

A Moment of Silence for Ian Grassam, DC

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On November 26, 1999, Dr. Ian Grassam of Florida died at his home surrounded by his family following a brief illness. While his family has suffered the loss of a husband and father, everyone who knew Ian also shared in the loss, and everyone in the chiropractic profession has been impacted by his passing.

Ian was a graduate of the Logan College of Chiropractic in St. Louis, Missouri. He pursued a career in chiropractic at the urging of Dr. Roger O'Dell of Southgate, Michigan, the chiropractor who cared for Ian's childhood sweetheart and wife of 34 years, Janet. After his graduation from Logan, Dr. Grassam returned to Michigan, where he began the process of developing one of the most renowned practices in the state. Practice was only one aspect of Ian's chiropractic life. He was involved in every aspect of the profession and was respected in every arena in which he entered.

Dr. Grassam was one of the central figures in the development of the Michigan Chiropractic Council (MCC). He, along with others in the state, was responsible for the meteoric growth of chiropractic in Michigan and for putting a progressive and dynamic face on the profession in the state. While Ian never held office in the MCC, he was a driving force behind its exceptional growth and influence. A frequent visitor to the state capitol of Lansing, Ian represented his views and argued for the MCC's concerns in any and every venue that presented itself.

It was during this period that Life Chiropractic College (now Life University) was established. Ian took a highly visible role in the emergence of Life Chiropractic College as the institution's international fundraising chairman and a member of the college's founding board of directors. His fundraising activities were exceptional, but he was also involved in student recruitment that was critical to the young college. Under his direction, monthly student recruitment meetings were held across Michigan that consistently attracted from 150-200 prospective students. From his office alone, it is estimated that 150 persons are practicing chiropractors as a result of Ian's encouragement and guidance.

Dr. Grassam continued his involvement and association with Life University until his death last month. Over the years, he was involved as a member of the board of trustees with accreditation visits to Life University and at CCE meetings involving the commission on accreditation or the CCE board of directors. In 1981, he also served as a member of the board of regents of Life Chiropractic College West. He served on this board for almost two years.

Following the election of Dr. Williams to the presidency of the ICA in the early 1980s, Dr. Grassam helped energize the ICA by coordinating and presenting the ICA "Nuts and Bolts" program for new practitioners. In the mid-1980s, Dr. Grassam increased his professional involvement by serving as a member of the board of directors of the ICA. Ian distinguished himself by winning elections as a regional director of the ICA from the central region and later the southern region, following his relocation to Florida in the late 1980s.

Ian and Janet moved from the winter climes of Michigan to the "sunshine state" of Florida in the late 1980s, eventually establishing five clinics in the communities of Stuart, Port St. Lucie, Tarpon Springs, Fort Pierce and Hobe Sound. Dr. Grassam became involved in the state political environment of Florida and was active in the growth and development of the Florida Chiropractic Society.

Interspersed among all of these activities, Ian displayed one of his greatest talents: the ability to articulate complex and detailed information in a way that was exciting, engaging and inspiring. He was renowned for his ability to enter virtually any environment, size up the situation, and emerge as the spokesperson of the moment. His ability to debate in friendly and hostile environments alike was legendary. One particular exchange on Michigan television between Ian and chiropractic critic Stephen Barrett comes to mind. In this duel of words, Dr. Grassam overwhelmed the underprepared and outclassed challenger Barrett. Their debate is used to this day in chiropractic colleges as a classic example of how to engage and dominate opponents in a public setting.

Dr. Grassam's professional life was, in his words, "transformed" as a result of his association with Dr. Sid Williams and the Life DE meeting. For over 25 years, Ian was a central figure and "team speaker" at the Life DE meetings. Many DE meeting regulars and newcomers considered Dr. Grassam's DE presentations one of the highlights of the weekend. In one of his last speaking engagements, Ian delivered the commencement address at the December 1998 graduation ceremony of Life University, during which he welcomed his son John to the profession.

Ian's vision and talents caused him to be in demand as a speaker across the country (and in fact, around the world). He accompanied Drs. Sid and Nell Williams on their historic trip to Moscow in 1986 to care for the athletes and officials of the inaugural Goodwill Games. He was welcomed by the majority of chiropractic colleges in North America, by dozens of state chiropractic associations, and by hundreds upon hundreds of enthusiastic audiences.

On a sunny day in late November, friends, patients and colleagues from across the country joined Janet, Dr. Grassam's wife of 34 years; their children Christine, John, Debbie and Dan; and their families, in saying goodbye to a beloved husband and father.

With the haunting sounds of bagpipes playing "Amazing Grace," members of the Life community and the profession at large said goodbye to a colleague, warrior and friend who lived his life as fully and completely as any man could. To a person, each expressed their thanks for the privilege of knowing him and their pride in the contributions he made to the growth and advancement of all things chiropractic.

Whether he was known to you or not, at some point along the way Dr. Ian Grassam has positively and lastingly affected your life as a chiropractor and the climate in which you have the privilege to live that life.

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