

## LIFE OF A SALESMAN

*Sid Williams heads a chiropractic school, but his true calling is to preach the gospel of success.*

By Ed Bean

Most people get up in the morning and go to a job. A few get up every day and embrace life as if it's a mission. Sid Williams lives such a life.

Williams is president of Life Chiropractic College in Marietta and perhaps the nation's best known and most controversial chiropractor. Fourteen years ago, Life College was a shopping center storefront with 22 students. Today it has 1,500 students and is planning for 8,000 when it expands to a general studies curriculum in 1992. The college already contributes \$40 million a year to the Cobb County economy.

All this came about because Williams is a gifted salesman, one who can elevate even the selling of pots and pans to an act of spiritual communion. For most of his life, he's sold chiropractic with a conviction that does not recognize excess.

But this isn't a story about salesmanship so much as it is a lesson on intensity of purpose. The first and last thing anyone needs to know about sales - whether the product is pots and pans or chiropractic treatment - is how to be totally committed to the product, Williams says.

Williams, 60, is a tall man with bushy eyebrows, an old-fashioned Southern drawl and a propensity for mixing spiritual imagery with mild profanity. A mentor to thousands of chiropractors, he is a huckster and showman to others in the profession.

His life has been a roller coaster of success and struggle. He is a past president of one of the two competing national chiropractic associations, yet three times his colleagues in Georgia have tried to revoke his license for unprofessional conduct, primarily for advertising before it was considered acceptable.

Those who believe in "Dr. Sid" do so without reservation. When Williams got ready to start Life, he asked 2,500 chiropractors meeting at Atlanta's Waverly Hotel for money. In one evening, they pledged \$1.2 million.

The meeting was one of William's Dynamic Essentials, or DE, seminars where chiropractors learn how to build "volume practices." Chiropractic is a sort of spiritual quest for Williams, but he doesn't see anything wrong in creating wealth along the way. In his philosophy, entrepreneurism is a high calling.

Some may remember Williams as a defensive end on Georgia Tech's 1951 Orange Bowl squad. It was football injuries that led Williams to visit a chiropractor. He became fascinated with the profession and after graduating from Tech with a degree in industrial management, Williams and his wife, Nell, signed up at Palmer Chiropractic College in Davenport, Iowa.

Williams and "Dr. Nell" graduated from Palmer in 1956, came back to Atlanta and within two years were running a chain of clinics, a publishing house for chiropractic literature and a company that sold chiropractic equipment. Later they would found a magazine that now circulates to nearly all the nation's chiropractors. From the beginning, it was hard to seperate Dr. Sid the chiropractor from Dr. Sid the entrepreneur.

We recently followed Williams around, tape recorder in hand. Part of our conversations were at his Life office, where floor-to-ceiling Chinese paintings that once belonged to Eleanor Roosevelt hang. We also spent time with him in Sarasota, Florida, rolling hours of tape while Williams strolled up and down the streets of a beachfront neighborhood where he is building a home. What follows is an edited version of our conversations.

My wife and I were going to school in Davenport at the Palmer Chiropractic College and we needed money. So I tried selling vacuum cleaners. Electrolux. Door to door. I could always get in the door. I had great persistence. I'd say to myself, over and over, "I can. I will. I must." But something was wrong. I couldn't sell them. I had the guts to go in a place but how in the hell do you get somebody to buy something when they don't need it and don't want it?

Then my wife started selling cookware and I thought I'd try that. I thought I'd be better at selling to single, working girls. I had the personality for it. Well, that wasn't working so well either. I made a great sales talk but they weren't buying. If they did buy, it was

just to get rid of me and then they wouldn't pay for the stuff when it was delivered. Nothing seemed to be working for me. I'd beat my head against the wall.

One day we traveled to a small town about 50 miles from Davenport. I was demonstrating to a woman and her daughter. They were trying to get rid of me but I kept talking with my prepared sales talk. I'd been talking an hour and a half in their living room when I knelt down to pick up a saucepan.

At that moment a wonderful thing happened. An all-consuming love for that cookware filled my heart. This saucepan I was holding seemed more precious and valuable than anything I could imagine. I cradled it like it was a baby. I became speechless and went into a trance. Love for that cookware just overwhelmed me. It wasn't a cheap affection, but an overpowering presence. We were one. I couldn't speak. Nobody said anything and after about 25 or 30 seconds, the mother broke the silence and said. "I've always wanted a good set of cookware and I've got \$35 to make a down payment." The daughter said she wanted one for her hope chest.

From that day on, all I could do was sit around all day and bathe in the euphoria of my love for the cooking utensils. I'd go down to a restaurant or a saloon and set a saucepan on the counter and people would come in and ask, "What's that?" All I had to do was sit there. People were drawn to me.

