

As my chairmanship ends, I want give my personal insights about what it is like to serve in this most important office, the progress that has been made and a brief outlook for the future.

As the chief executive officer of the largest chiropractic association in the world, it is without question the most powerful position in the chiropractic profession.

Although the ACA Chairman does not have the power to act unilaterally or dictate what should or should not be done, I can tell you that nothing happens within chiropractic, or that affects chiropractic, without knowing about it within minutes and nothing happens without having the opportunity to offer input. Past ACA Chairman Dr. Kerwin Winkler once told me that is what he missed most about leaving the job...and I know that is what I will also miss the most.

What will I miss the least? 200 daily emails and 25 phone calls. And I will also not miss Austin skycaps knowing me by name!

I must admit that I leave the job extremely satisfied. Four years ago when I was a candidate for the Executive Committee, I was asked about my vision for the ACA and this profession. I recently ran across my written replies to that question and was pleasantly surprised with and extremely proud of the progress that has been made on the multiple fronts I addressed. I want share the comments I submitted to the 1999 House of Delegates as a result of that question.

“In my opinion, chiropractic’s first century (or so) will be remembered as the ‘100 Year War.’ This profession not only fought (and continues to fight) the AMA, it fought (and continues to fight) a civil war among it’s own practitioners and associations. We continue to circle the wagons and shoot inward and that simply must stop if we are ever going to mature as a profession.

“It is time for the leadership of this profession to say ‘enough is enough’ and take bold steps to stop the infighting. It’s time for leadership of this profession to accentuate what we agree upon rather than the small things that divide us. And it’s time for the leadership to do the right thing for the profession without regard to how they might be affected politically.

“In the final analysis, one word describes what this profession needs...UNITY.”

After that preamble, I outlined the need for “internal unity” within this association so that our leaders could become a “team” working for the same goals. That has most certainly occurred. Yes, ACA leaders debate and often disagree on important issues, but it is done with professionalism and at the end of the day, friendships and mutual respect remain intact.

I then discussed the importance of building bridges to state associations in order

to create “state unity.” I recommended that the ACA become a legislative and legal resource depository for them. That has most certainly occurred. Today, the ACA staff and legal counsel are viewed as the premier experts on a variety of subjects including insurance relations, regulatory interpretation, legislative strategy, model bills and legal issues. State associations across the country know that our assistance is only a phone call away and take advantage of our ACA expertise and experience on a daily basis.

I then stressed the need for “member unity” and the importance of refuting and correcting inaccurate statements each and every time they surface in the tabloid press. To make sure the ACA member in the field has correct information, I recommended that “ready to print” articles be sent to every state association journal each month and that *ACA Today* be distributed to every doctor of chiropractic in the United States. Both of those goals were accomplished and as a result, members and non-members know what the ACA stands for. The purveyors of misinformation now have a much tougher time getting doctors to believe their fabricated stories.

My final and most important vision was “professional unity” and the absolute need for the ACA and ICA to unify into one organization. I pointed out then (and have repeatedly done so since) that if the ACA and ICA can agree on language for the Alliance publications, and if both organizations can endorse the ACC Paradigm, then there is much more that unites than divides us. In that

document, I concluded by stating, *“When the window opens again, the ACA must take the lead to insure that the opportunity is immediately seized and thoroughly explored. The profession expects and deserves no less.”* With new leadership at the ICA, that predicted “window of opportunity” has finally opened and unity could and should finally become a reality.

After serving two years on the Executive Committee, on September 1, 2001, I became the 23rd person to serve as the ACA Chairman of the Board of Governors. And as I have told you before, ten days after taking office as chairman, the world was changed forever when the tragedy of 9-11 occurred. I am very proud that the ACA did not yield to terrorism and that not one event was canceled. In fact, on Friday, just 3 days after 9-11, I was on one of the first flights out of Kansas City and was one of the first to see our armed forces protecting airports.

The goal of my chairmanship was simple...continue the policies and vision of past chairman Dr. J. Michael Flynn. Even though many of the biggest victories in our history occurred during the last two years on “my watch,” it was Dr. Flynn’s leadership that got the ball down to the 5-yard line on so many projects.

Fifty years from now when historians write the history of chiropractic at the turn of this millennium and mention ACA leaders, I believe they will have trouble separating the Flynn-Edwards chairmanships since there was such a continuity

of purpose and efforts and since we served as each other's trusted advisor and chief assistant. J. Michael, I was truly blessed to have had the opportunity to serve under you and learn from you. This association, this profession and I owe you a debt that can never be repaid.

And when it comes to chiropractic "touchdowns" scored by the ACA team, there have been so very many. In fact, **more regulatory, legal and legislative victories were achieved in the last 4 years than in the first 104 years of our history combined!**

From President Clinton signing ACA sponsored legislation making chiropractic a permanent benefit for our men and women in uniform, to President Bush signing ACA sponsored legislation making chiropractic a permanent benefit for our nation's veterans, to President Bush signing ACA sponsored legislation making DCs eligible to have their student loans paid off, to Senate passage of a bill that will hopefully lead to Medicare reimbursement for X-rays, examinations and therapy, to getting a doctor of chiropractic appointed to the Attending Physicians Office to treat Members of Congress onsite, to having two Cabinet members speak at NCLC, to filing a lawsuit against the federal government that resulted in the HHS Secretary ruling that PTs cannot deliver subluxation care under Medicare, to filing a federal lawsuit against the Blues that led to expanded chiropractic reimbursement for physical therapy services for federal employees, That's what has been accomplished in the last 4 years.

