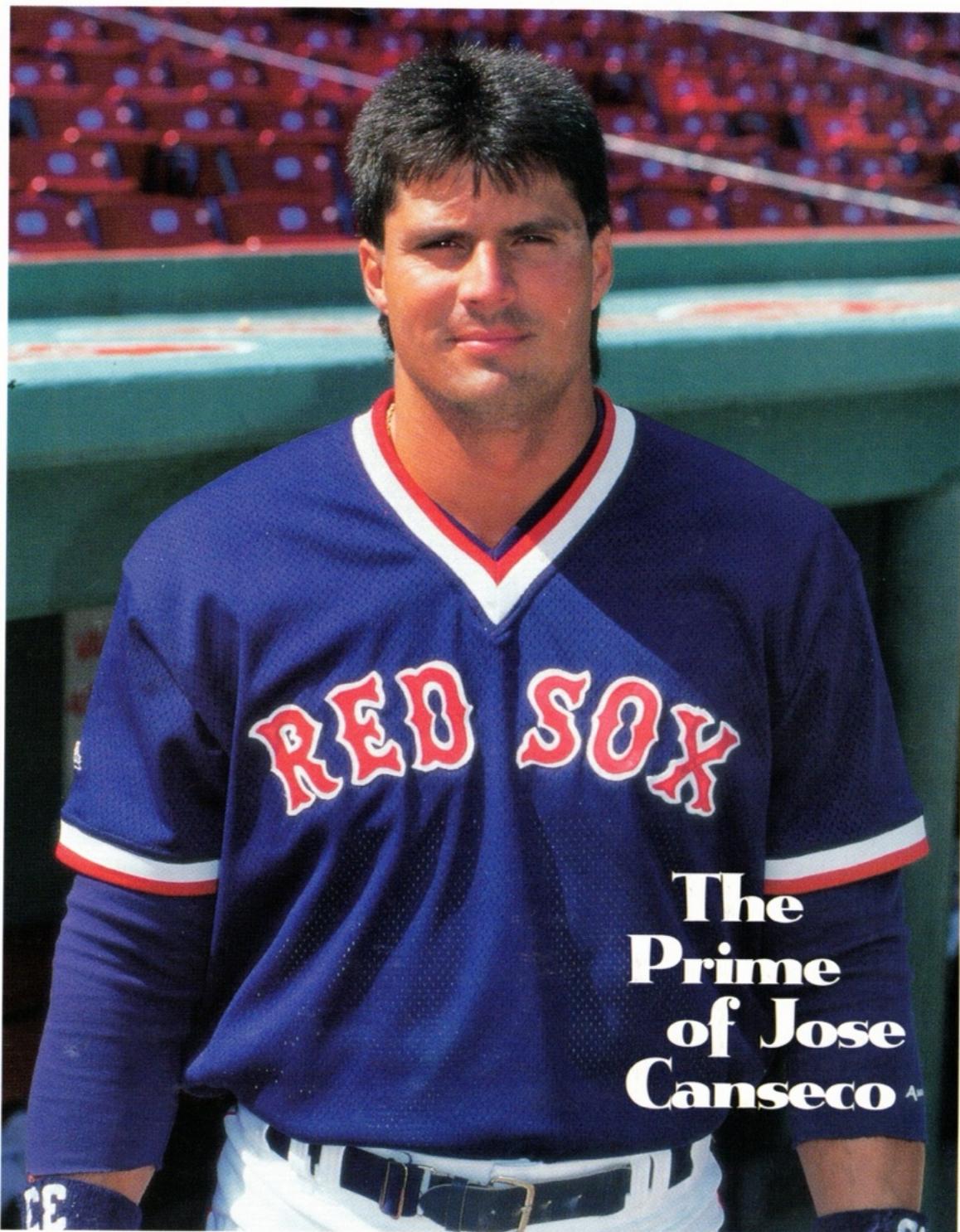


# Today's Chiropractic

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# A Salute to Women in Chiropractic

By Nell K. Williams, A.A., D.C.

*Women  
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will lead the  
way to gaining  
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in the greater  
health-care  
community.*

ONE MORNING THIS spring as I was walking toward my office across the beautiful, sunny 120-acre campus of Life College, I was flooded with gratitude for the privilege of being a part of the great Dynamic Essentials movement that rejuvenated a major part of the chiropractic profession through the establishment of what is now the world's largest and foremost school of

chiropractic. I did not have to remind myself that this accomplishment did not come easy.

At our first commencement in 1977, Congressman Larry McDonald stated in his address

that Life College was "an overnight success." I nudged my husband, Dr. Sid E. Williams, founder and president of the college, and whispered in his ear, "Thirty years is a mighty

long night!"