I finally began to realize what had happened. Without that love for my product, I'd been just another salesman repeating a sales pitch and making a loud noise. But when I got that love for the product, I could speak with authority. When I could speak with absolute authority, I was ready to sell. When you sell something, you've got to talk like it's the latest word from God. You follow? You've got to know it's the latest word from God.

That's how my business in chiropractic grew. I had a love affair with chiropractic. I dealt with people with love and they felt it and they sent their friends in. If you love your patients they will recognize that and they won't want to destroy that relationship.

Now I never read any book on marketing, but in a few years Dr. Nell and I had 20 clinics. We were seeing thousands of people a week. I knew I had found the fundamental, underlying cause to nearly all their problems. It was in their spines and I could correct it. I could say that with absolute and total authority. You talk with authority and the whole world will listen to you. If you know how to

reach people with love, the innate intelligence will bring them to you.

I was controversial right away. I broke out of the mold. I was taking no prisoners. At that time, the medical doctors didn't advertise, the lawyers didn't advertise, the dentists didn't advertise. The chiropractors patterned their laws after the medical doctors so they didn't advertise either. That was a mistake, because we weren't medical doctors and they controlled the market. What were they going to leave us? Nothing.

I was on fire for chiropractic. I used to send out news releases all over the country on chiropractic. They thought there was a big organization down here in Atlanta but it was just me. I was running full-page newspaper ads, advertising free X-rays, talking about what chiropractic could do for diabetes, headaches, back pain. Right away they started talking about yanking my license. It wasn't professional to advertise. But I felt like in this country that if you have something that has benefit for people, you ought to be able to advertise it and sell it. These other chiropractors would drive by my office and there would be 50 cars. They said that damn Sid Williams is a threat.

I first got the idea of building a chiropractic college in the South when I was still in school in Iowa. I needed some money to do it so I started building houses around 1959. I was going to use the profits to start a college. I had 80 houses under construction in Cobb County. Kennedy Hills in south Cobb was one of them, maybe you've heard of it. Then the rains came and knocked me out for six months. There was so much mud, I couldn't finish anything.

Then everybody started suing me, calling me in the middle of the night to pay up. The banks foreclosed, even took my damn car. I was \$14 million in debt. The state was trying to yank my chiropractic license for advertising. These young bucks that were working for me, they all deserted me. The whole world was after me.

You see I got sick in 1960. For four years, I couldn't even drive a car. I could hardly talk. I just collapsed. My heart would beat 200 beats a minute. I felt like some kind of demon had me, a weird feeling. I'd have these sinking spells working in the clinic and I'd have to get out because I didn't want to die inside the clinic. It was a terrible feeling.

Every night we'd go out riding in the car until three or four o'clock in the morning. That was the only thing that would calm me

down. The maid that lived with us would sit in the backseat and hold my son Sid on a pillow and my daughter Kim would hold me up. Dr. Nell would drive. For four years, she ran the business, had the babies, managed our affairs, did everything.

The thing I learned from all this was that you have to leave space inside yourself. I'd been doing it all. I'd been too anxious. I was trying to do this without any capital. I was the resource, I was the energy.

When I began to feel better, I saw that chiropractors were lost and frustrated. They were listening to the propaganda put out by the medical association and a lot of them were starting to believe it. They didn't believe in themselves anymore. They needed my help.

I sent out a letter to chiropractors all over the country. I said I had discovered the secret of magnetism, how to attract the things you want by using the mind's eye. That was 1964. I got eight people for our first meeting. That was how DE got started. Now we get several thousand, four times a year.

I called it Dynamic Essentials. Everything we have, DE built it. Over the years DE has been a lot of things to different people. Most of them don't come to find a deeper purpose in life. They come to find how to attract a lot of people to their practices. They say, "I don't need an experience, I just to need to make money."

But that's not the main thrust of it, making money. The main thrust is to get centered and become a servant. When the subconscious mind knows you're committed to chiropractic, the patients will come. They'll come out of the woodwork.

People are accustomed to going to meetings to pick up more knowledge. They don't need any more knowledge. What they need is the supreme confidence that they can hit when they go up to bat.

If you're selling a vacuum sweeper or selling chiropractic, you don't have to understand it; you just have to start believing it -- whether it's right or wrong. People buy what you feel about the product and that's why you've got to have the feeling about chiropractic. Every time I do an adjustment, I expect a miracle. Patient says I can't get up, and I say you can. He says I've been in bed for three weeks. I say give me your hand.

