

The End of an Era

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Chiropractic's first century was marked by the actions and accomplishments of many great leaders. Those "rugged individualists" moved chiropractic forward by dedication, sacrifice and sheer willpower. For them, "going against the grain" was not an option, it was a lifestyle.

Innovative, controversial, charismatic, powerful - these were the primary traits that made them successful during times when chiropractic was fighting for its life. Sadly, the same attributes they needed to succeed frustrated their efforts to work with others of their kind.

Dr. Sid Williams' decision to begin the process that will lead to his retirement as president of Life University is a good one. At this point, it should be noted that several of us in chiropractic were aware of Dr. Sid's decision to announce his retirement before the CCE made its announcement not to renew Life University's accreditation. His desire was to place his institution and the need for smooth succession ahead of his personal position. In the past, so many of our leaders vacated their positions by sudden death or forced retirement, leaving their vision in jeopardy.^{1,2}

Like most of our leaders in chiropractic's first century, Dr. Williams evokes strong emotions of appreciation or aggravation, depending on where you stand. His resourcefulness and dedication to purpose have made him successful when many counted him out. Like the greats of the past, Sid Williams is respected most for his dedication to chiropractic, even by those who don't always agree with him.

Looking at our history, we see a long succession of strong-willed, charismatic leaders, from D.D. and B.J. Palmer to present-day leaders. But the world has changed. No longer can we depend on the efforts of a single chiropractic leader and a few thousand loyal followers to make a measurable impact on chiropractic's place in health care. As chiropractic becomes more established, gaining new ground becomes harder and more expensive.

The great leaders of tomorrow are those who will know how to build relationships with other committed leaders and work around those who break faith and can't be trusted. The leaders will still have the same passion, but will be willing to work toward a shared vision.

The past has shown us that power can be abused in the name of chiropractic. The new leadership knows that real power must be earned from the practicing doctor of chiropractic through efforts that are conducted honorably and passionately. Those looking for dynamic, individual leaders are likely to be frustrated. Today's environment no longer supports such a leadership model. The days of self-willed success and accomplishment are over.

This is an era when leadership must be earned from a majority of DCs who have deliberately chosen not to join a national association. To even qualify for consideration, the issue at hand must have a direct impact on the doctor's ability to practice successfully. Tangential issues and political infighting

no longer qualify.

While Dr. Williams will remain active for years to come, we know that his decision to step down is ushering out an era of great passion and accomplishment. His was a time when issues were simpler, and even small successes were cause for celebration; a time many wouldn't mind returning to.

But our sights are on the future. We were put on this earth "for such a time as this." As Sid Williams nears the finish line, we have to ask ourselves where we are in the race:

- What is still before us that requires our involvement?
- What will we have to look back on when we cross the finish line?
- What great work or accomplishment has our name on it, but remains incomplete?

It's a new day - time to get out there and meet it head on.

References

1. Dr. W. Karl Parker appointed president of Parker College. *Dynamic Chiropractic* October 21, 1996. www.chiroweb.com/archives/14/22/19.html
2. Parker College Board 'removes' Dr. Jim Parker from campus. *Dynamic Chiropractic* May 5, 1997. www.chiroweb.com/archives/15/10/16.html

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