Remembering the long days, the sleepless nights and the painstaking preparations that were necessary to bring our dream to fulfillment, I felt a great sense of pride and satisfaction.

Long before I was named senior vice president of

Life College, I had learned several abiding truths:

You can make good use of adversity if you try; life is really in your own hands; and overcoming obstacles through hard

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work is good training for even greater achievements.

## OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

The story of my own life began during the Great Depression years, when there was much poverty and hardship in America. My family was of modest means, but to make things even worse, my mother died when I was only 7 years of age. My mother's death shattered our home. It was especially hard for my younger sister, who really did not understand what was happening. Nevertheless, tough times had made all of us tough people, so we were able to withstand adversity.

As a Mason, my father, unable to work on his railroad job and also take care of us by himself, was able to get my sister and me accepted into the Masonic orphanage in Oxford, North Carolina. We remained there 11 years until we finished high school. My brothers entered military service in the early part of World War II and served honorably. Long before I completed my high school education, I was searching through catalogs to find a college to attend. This set me apart from my friends, who were interested in looking at mail-order catalogs and wishing for the fine clothes they offered.

I was thrilled when I was accepted at Lees-McRae College in Banner Elk, North Carolina. During the summer after I graduated from high school, I was able to get a job in the Lees-McRae College library and earned enough money to pay most of my fall tuition. Loans and grants for students were not available at



Dr. Nell K. Williams

that time, of course, so I continued to work every summer and part-time during the school year to pay for my education.

## HIGH EXPECTATIONS

I graduated in two years with an Associate of Arts degree in 1949 and immediately moved to Atlanta to live with my older sister. As fate

would have it, that move led to my meeting Sid Williams, who at the time, was a student at Georgia Tech.

Needless to say, I was very impressed with this energetic, enthusiastic, and persistent young man who, as a football star and general "Big Man On Campus", was considered quite a catch. As a

consequence of his relatively light weight and enthusiastic playing style, he was also considered quite a catch by the medical community because of his many injuries.

When medical doctors, as well as the Tech trainer, seemed unwilling or unable to do anything to relieve the chronic pain and discomfort he suffered as a result of an old injury, and told him it was "all in his head", Sid did not accept their diagnosis. In search for relief, he was finally introduced to chiropractic through a friend and his pain

and immobility were greatly improved within a short time. This launched his love for chiropractic, and I caught the fever from him and his enthusiasm.

Sid knew he was going to the mountaintop in chiropractic, and he and I were married on March 21, 1953, at the All Saints Episcopal Church on West Peachtree Street at North Avenue

under the very shadow of Georgia Tech in downtown Atlanta. Having made up our minds to pursue chiropractic as a career, we drove to Davenport, Iowa, on our honeymoon and enrolled together in the Palmer School; of Chiropractic. Now, more than 40 years later, it is with the greatest joy that I recall the beginning of our chiropractic careers. While Thoroughly convinced of the validity of chiropractic, our first steps were somewhat uncertain. While we fully embraced the principles of chiropractic, our hope was that the slander and ridicule of chiropractic by powerful medical interests would soon end.

Dr. Sid and I began our modest practice with high expectations in the small town of Austell, in the western part of Cobb County, Georgia. Due primarily to our unique principles of service to our patients, we soon were booking more than 1,000 patient visits per week in our clinic which, at that time, had 14 adjusting rooms and parking spaces for 40 cars. So spectacular was our success that we gained nationwide attention. Patients in our clinic were featured on the CBS "60 Minutes" television program with Mike Wallace. Some of the cases that had proven to benefit from chiropractic were highlighted. Building on this early success, we began conducting "Tuesday Night Meetings" which later, in 1964 turned into Life D.E. meetings. Soon we had set up 21 clinics throughout the southeastern United States.

## SEEKING EDUCATION

With this continued success, a new vision began to take shape. In his usual bold and persistent manner, Dr. Sid decided that the Atlanta area - and, for all practical purposes, the world - needed a school of chiropractic and that he was the one to build it. This would not only fulfill what he saw as a professional need, but it would also satisfy his long-standing ambition to teach the young people of the world about life and

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how to live it more abundantly.

After some heartbreaking false starts with financing plans that did not work out, the Life College School of Chiropractic (now Life College) was finally launched in 1974 with 22 trusting students (three of whom were women) and a leased warehouse. This marked the dawning of a new day for us and our beloved chiropractic profession. I was glad then, and I am even more delighted now, as I recall the heartbreaks and triumphs of this great adventure.

