

Bertha Montenegro (February 24, 1913 - January 29, 1990)

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Bertha Montenegro, the wife of the late Dr. Leo Montenegro, was my dear friend and a staunch supporter of the chiropractic profession of this state. May her memory live on as a shining example of what a lay person can do for chiropractic.

When I attended the memorial services held in her honor, the influence of this wonderful woman was clearly seen on the faces of those present, and it was heard in the speeches of all those men and women who came to mourn her death and to pay tribute for all she had accomplished during her life. I realized at that moment, that her influence lives on in me and in countless others.

Throughout her life, Bertha was active in civic organizations in order to establish chiropractic in the public eye and to enhance the stature of chiropractic doctors in California.

In her early years, she was president of the Tenth District Parent Teachers' Association (PTA). She also served on the state board of this organization and was honored on a statewide basis for her accomplishments.

In her later years, she was on the Democratic State Central Committee and served as office manager in the South Bay for Dukakis for President Committee. She was also an active member of the South Bay Chapter of the Gray Panthers and held the office of co-convenor.

It was during her middle years that I first met Bertha Montenegro. The year was 1950. As president of the Women's Auxiliary of the California Chiropractic Association, she organized and implemented a booth at the Pomona County Fair offering free blood typing for the general public. The blood typing was performed in its entirety by interns from the Los Angeles College of Chiropractic. I was one of those interns. The event was a huge success.

Bertha firmly believed that comprehensive and competent diagnosis was the key to the public acceptance of chiropractic doctors as family practitioners.

Bertha and her husband belonged to that era of chiropractic in California of the 30's, 40's and 50's, when there were chiropractic hospitals and sanitariums devoted to general practice, when there were chiropractic specialists in internal disorders, psychiatry, proctology, gynecology and obstetrics.

It was an era that was made possible by the amalgamation of chiropractic colleges in California, unified and pledged to teaching chiropractic, not as an orthopedic specialty, but as an umbrella to encompass all methods of natural healing and apply them to the various fields of practice.

Bertha sought to recapture this image of chiropractic in her interviews of our "old timer" doctors printed in Dynamic Chiropractic -- to impress upon our younger doctors how the philosophies and

practices of chiropractic had changed through the years and with the hopes of regaining what we had lost and to the end of preserving what we had. She worked to stop the continuous erosion of our practice rights.

It is difficult to comment on the life of Bertha Montenegro without referring to her beloved husband, Dr. Leo Montenegro; their lives were so entwined. While Bertha was active in the various organizations, her husband served on the Board of Regents of the Los Angeles College of Chiropractic and then as secretary of the Board of Chiropractic Examiners assuring that chiropractors in this state were competent to practice broadly in the various fields. Dr. Montenegro was also president of the California Chiropractic Association.

Bertha and Leo Montenegro spent a lifetime serving patients, the public and the profession. They were both the "keepers of the flame" and the beacons that lit the way and set the pace for broad-scope chiropractic practice in California. The enormous success of family chiropractors throughout the 1950's was due to their efforts.

Bertha and "Monte" were brilliant contributors to our profession. Their genius was rooted to a boundless faith in chiropractic and what it can do.

Today, we mourn their passing not only because of who they were but because we view them as part of ourselves, the end of our profession as it once was.

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