And now for some late breaking news that tops it all off.

Just one year ago, the ACA had a tough decision to make. Do we fight the appointment of 5 medical types and Charles Duvall to VA Advisory Committee or do we gamble that our 3 representatives – Reed Phillips, Cindy Vaughn and Rick McMichael - can prevail? After attending the first VA Committee meeting and observing Rick, Reed and Cindy work, I reported to the Board of Governors that even though the deck was stacked against them, I was confident they would get the job done.

While chairing my last Board of Governors meeting, I received a call from Dr. Cindy Vaughn who was in Washington, D.C. informing me that the VA document had just been passed and will soon be on its way to the Secretary. You will get a full report this afternoon, but suffice it to say that Reed, Rick and Cindy got the job done. As a direct result of their work, a NEW FEDERAL model has been created that will have monumental positive effects for this profession for many years to come. To all 3 of you I want to say how proud we are of the job you did and for what you have accomplished for this profession.

It bears repeating.... **more regulatory, legal and legislative victories were achieved in the last 4 years than in the first 104 years of our history combined!** For that reason, it truly has been an exhilarating time to serve at the

helm of this great profession. It is not an exaggeration to say that hardly a week has gone by that something did not happen that was positive for doctors of chiropractic, our practices and our patients!

History shows that most past ACA chairmen remain very active after leaving office. Prime examples include Drs. Shelby Elliott, Lou Sportelli, J. Michael Flynn, Edward Maurer, Lowry Morton, Robert Jackson, Harry Kieffer, Van Mericas and Kerwin Winkler, all who continued to serve this profession in other important roles. I can assure you that this former chairman will follow their lead by continuing to serve this profession in areas where I feel my experience will benefit the profession.

There are 3 themes that I have incorporated in many of the speeches I have given and most of the articles I have written during the last four years and I want to share them with one last time.

In all of recorded history – there has never been a better time to be alive. We have unbelievable conveniences, beautiful homes, good working conditions and plenty of food. And in all of recorded history – there has never been a better place to live than the United States of America. Sure, we have our problems, but no other country today...or in all of recorded history can hold a candle to the United States of America. And as doctors of chiropractic, we have one huge, additional advantage. Of all the professions you could serve in, there is none

better than chiropractic. We are truly blessed to be able to have the skills and the opportunity to help people regain their health naturally without the use of harmful drugs and surgery. So we, as American doctors of chiropractic today, live in the greatest time, live in the greatest country, and serve in the greatest profession in all of recorded history. And as the leaders of this great profession, I submit to you that it just doesn't get any better than this.

Second, we must never forget the sacrifices made by our early pioneers who were willing to go to jail to ensure that chiropractic survived. We must also remember that chiropractic doesn't belong to any chiropractor. It never has and it never will. Chiropractic belongs to humanity and we are only the caretakers of it for this particular generation. What we do with it...how we preserve it...how we defend it...how we protect it, will affect many generations to come. It is now our "watch" and our primary responsibility is to take chiropractic and to pass it on to the next generation better and stronger than it was when we received it. Years from now when we look back at our professional careers, I believe that is the only "yardstick" that will matter.

And finally, I remain totally and completely convinced that there is no greater need today than professional unity. Call it affiliation...call it unification...call it merger...call it whatever you want. But the fact remains that it is past time for the ICA and ACA to merge and begin speaking to policy makers and legislators with one strong voice and stop the needless duplication of efforts. Just as I have

used every opportunity to discuss this need over the last four years, I will steadfastly continue those efforts during my last two years on the Board of Governors and fully expect this dream to become a reality.

To the District VI Delegates who have repeatedly elected me District Governor, to the ACA Board of Governors who twice elected me to the Executive Committee and then Chairman of the Board, words cannot express the gratitude I have for the confidence you placed in me. I am humbled to have had the opportunity to serve the chiropractic profession as ACA Chairman and am grateful that my tenure fortunately coincided with the zenith of this profession...to date.

I conclude my remarks with the words of fellow Texan George W. Bush after the tragedy of September 11th. Here is what he said,

“Our nation - this generation - will lift a dark threat of violence from our people and our future. We will rally the world to this cause by our efforts, by our courage. We will not tire, we will not falter, and we will not fail.”

During the last two years and especially when things got tough, his statement about not tiring, faltering or failing inspired and motivated me on a daily basis.

As the true leaders of this profession, I can tell you that the ACA is on the right

course and is the ONLY organization getting the job done for our profession and our patients.

A few minutes ago, we watched a stirring tribute to our military and one of the slides was a photo of Arlington National Cemetery where the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier is located. Since 1930, a military honor guard has been on duty 24 hours a day – 365 days a year. Yesterday, the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier Honor Guard was advised to seek shelter as Hurricane Isabel approached. The response from the Honor Guard was “Leaving our post is not an option” and they stayed on duty during the entire storm.

By changing just 4 words in President Bush’s quote and adding the Honor Guard’s courageous statement to it, the ACA’s steadfast commitment and ongoing responsibility can be summed as follows and is my charge to you...the leaders of this profession:

“Leaving our post is not an option. Our association - this generation - will lift a dark threat of discrimination from our patients and our future. We will rally this profession to this cause by our efforts, by our courage. We will not tire, we will not falter, and we will not fail.”