

Chiropractic Unity in Arizona

Steve Kelly, managing editor

Will you, won't you, will you, won't you, will you join the dance? -- Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, Lewis Carroll

In the January 1, 1989 issue of "DC" Thomas M. LaBrot, D.C., reported to our readers the arrival of a new chiropractic organization in Arizona. The major chiropractic organization in Arizona for the past 15 years, the Chiropractic Association of Arizona (CAA), now had to deal with an upstart, splinter group, the Arizona Chiropractic Alliance (AzCA), characterized by Dr. LaBrot as "a coalition between a disgruntled former member of the CAA (Alan Immerman, D.C.), and the leaders of the Federation of Straight Chiropractic Organizations of Arizona (FSCOS)," (represented by Terry Rondberg, D.C.).

In our February 15, 1989 issue, Todd Raemisch, D.C., associated with the CAA since 1980, stated that Dr. Immerman "was suspended from the CAA for lying and duplicity. This was a very rare action instituted against a CAA member. Understandably, Alan Immerman, D.C., was embarrassed and Terry Rondberg, D.C., seized the moment to motivate Alan Immerman, D.C., to pick up his marble and start a new game for the FSCOA under the disguise of the Arizona Alliance."

Merger Talks

We now skip forward to the summer of 1990. The August 15, 1990 issue of "DC" published an article by Christine Tamulaitis, "Celebration and Despair." The cause of celebration was the legislative success of the CAA to promote the passage of a state statute to prohibit insurance companies from denying claims for chiropractic treatment covered under the terms of insurance policies. The cause of despair was the continued existence of AzCA.

The CAA lobbyist, Joe Abate summed it up best: "No one achieves legislative success without years of ground work. In my 15 years as a lobbyist, this was the most difficult bill to get passed, not necessarily due to the bill's controversy, but because of the faction of voices outside the CAA that we had to monitor."

A proposal to merge the CAA and AzCA was promoted by the CAA in its desire to provide Arizona with a united organization. The road to merger was developed over months of joint meetings, often with the aid of a paid, professional mediator. The merger proposal was to be voted on by the CAA membership at its convention in Tucson, July 5-7, 1990. One week before the vote, AzCA President, Dr. Immerman (board appointed) called for AzCA members to reject the proposal.

Dr. Robert Dahl, the CAA president, was naturally upset by the AzCA rebuff. In our August 15, 1990 issue he said, "We have spent time, money, and energy trying to work with Drs. Immerman and Rondberg. We have bent over backward to secure an agreement because we truly believe it is in the interest of the profession to have one association representing the profession."

Dr. Dahl also reported at this time, that former AzCA members were rejoining the CAA and were publicly criticizing the "dictatorial and self-serving nature of AzCA leaders, Immerman and Rondberg."

Merger, The Sequel

In December of 1990, Dr. Dahl told "DC" that AzCA approached Dr. Terry Peterson with talk of merger. This proposal was no doubt viewed with great scepticism, in view of AzCA's sabotaging of the merger that past summer.

But then an interesting thing happened. In January of 1991 Dr. Rondberg resigned from the AzCA board; on March 1, 1991, Andy Mequin (newly appointed president of AzCA) received the resignation of board member and former AzCA president Alan Immerman. The "dictatorial and self-serving" leaders of AzCA had vacated their perches as board members of AzCA.

It's interesting to note that these resignations coincided with the publicity from AzScam, the legislative sting in Arizona. Drs. Rondberg and Immerman's names appeared on checks that were used by AzCA lobbyist Richard Scheffel to launder money to circumvent campaign contribution laws in Arizona. Is it coincidental that the two men synonymous with AzCA resigned from the board of directors during a period when Richard Scheffel was under investigation and later indicted and pleaded guilty to a conspiracy charge? See March 15, 1991 issue of "DC."

Flip-Flop

Is it coincidental that renewed merger talks were initiated by AzCA. Was it coincidental that AzCA suddenly seemed intent on merger only after the terribly negative publicity that AzCA and chiropractic were receiving from AzScam? Was it coincidental that AzCA went from rebuffing merger to admonishing the CAA for "dragging their feet," as AzCA President Andy Mequin told "DC" in March. In short, was it coincidental that merger only gained real impetus as Drs. Rondberg and Immerman vacated the AzCA board?

Merger III

A questionnaire went out to AzCA members. The AzCA members responded overwhelmingly that they wanted merger. The CAA's main concern was that the bylaws of the new association would follow the democratic example of the CAA bylaws, and not the non-democratic bylaws of AzCA. The CAA insisted that board officers of the new association could not be appointed to the board, as the AzCA officers had been, but that election of officers must follow the CAA bylaws which stipulated a democratic election by the membership. AzCA agreed to this. The new bylaws (based primarily on the CAA bylaws) were approved by both parties.

"We've crossed all the t's and dotted the i's," Dr. Dahl said, in reference to finalizing the merger in a conversation with "DC" on April 8, 1991.

The CAA membership met on April 13, 1991 to vote on the merger issue. Dr. Dahl told "DC" that it was a unanimous vote in favor of merger.

The election of board officers for the newly united chiropractic association of Arizona will be done via mailed ballots, going out to both associations in mid-May, to be returned by June 1. The candidates will not be differentiated as to affiliation. The ballot will also decide the name for the new organization.

The Arizona Chiropractic Association (ACA) or Arizona State Chiropractic Association (AzCA) are the most likely choices.

Robert Dahl, D.C. is the CAA's candidate of choice to head chiropractic in Arizona. AzCA members will probably give their support to Jeffrey Jolley, D.C. for president.

Whatever the outcome in Arizona, we applaud chiropractic unity in Arizona. As Dr. Dahl put it, "Keep the fighting in house, not out house.

The formal announcement of the merger will take place at the CAA convention in mid-June in Chandler, Arizona.

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