Dr. Mara Pennell practices in Whittier, California, and Dr. Lana Anderton practices in Independence, Missouri.

The Pennell family wishes to establish the Dr. Rolla Pennell Memorial Endowment and suggests contributions to the Cleveland College Foundation in celebration of Dr. Rolla's memory and service as a leader in business, practice training, and entrepreneurship. These funds will be dedicated to the advancement of business and practice management educational programs.

"Dr. Rolla understood and practiced the concept that the greatest good one could do for another is to reveal him or her to their own potential. He appreciated others, and encouraged them. He helped them reach their own potential...and they loved him for it.

"Like all great leaders, Dr. Rolla knew that hope is the greatest of all possessions. Dr. Rolla was a 'dealer in hope.' He was a person that bestowed that gift on others, and for that ... so many in chiropractic practice today are forever grateful."

Dr. Carl S. Cleveland III
President, Cleveland Chiropractic College -
Kansas City and Los Angeles Campuses

"My dear friend Rolla, you are forever in my heart. Your wisdom, your kindness, and your inspiration have changed my life and the lives of so many others in this country and throughout the world.

"I thank you and Ila for your lifelong friendship. I truly love you both! My prayers and love are with you and your family always."

Dr. Richard Yennie
President, Acupuncture Society of America, Inc.

"Rolla Pennell taught me everything I ever learned about success, philosophy, and living. He was without question, the single most influential mentor and philosopher to touch my life. I owe my entire success and philosophical outlook on life to Rolla. He was one of the greatest teachers the world has ever known and clearly the greatest teacher I ever knew."

Dr. John A. Amaro

President, International Academy of Medical Acupuncture, Inc.

"A man among men, always ready to stop along his busy way and touch the hand, heart, and mind of one needing help."

Dr. Gordon Heuser

Fellow Traveler

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