

Chiropractic at the Bush Campaign Headquarters

Arlan Fuhr, DC

Editor's note: "For the Good of the Order" is a new column for 2001. Arlan Fuhr, DC, a graduate of Logan College of Chiropractic, is the president/co-founder of Activator Methods, Inc., of Phoenix, Arizona, and the National Institute of Chiropractic Research. Dr. Fuhr began private practice in Minnesota (1963-1988), before relocating his practice to Phoenix. His research activities include receiving a grant from the National Institutes of Health, and as a frequent contributor to peer-reviewed publications, particularly the Journal of Manipulative and Physiological Therapeutics. He is the co-author of two books on the Activator technique.

His honors are many, including: "Chiropractor of Year 1993" from the Arizona Association of Chiropractic, and the "Daniel David Palmer Chiropractic Scientific Award," from Palmer College of Chiropractic, Davenport, Iowa, in 1993. He is a member of the International Society for the Study of the Lumbar Spine.

Dr. Fuhr has been a member of the editorial board of Chiropractic Technique since 1989. He is a member of the Council on Chiropractic Guidelines and Practice Parameters, and was a commission member that established the Guidelines for Chiropractic Quality Assurance and Standards of Practice (Mercy guidelines).

Many times, things we do for chiropractic are done because we want to help the cause, and they go completely unnoticed or do not have a great ending. We just do it for the "good of the order." The following story is just beginning to unfold, and time will tell if it has an impact on chiropractic.

In May 2000, I hired the Gordon James public relations firm to assist my company in its mission to drive patients to our clients' (doctors') offices. Some time later, James' wife, Lisa, called to invite my wife, Judi, and myself to a political fundraising dinner. At the last minute, I had to go to Life Chiropractic College West to speak at their "Science Philosophy and Art Day" event. Since I couldn't get back in time, my wife attended the dinner with the James's.

Lisa headed George W. Bush's presidential campaign in Arizona, and Gordon had long been politically involved with the Bush family. He'd been the advance man for Bush's dad when he first ran for president, and had also served former President Bush while he was in the White House.

It's dangerous to have Gordon and my wife get together; one never knows what will come of it. When Gordon complained about the stress level at the campaign headquarters in Austin, Texas, Judi jumped in: "Gordon," she asked, "why don't you have Arlan fly to Austin and deliver chiropractic care to the staff?" Gordon was intrigued. "Let me float that up through the organization and see what comes of it," he replied.

That night, when I arrived home from Life West, Judi picked me up from the airport. "Guess what?" she casually remarked. "I volunteered you to care for the Bush/Cheney staff at campaign headquarters in Austin!" The next day, Gordon telephoned and was as excited as I've ever heard him. The leadership in Austin was glad for any help to relieve stress - and there was plenty of it during the final two weeks of the campaign. I'd be on an airplane headed for Texas the following Tuesday.

There was more to it than just ordering airline tickets. The next day, while talking to Dr. Tom DeVita, the issue of licensure arose. Tom, a member of the Massachusetts Board of Chiropractic Examiners (BCE), asked if I was licensed in Texas. I'd never given it a thought and could just imagine my political opponents' reaction when they learned I'd treated a presidential campaign staff without proper credentials.

My neighbor, Jim Badge, DC, a member of the FCLB, told me to call the chairman of the Texas Board of Chiropractic Examiner, Cynthia Vaughn, DC, who informed me that Texas granted temporary licenses, although for no more than 30 days. I'd need a letter of invitation from the Bush/Cheney camp, and a letter from the Arizona Board indicating that my current license was valid.

The executive director of the Texas Board, Joyce Kirchner, gave me explicit instructions, and the process was underway. The Arizona Board presented the first obstacle. A staff member told me that I'd need to fax a letter requesting that they send the letter to Texas, or she wouldn't start the paperwork. I explained what was at stake, but she was immovable. I finally reached the voice mail of Patti Pritzer, executive director of the Arizona Board. The next morning, Patti had already faxed the requisite letter to Austin. The next hurdle was a formal invitation from the Bush camp. Gordon repeatedly tried to fax the necessary letter to my office, but there were "gremlins" in the wire. At last, he faxed the letter to my home office in Phoenix. Judi relayed a copy to the Texas Board. The temporary license was promptly issued and we were on our way.

On Tuesday morning we headed to the airport for our departure for Austin. Unfortunately, we ran into a rare weather condition in Phoenix - fog. I called Gordon to let him know we'd be delayed. "Get here as soon as you can," he answered, "Everyone is waiting for you." At last the weather cleared, and we were only two hours late. We arrived in Austin and headed for the Bush/Cheney headquarters for our "mission possible."

Bush campaign headquarters was located in downtown Austin in an attractive new office building; the campaign offices occupied two floors of the building. I was stopped by security and had to surrender my driver's license in exchange for a visitor's pass. The security person called Gordon, who escorted us to an area he'd arranged for staff members and patients. The impromptu adjusting area consisted of a mailroom, large conference room and lunchroom. We set up my portable adjusting table and prepared for the patients to assemble.

The sign-up sheet for chiropractic care quickly became full. The first patient came from the media: a lawyer in a great deal of pain who had hurt his back while moving wrong in bed. I examined and treated 11 people that first two hours, and word of our service was just beginning to spread. Staff came and went through the lunchroom and mailroom, and didn't seem to pay much attention to us. With so much hubbub, one more unusual activity didn't disturb anyone.

At 5:00 p.m. we surrendered the lunchroom to another group that was planning the election night street party. There would be 1,200 reporters in attendance, which signaled that the press thought Governor Bush would win. There was electricity in the air, and the excitement was palpable.

I attended a private dinner with the Bush campaign's advance team. It was one of the most enjoyable events of which I've ever been a part. There were five in our party to start, but by the end of the evening nearly a dozen campaign workers had joined us. Our clinical services had generated several new friends, and the dinner party included many interesting people. Most had been together through several presidential campaigns. We heard stories of how former President George Bush's advance team had once been housed offshore on a ship, because the country where the president was visiting was too dangerous for an overnight stay. A helicopter had shuttled the staff to and from a Navy ship. The inside stories were rich with humor and were believable because they were "stranger than fiction."

The young people working in the Bush campaign impressed me. They were smart, dressed casually, but were very neat and dedicated. One of the veterans said they just had to win or he didn't know how the "kids" would take it. Gordon recommended former First Lady Barbara Bush's famous saying after her husband lost his second presidential campaign, "Get over it."

The next morning saw new arrivals for chiropractic care, and returnees from the day before who were delighted by their clinical results. One young man suffering severe LBP had slept through the night - for the first time in eight months; a young political intern told me she'd felt a pain under her left arm and just knew she had something seriously wrong. Her clinical history revealed that she had cradled a phone for so long with her left shoulder, she had caused a nerve pressure to develop on the left side of her neck, which caused her arm pain. Relieved to find out what her problem was, she cried; and mailroom volunteers also lined up for chiropractic care. It got wild. I adjusted more than 30 people that morning and gave each patient a little pep talk. Some of them had been working for the campaign for over two years. Their dedication was unbelievable.

Joyce Kirchner and her boss on the Texas Board, Dr. Cain, visited us at the Bush headquarters. They toured the facilities and were impressed by the number of people involved in running the national campaign. I thanked them again for all their help. As my office hours ended for the day, and we began to pack up to head back to Phoenix, it hit me - I had just been involved in a national presidential campaign. Could the next step be a chiropractor in the White House?

Arlan Fuhr,DC
Phoenix, Arizona

awfuhr@aol.com

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