



CHIROPRACTIC MOURNS THE PASSING OF A GIANT

Gerard W. Clum (May 7, 1952 - October 27, 2023)

Dr. Gerard Clum, longstanding Board member and past president of the World Federation of Chiropractic (WFC), passed away on October 27 following a long illness. He was 71.

Dr. Clum, known to many as Gerry, was arguably one of the best-known figures in the chiropractic profession. A member of the inaugural Board of Directors of the WFC when it was formed in 1988, he served as a Board member until stepping down in 2015. By that time, he had occupied all of the Executive offices of the WFC, including serving as its eighth president between 2006 and 2008.

Fondly remembered for his unfailing gentlemanly conduct, sense of fairness and diplomatic skills, Dr. Clum was widely respected in all quarters of the chiropractic profession. Between 2003 and 2005, he served as a co-chair of the WFC's Identity Consultation, a challenging role that called on the views of all stakeholders and developed a statement around which the vast majority of the profession could coalesce.

As a child growing up in Buffalo, NY, Dr. Clum experienced a number of falls, including bilateral fractures of his hands and a broken ankle. A throwaway comment from an attending orthopedic physician caused his family to get his eyes checked, whereupon it was discovered that he was suffering from Bilateral Optic Atrophy, a progressive condition causing deterioration of the optic nerve leading



Dr Gerard W. Clum

to loss of vision. Brutal tests were undertaken, including a pneumoencephalogram, which Gerry remembers as being like having his brain sucked out of his skull. With no medical treatment available, he was recommended to attend a Braille School due to his severe visual impairment and was consigned by the medical profession to gradual sight loss and eventual blindness. The future looked bleak.

Around this time, in 1964, his father was seeing a chiropractor in Port Colborne,

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Ontario. The chiropractor enquired about young Gerry's eye condition and, with the help of textbooks from his library, explained what bilateral optic atrophy was. He offered to treat Gerry, stating that while he was unsure whether he would be able to help him, he would love a chance to try, promising that he would not make the condition worse.

Treatment commenced with chiropractic adjustments, whereupon, to the amazement of ophthalmologists at the Cleveland Clinic

and elsewhere, a dramatic improvement in Gerry's vision was noted. Gerry recalled with a smile, "With an ophthalmoscope in one hand and a Camel (cigarette) in another, he looked at my eyes and through a big, bushy mustache, he declared, "This is a God-damned miracle! What has this boy been doing?" When informed that he had been treated by a chiropractor, the ophthalmologist snarled through a haze of tobacco smoke, "I wouldn't take my dog to see a chiropractor." By the end



The inaugural WFC Council (1988) with Dr. Gerard Clum standing (centre)

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of the summer of 1964, with ongoing chiropractic care, Gerry's vision had improved from a dismal 20/90 to only mild visual deficit of 20/40.

Not deterred by the eye-doctor's less than glowing endorsement, at that life-changing moment, Dr. Clum's career trajectory was cemented. There were no other options – he would become a chiropractor, no matter what.

Looking back, he recalled that he was blessed not to have had to endure much of the high school angst regarding career choices that his peers had had to suffer. He was certain that he wanted to be a chiropractor. At the age of 18, in 1970, he enrolled at Palmer College of Chiropractic, graduating three years later in 1973.

Remaining in Davenport, IA, Dr. Clum went into practice in January 1974 but remained connected to his alma mater, becoming a junior member of faculty. At the time, he also harbored aspirations of practicing in South Carolina, and obtained a license to practice in the Palmetto State.

However, in the summer of 1974, Dr. Clum's life was to take on a new direction, when he attended a fund-raising event run by Dr. Sid Williams at one of his Dynamic Essentials seminars. Inspired by the larger-than-life Williams, Dr. Clum became one of the first three faculty members at the newly formed Life College of Chiropractic in Marietta,

Georgia. With this encounter, and with Gerry marrying his sweetheart, Cathy on November 2, 1974, it was another life-changing year for Gerry, who at the time was still only 22.

Over the course of six years, Life College grew from a handful of learners to a campus with 1500 students enrolled. By 1981, Dr. Williams had aspirations to expand his operations and had eyed California as a potential second campus location. At that time, two upper-cervical chiropractors had formed the Pacific States Chiropractic College. However, the institution was in financial trouble and needed urgent support. Dr. Clum was offered the role of president, which he initially accepted, but then withdrew, recommending that Dr. Williams' acute business and entrepreneurial skills were desperately needed in the first instance. The advice of the Life College President was duly sought, a rescue package was put in place and Life Chiropractic College West (LCCW) was born. Dr. Clum was appointed as its first president.

