

A Moment of Silence for Herbert Reaver, DC

Editorial Staff

Herbert Ross Reaver, DC, a former vice president of the International Chiropractors Association and unofficial holder of the chiropractic title "most jailed chiropractor for practicing medicine without a license," passed away in Ohio on February 7th. Dr. Reaver was 93.

Dr. Reaver had been a practicing chiropractor for more than 70 years in both Ohio and Florida. He served as the ICA's vice president when B.J. Palmer was its president.

Herbert Reaver became interested in chiropractic after meeting a group of chiropractic students in Iowa. He was employed as a professional musician at the time but suffered from rheumatoid arthritis, which often caused him to use crutches for support. After being adjusted for his arthritis, he became interested in chiropractic and enrolled at Palmer College, graduating from the school in 1928.

After graduation from Palmer, Dr. Reaver moved to Ohio, where his right to practice chiropractic was severely tested. Although the practice had been licensed in Ohio since 1915, the law required chiropractors to be licensed by the state medical board, which at the time consisted of MDs only.

But Dr. Reaver believed that the idea of medical doctors licensing chiropractors made "absolutely no sense." As a result, from 1928 to 1943 he was arrested eight times for "practicing medicine without a license," paying fines each time before returning to his practice.

"I stepped on a lot of medical toes; I had a good practice and the local MDs were jealous," Reaver once said when asked why he was such a constant target of the law. "I would pay the \$25 fine and go back to work."

In the summer of 1943, Dr. Reaver was arrested a ninth time for not being licensed by the state medical board. Instead of paying the fine, he decided to make a statement about the law's unfairness to chiropractic and spend time in jail.

"I'd had enough," Reaver told an audience in 1997 about the experience. "I felt like I was admitting guilt by paying my fine. I was fighting for principle."

Dr. Reaver subsequently served three more jail terms, receiving tremendous support from the local population during his sentences. During one jail term, more than 300 people visited him to celebrate his birthday. All the while, Dr. Reaver continued giving patients adjustments. His courage and defiance earned him the distinction of being the most arrested chiropractor for practicing his profession, and he became affectionately known as "Jailbird Reaver" for his beliefs.

After being arrested for the 12th time (and serving a six-month sentence) in 1949, the fines and time in jail began to take their toll. Dr. Reaver and his wife Millie moved to St. Petersburg, Florida. In the subtropical climes of the sunshine state, he established a thriving practice, which included many

professional baseball players who came south for spring training.

In 1972, Dr. Reaver left his successful practice in Florida to return to practice in Ohio, perhaps to exorcise the demons of the 1940s. No longer the target of harassment, Dr. Reaver was able to practice on his own terms, using the same techniques and philosophies he'd learned at Palmer. "The instrumentation of my brain and hands are all the instruments I need," he told a group of Life West students in 1997.

Dr. Reaver received many accolades and awards during his career. In 1997, he was unanimously selected by the International Chiropractors Association's Board of Directors as their "Chiropractor of the Year." That same year, an amendment was made to the ICA's bylaws to establish an annual "Herbert Ross Reaver Lifetime Achievement Award."

Dr. Reaver's words he wrote for *The Chiropractor* many years ago best sum up his philosophy: "We must not retreat a single inch from our stand on behalf of health freedom, so that together, we may all enjoy the abundance of health which chiropractic can provide."

Dr. Reaver is survived by his wife of nearly 70 years, Millie. His son, Herbert "Chap" Reaver, DC, who practiced in Marietta, Georgia, passed away in 1993. Chap was a columnist for *Dynamic Chiropractic* (1984-92) and a novelist. His first novel, *Mote*, won an Edgar Allan Poe Award in 1991 for Best Young Adult Mystery. His second novel was *A Little Bit Dead*.

The passing of Dr. Herbert Reaver is sad news for chiropractic. He was proud of his profession, and we of him.

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