Now you don't do that if you're worried about getting paid. You have to start serving in the total capacity of your mind and collect in

another part of you mind. And don't let either know what the other is doing. The collection hand can be a monster.

One of the biggest hinderments to a doctor who wants to build a big practice is he's got it in his mind that he wants to retire at age 35. You follow? He's checking the stock market and he's in real estate and he may have an idea about being in the horse business or the automobile business. And he wonders why he can't build his practice. The son of a bitch is supposed to be in there thinking about how to love those damn patients.

A mistake that a lot of people make is they don't see the need for mental preparation. You program yourself every day. Athletes spend time getting themselves mentally right before a game. You've got to get your mind right before you go to the office every day, you follow?

Say I just had a fight with my wife because she let the checks bounce. And she says I didn't put the money in the bank on time, so I'm cussin' all the way to the office. Then I walk in the waiting room and see all those patients sitting there. Am I going to inspire anyone? Going to be uplifting? If you want to be successful, you've got to get up an hour earlier and get your mind right. You need to think about your purpose. If a person wants to be successful, he has to have a major purpose in life. Then the subconscious mind will draw the people and the circumstances, the resources and ideas. If he wants to be a chiropractor, he dedicates himself to proficiency and loving his patients and goes out on a crusade.

One of the principles of DE is you have to be willing to accept all patients regardless of their ability to pay. That doesn't mean you have to run a free practice, but you have to prove to yourself that you're willing to serve. That's picked up by the spiritual eye, and when you know it, the whole world knows it.

That's what we do in DE. We teach office procedures and how to collect the money, but mainly we teach them how to get into the right state of mind. We clean out their thinking processes.

We also used DE to teach chiropractors about the political process. They couldn't get a thing from the legislatures in this country and they couldn't figure out why. They'd go to their representative and he'd say, "I don't know anything about chiropractic but the medics over here say you're quacks. Besides, they've been supporting me a long time and they gave \$1,000 to my campaign."

So I got them to start sending money and things began to change. I lobbied for 10 years at the Capitol. The medics would want some law against us and that guy we'd given \$500 to, he'd say, "Now wait a minute. These chiropractors are pretty nice people. I'm not going to help them, but I'm not going to do anything to hurt them either."

Do you know how we got Medicare to cover chiropractic? The medics said there wasn't any scientific evidence for it. Well, I got my friends in DE to collect two million signatures in their offices. Sen. Herman Talmadge took the petition over to the committee. Two million signatures was all the scientific evidence they needed. We got chiropractic in Medicare. If I get 5 patients to write to a representative and say Dr. Sid is coming to see you and he's all right, I guarantee he'll be waiting for me when I get there. That's part of what I teach at DE, too.

We've had lots of political friends over the years. Sen. Talmadge was a good friend of chiropractic. Congressman Larry McDonald, he was an M. D., you know, but he was our friend. He spoke at our first graduation. I was a member of the John Birch Society back then. Larry McDonald held three or four Birch Society meetings in our Lithia Springs office. Yeah, I know you've heard a lot of ugly things about it but you don't understand what the Birch Society was. The credo was less government, more individual responsibility. That's it. It was a beautiful thing.

Lester Maddox is a good friend. Lester rode his bicycle at one of our DE meetings at the Biltmore. He was probably the best friend chiropractic ever had in this state. He held up Jimmy Carter's reorganization bill to get one of our bills passed.

When Carter started running for president, he just assumed we weren't with him because he knew we were with Lester. But early on I could see that he had that inner attunement working for him. I wrote to chiropractors all over the country and asked them to vote for him.

Next election, I'm going to be supporting Sen. Roy Barnes for governor. I've known him since he was a little boy and he's very capable. What else can you say about him?

But really, I don't care about politics. We're in the middle of a \$14 million expansion at Life now. By 1992, we want to be Life University. We're working with the accreditation people now. We're going to offer undergraduate degrees in chemistry and physics, business. We're going to teach entrepreneurism.

Now you go to a regular college, they don't give you any values. They just give you education, you follow? Very little is being promoted in education to show you how to take charge of your life, to change habits and be happy and successful and fulfilled. They don't teach you how to create the capacity to make a better life and a better world. Part of our philosophy is if you can see it in your mind's eye, it will happen. We're going to teach students that. We're going to teach them how to get what they want out of life.

We'll teach them lasting purpose. That's a idea that came to me one night at three in the morning. I woke up and wrote it down. Lasting purpose is to love, serve and give out of your own abundance. I didn't think of it, it just came to me, like all of my ideas. When you get to the silence, you don't have to think as much. Most people have all these plans for the future, all these regrets for the past, all this verbalizing all day long. I don't have any of that. I just try to be right here.