Now, of the 3, 213 students studying chiropractic at Life

College, 813 are women and more than one third of our pre-chiropractic students are women. that is truly significant when you consider that when Dr. Sid and I graduated from Palmer in 1956, the role of women in chiropractic had reached a low ebb. There had been a decline in their number in the 1930's, and by the late 1940's, women had all but disappeared from the ranks of chiropractic. The early pioneers were retiring and younger women were under pressure from society to stay at home and leave the pursuit of careers to men.

Dr. B.J. Palmer, the recognized developer of chiropractic, supported equal rights for women, of course, as early as the 1920's. In the 1940's and 1950's, he advertised his support on Palmer College's smokestack with a sign which read: "Equal Rights and Votes 4 Women."

## ABUNDANT CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

Chiropractic has always offered women the same opportunity to become successful chiropractic practitioners. Even so, women have endured some tough times. In 1995, however, this is no longer the case. Opportunities for women abound.

In addition to being able to set up a clinic and practice chiropractic, women with their accredited chiropractic education also have many other career options. They can teach in chiropractic schools as

well as in other colleges throughout the world where new opportunities are emerging every year. They can serve as military officers; they can fill roles in hospitals when these institutions begin to adjust all their patients for optimum function and to reduce the use of drugs; they can take the chiropractic message overseas, as with the Life Around the World program; they can do research projects with chiropractic colleges; they can be authors and seminar lecturers; they can serve in one of the many professional positions that will be opening up with insurance companies as chiropractic continues to expand; and the list goes on.

Women doctors of chiropractic can serve as college administrators, as many have done for the past 100 years. Dr. Jean Moss is president of Canadian Memorial Chiropractic College, and Dr. Beatrice Hagen has served as president of Logan Chiropractic College. In addition to my own position at Life, more than a dozen other high offices at Life are filled by women, including those of vice president of external affairs, the dean of the School of Undergraduate Studies, the assistant dean to the vice president for academic affairs, the chair of diagnostic imaging and alignment, the heads of four departments and the directors of four other major Life College agencies.

Through the Life Foundation, women chiropractors have served our profession well in at least three other countries in recent years and are welcomed as counselors, researchers and lecturers as well as many entrepreneurial

efforts throughout most of the world today.

New opportunities for female doctors of chiropractic are opening up almost daily in public health care in such specialties as dietetics. We have a certified degree program at Life that allows a person to be fully qualified as a dietitian. The future is bright for dietitians in every aspect of health care, including programs for industry and business, and this provides a great entree for the chiropractic message for the dual-trained professional. The key to future health care is prevention and wellness. For that purpose, a marriage of chiropractic and scientific dietetics may provide a perfect blend.

To the ambitious young woman of today who is armed with a D.C. degree, I am pleased to say: The sky is the limit! You can be a proud professional contributing to the betterment of humankind while, at the same time, always having the option of being a wife and mother, too, if that is your ambition. A degree in chiropractic gives you flexibility in a career that is available in only a few other situations.

## **THE CHIROPRACTIC WOMAN'S TOUCH**

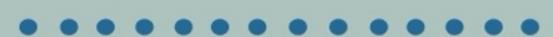
Just as women nurses were able to penetrate and exert great influence on the medical profession long before women doctors were fully accepted, I believe that women chiropractors also will lead the way to gaining full acceptance for chiropractic in the greater health care community. As fully qualified and contributing members of the health care teams of

the future, women D.C.'s will be working in major hospitals during regular rounds, adjusting patients - not trying to be doctors of medicine, but fulfilling their own special niche to prevent suffering and promote health - and doing it well.

The accomplishments of women already have been profound and abiding. Women were among the first to practice chiropractic, and I firmly believe that their continued active presence in the profession will make the future of chiropractic, as one writer said, "a thing of beauty and joy forever."

As a woman in chiropractic who has been able to enjoy raising a family while pursuing a career, I was greatly honored to receive the first International Chiropractors Association "Woman of the Decade" Award in 1991. With abiding gratitude, in spirit I am pleased to share that award with all chiropractic women of achievement as we celebrate chiropractic's centennial. I further suggest that we all be for chiropractic women's vision, their sacrifices, their love and their devoted, caring service. I have no doubt that chiropractic has been able to make the great strides it has, in part, because of the chiropractic woman's touch.

And so, along with Dr. Sid, I am pleased to salute the women of chiropractic and wish each of them continued years of even greater accomplishment and achievement.



*About the author: Nell K. Williams, A.A., D.C., is senior vice president and dean of student affairs at Life College. Comments may be addressed to her at Life College, 1269 Barclay Circle, Marietta, GA 30060*