The early days were not easy. Hurdles needed to be overcome and there was much work to do. The first attempt at accreditation failed, primarily on financial grounds, before CCE approved Life West's second application six months later. The institution continued to grow, during which time Dr. Clum's efforts saw a new loan

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system put in place that saved institutions from bankruptcy and enormously reduced student loan debt default.

With Life West thriving under Dr. Clum's leadership, it was not long before further opportunities presented themselves.

He became involved with the Council on Chiropractic Education, the Association of Chiropractic Colleges and the ICA, passing through the executive offices of each. It was through his lifetime membership of the ICA and his service on its Board and as Vice-President, that Dr. Clum was able to pursue international interests.

Dr. Clum's involvement with the WFC commenced in 1987, when the concept of the World Federation of Chiropractic was first mooted at a Summit meeting in London. A congress in Sydney in 1988 saw the WFC being formed, with Dr. Clum serving on the inaugural WFC Council, a seat he was to continue to hold, representing the International Chiropractors Association, until stepping down in 2015.

One of the key projects led by Dr. Clum was the WFC's Identity Consultation. Arising from a 1988 Institute for Alternative Futures report, which stressed a need for a clear and agreed-upon role for the chiropractic profession, a Task Force was assembled under the joint chairs of Dr. Clum, Dr. Paul Carey and Dr. Peter Dixon. Following a



All WFC Presidents at 9th WFC Biennial Congress, Vilamoura, Portugal. Dr. Clum seated second from right.

global consultation, the outcomes were reported in 2005 with unanimous approval. Meetings were hosted at LCCW and the outcome underscored Dr. Clum's ability to convene the best minds from across the political and philosophical spectrum.

Having served in the offices of Secretary-Treasurer, Second Vice-President and First Vice-President, Dr. Clum was elected President of the WFC in 2006, serving a two-year term of office. Bringing a wealth of experience to the role, his reputation for unfailing courtesy and gentlemanly conduct made him one of the profession's great statesmen, representing the WFC around the world, including as the host president at the 2007 WFC Biennial Congress in Vilamoura, Portugal.

Dr. Clum stepped down from his role as President of LCCW in February 2011, following over 30 years in office. He was subsequently appointed to the office of

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The WFC Council (2010) Budapest, Hungary.

Presidential Liaison for External Affairs at Life University, where he oversaw a range of activities under then President Dr. Guy Riekeman and his successor in the role, Dr. Rob Scott. He remained active, coordinating meetings of the Octagon Group and participating in the Rubicon Group, representing chiropractic educational institutions with a vitalistic philosophy.

One of the roles of which Dr. Clum was most proud was as Director of the Center for Compassion, Integrity and Secular Ethics

at Life University. In this role, he oversaw the Chillon Project, providing higher education to people impacted by the prison system in Georgia. This included the offering of two degree programs at Arrendale State Prison, a maximum-security facility for women in Alto, Georgia. The project continues to provide full scholarships for correctional staff to obtain degrees at Life University.

In addition to the above, Dr. Clum continued to serve on the Board of the

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Foundation for Chiropractic Progress and as a Board member of the Integrated Healthcare Policy Consortium. He was awarded Chiropractor of the Year by the ICA, Man of the Year by *Dynamic Chiropractic* and was the 2014 recipient of the Lee-Homewood Award for the Association of the History of Chiropractic. He was the recipient of the WFC Honor Award, the highest honor the WFC has in its power to bestow, in 2015.

Dr. Clum remained a mentor to many in the profession until his passing in October 2023. Testament to the esteem in which he was held, his passing brought tributes from across the international chiropractic profession, irrespective of political viewpoints. Those who served with him remembered his polite diplomacy and the courteous and respectful manner in which he was able to communicate his opinion.

Speaking after his death, current WFC President Dr. John Maltby said, "Gerry Clum was one of the greatest advocates for chiropractic. His life was truly dedicated to the vision of the WFC: that all people, of all ages, in all nations should have access to

chiropractic. With Gerry, it was never about him; it was always about chiropractic.

"I was humbled when he asked me to take his place on the Board of the WFC after having served 27 years. To me, Gerry was a mentor, a champion, but most of all, a friend."

Dr. Clum's passing will be felt acutely by the entire chiropractic profession and all who had the honor of serving with him across his illustrious 50 years of service. Recent years saw him in failing health, but despite this, he found time and energy to attend chiropractic events, provide counsel to chiropractic leaders and retain an active interest in the affairs of the profession.

He leaves behind his loving wife, Cathy, three children Don, Cassie and Lauren, and four grandchildren, Skylar, Cameron, Xander and Kaiya. In December, Skylar will walk across the graduation stage of Life University, 50 years almost to the day from when her grandfather did the same at Palmer School of Chiropractic. Dr. Clum's legacy lives on through his beloved family and profession.
