

A Moment of Silence for Dr. Joseph Flesia: 1935-2004

Editorial Staff

Joseph M. Flesia Jr., DC, affectionately known as "Dr. Joe" to many in the chiropractic profession, passed away on July 6, 2004, following an extended bout with illness. Dr. Guy Riekeman, president of Life University, authored the following as a testimonial to his longtime friend:

On July 6, my good friend and mentor succumbed to long-standing health issues. His passing is mourned by all of us at Life University and countless others in our profession.

Dr. Joe's name was frequently used in the same breath as the word "Warrior," and he was truly a Chiropractic Warrior. He, like many warriors, was nothing short of genius. He was always prepared, and his ability to motivate a crowd was a lesson for any aspiring speaker. Dr. Joe, however, was also an academic whose intellect never rested. He taught classes ranging from in-depth discussions on chiropractic philosophy to physical diagnosis. His impact on the profession was profound. He gave us the lecture-chart health care class and the first health care videotapes before most Americans owned a VCR. He worked with stars like Peter Graves, Lorne Greene and Tony Franciosa, yet also gave a new chiropractic student the same intensity and attention.

Perhaps Dr. Joe's greatest professional contribution was the way he articulated the Five Components of the Vertebral Subluxation Complex, which are taught in many colleges today. Most specifically was his intellectual contribution of the Four Phases of Subluxation Degeneration, which are now a part of the Chiropractic Lexicon.

Like a true Warrior, Dr. Joe's personal life was indistinguishable from his public life. He brought the same intensity to his relationships, parenting and bodybuilding as he did to his lecturing, studying and never-ending search for knowledge.

Joseph and I spent 10 years of our lives together, daily: traveling across the globe, weekly, and lecturing together, nonstop. The first time I had dinner with him (pre-ATMs), he was 17 cents short. That night, he drove 25 miles to return the 17 cents. In the '70s, he saw 300-plus patients per day in his Rhode Island practice, which evolved from a medical-model practice to a wellness-adjustment practice. He started an academic fraternity at Palmer in the late 1950s and Renaissance International in the late 1970s. I trusted him with my life and my dreams. He would never allow himself to be in anyone's debt, but paradoxically, thousands of chiropractors and millions of people will forever be indebted to him.

I cried at his passing. I miss my friend. The world was too simple and mediocre for him. He never really understood its workings and, when he did, couldn't fathom its insanity. He warned us about the Predicament of the Species before most knew we had a dilemma. He spoke of the Magical Child as a colorful way of reminding us what the potential of a human might be, long before anyone had declared the human potential movement. He never deviated from the Cause. But then, isn't that the definition of a Warrior - which he was - even with his last breath? I will see you soon, my dear friend.

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