

We Get Letters & E-Mail

Retiring From Chiropractic: Looking Back - and Forward

Dear Editor:

Like many other chiropractors, I am a baby boomer ready to retire and see the world. Traveling as a younger woman, I had a companion; I was married to another chiropractor. So when my back was sore after carrying my pack, I could turn and utter those four little romantic words, "Honey, can you adjust me?"

I have been waiting a long 34 years to enter the next chapter of my life. I have practiced passionately and lovingly - pretty much how I try to address all important things in life. I loved being a chiropractor and after a long dry spell of nose-to-the-grindstone, vacationless work, it was time to tell myself, "Job well done!"

What I find most challenging as I retire is to undo my identity as a "chiropractor." In our profession, we really are what we preach. We really *do* exercise, we *do* take vitamins, we *do* get adjusted and adjust our loved ones. It's not an act, but a well-intended mission to help change as many lives as humanly possible without violating the sacred laws of nature we revere. We perceive our whole world differently than others do, and in that we are every bit the 1 percent.

It has not always been easy being a chiropractor - perhaps never. It is even tougher on the women in the field. I see us as the salmon profession perpetually swimming against most streams of mediocrity. Nonetheless, we do it with a smile and paddle like hell. Trying to fit into societal norms with our daily good works and near miracles, and all while adding adoring patients, merits public recognition and praise (bells, whistles and fireworks, too).

I've always felt we might have done more - that *I* might have done more - if only our profession had not been so underappreciated and marginalized, but instead included in every life.

Vitalism must become a word in all vocabularies before it too is usurped like the powers that be demeaned the word *wellness*, now used to define having only 11 prescriptions to fill instead of 15.

I am not complaining, just observing. After 34 years of service, it is my right to look back and hopefully forward. I love chiropractic and what it has done in my otherwise triangular world. I would love to see it continue among young, cohesive chiropractors who keep the profession as unvarnished as possible; yet adding new technologies and services to enhance the adjustment itself. Nothing is anything without it.

Helping improve health has been a long, exhilarating, wonderful journey. But now, I am embarking on a new type of trip. No, not the magical mystery tour; rather, a race with time, a search for new meaning, and hopefully new pleasures and experiences. But of course, without forgetting the big "P" - yes, *passion* in all things.

I believe that for the chiropractor, retirement is different than stopping a law practice or giving all of your proctology patients to your son. We are inextricable from what we do and cannot unravel

the two; nor should we try, as we would ourselves come undone. We will live with a common, secret joy at having intimately witnessed awesome moments in the sanctity of our offices. Therein lies the glue we all share.

Retirement is not the ending of anything, but the starting of something new. In my case, adventure will be a big part, as I am hopelessly curious about this planet and all of its nooks and crannies. For now, I am healthy and vital. Blood pressure 110 / 65, I sit on the floor like a 5-year-old to put on my shoes, and do flips off the diving board - although the lifeguards now move in a bit closer.

I am hoping to find a partner and travel mate who looks out the same window; who might like to explore and grow their inner child in the process; and of course, that special someone who gives "good neck." The world is a big place and it would be nice to share the ride. Just thinking out loud...

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