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Gerry Clum

1952-2023

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Guy Riekeman

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### Dr Gerry Clum has passed

*A tribute to my good friend*

It is still difficult for me to speak of my friend and fellow warrior of over five decades in the past tense. So near does he still seem to me in both spirit and presence. How many times we went to battle together in State, National and International settings; how many times we laughed and broke bread in cities and hamlets from the power centres of Washington, DC to the simple tables of a family eatery in Germany?



I met Gerry for the first time when he was a fledgling student at Palmer College. Being a year ahead of him, I had generated, with a small group of passionate students, a philosophy group, but it was more radical than it sounds. We were the hippies, the activists, the rebel rousers and we were fighting for the heart of Chiropractic at a time when the profession, in an attempt to gain recognition, was willing to sell its soul for acceptance.

We were products of the 60's and we challenged authority, protested, and organised movements. We produced an underground newspaper (*The Spinal Column*), which would have gotten us kicked out of school had we been caught. It was raw and honest and exposed the weaknesses of an administration who at the time valued unity over principle.

We used the DE movement to bring in speakers like *Sid Williams, Joe Flesia, River Ribley, Tom Morgan*, and the most controversial, *Reggie Gold*. We met in the basement of a church we rented and we'd have 300-600 students attend. Perhaps most frustrating of all for the administration is that we'd load 2-4 buses of students every quarter and take them to the DE meetings in Atlanta.

Gerry fitted right in and soon was one of the leaders of the movement, a position of authority earned, not elected, and one he never relinquished until his passing in October, 2023.

So, how do you sum up a life, so well lived that it inspired generations of people to want to do more with the life that was theirs? Five quick stories...

### **Gerry was an academic, and intellectual**

*And he rearranged walls*

Upon graduation from Palmer he was offered and accepted a teaching position at the College, but his love for the DE movement and the idea of being part of the founding of *Life College of Chiropractic* while standing next to Dr Sid Williams pulled him to *Marietta, GA*. The school was founded in an industrial park in half of a typical one story building surrounded by endless asphalt for trucks and cars coming and going. The other half of the building was an unemployment agency and we always laughed about the juxtaposition of it, just in case the College wasn't successful.

But, of course, it was successful and that building is still the centre of a 105 acre campus that is the envy of so many institutions because of its beauty and services. However, the walls were made out of compressed cardboard and could be moved to accommodate varying incoming class sizes. A dear friend in one of those early classes of 20-30 students talked about visiting the campus and walked in while Gerry was in jeans rearranging the walls for the new class starting on Monday. He stopped and gave a tour, then took him to his office to enrol him and on Monday was standing in front of his class teaching one of the many academic courses Gerry perfected.

He did it all from addressing CCE accreditation standards to advocating for student services. He could fight any battle, because he always knew what his opponents knew and then he knew what he knew. Even his enemies respected his preparation and scope of knowledge. He almost always won, because as he so often said to me, *'Make them play by their own rules'*. He did and he held these power brokers accountable, but he did so with such grace that he would become the head of almost every major academic and political organisation, including the *World Congress of Chiropractic*. When Dr Williams, procured the campus in California that would become *Life West*, Gerry was sent to build a college. He did so and headed that Institution for 30 years.

### **Gerry courted with Kings and Queens**

*But related to commoners*

I recently spoke at a conference in Europe and was thrilled to reconnect with a friend and true Chiropractic Advocate, who, as a lay person, is more committed and active in realising a global vision for our profession than the majority of DC's. I love her because she loves the things I love, as BJ would have said about her if he had ever met her. She told me this story about the first time she met Gerry and why she loved him so deeply.

*'I only met Gerry a few times ... no need for words his energy was everything. I sat next to him in a Joe Dispenza lecture many years ago. Joe was talking about the human brain, the quantum world, neuro-plasticity, and consciousness. I was lost and then Joe said, "Turn to the person next to you and explain what this means in your life." Well, I of course, s- - my pants because my partner was Gerry Clum. I said, "You go first" and he laughed and said, "I have no idea what he was talking about". We both laughed, but little did he know the relief I felt.'*

This was so Gerry. From a new CA to the head of the United Nations, he treated everyone with dignity, respect, and equal stature in life.

### **And always thinking about the big picture**

When I left Palmer College in 2004 out of principle there was very public turmoil both professionally and personally. I thought, *I'm free, I can do anything, what would fulfil me?* Innate

provided the answer, move to Northern California and reconnect with Gerry and rock *Life West*. One call and Gerry said, 'COME'. Then a week later he said that while he'd love to have me at *West*, *Life U* in Atlanta was about to close due to politics and evil players. The Board wanted to meet with me and he was going to act to facilitate that meeting. It occurred in a hotel room at the Detroit Airport Hyatt and 8 hours later I was committed to being in Atlanta. The rest is history. In every case, for 60 years, you could count on Gerry doing what was best for our beloved profession.

### **A prankster with a good heart**

We were in Washington, DC for a profession-wide political event of profound importance ... serious stuff. Gerry, Tom Klapp and I decided we needed to meet away from the hotel where there were too many eyes and ears to be safe to talk strategy. Tom and Gerry arranged a dinner spot about a 15 minute walk from the conference hotel. Gerry called me up, gave me the address, and said he and Tom were running a bit behind, but I was to get there and secure the reserved table. Trusting my friend, I headed out to the sleaziest part of town, down some questionable side streets, up a flight of stairs, past a big doorman and got the reserved table. So focused was I on the political battle we were engaged in that it took more time than it should have for me to realise, I'm sitting in a strip club. Gerry and Tom soon called me with the real dinner location and, of course, it cost me a fortune to get out of that place alive.

### **We finally reconnected to work together**

*Almost 50y after that first day at Palmer in 1970*

While at Life University I designed with Dr Brian McAulay a remarkable think tank, the *Octagon*, to further our 8 Core Values at *Life U*. It was and still is a big deal. Off-shoots of the programs emanating from the *Octagon*, included revolutionary educational programs in prisons, program designs for compassionate K-12 teacher training for the United Nations and more.

The yearly conferences were created to bring together academics and activists who were working to make the world a better place in which to live. Gerry had retired from *Life West* and who better to head the *Octagon*. One call, this time from me, and Gerry was back where it all started at *Life U* in Marietta, GA. I can't tell you how fulfilling it was to be reunited with my friend, my fellow warrior, and professional muse. We created a lot together those final years, like the *Rubicon Group* to coordinate the efforts and development of Chiropractic world-wide and so much more. Vision and Actualisation were our respective strengths and we were better together than we were individually.

### **One last thought ...**

I miss him, of course. I'm sad that those just entering the profession on whose shoulders they stand will never get to know and appreciate him.

I worry for the profession without him being there watching out for us and the attacks on our principles.

He was just a good man and a good soul and our world seems so devoid of those attributes today. But I'm also happy for him as I have no doubt that DD and BJ and Galen Price and Sid and River and the Cleveland's and Vint Logan and Herbert Reaver and Mac/Kitty Scallon and the rest of the gang were there to meet him and in perfect chorus echoed out: '*Well done...good and faithful servant*'.

## For Gerry

The personality of a person. The ways of a person. His thoughts. His deeds. His actions. Are all based around his heart. For what is a man? A man is his heart ...

*'A lying cheating heart means a lying cheating man. A loving merciful heart means a loving merciful man. A loving heart means a loving man. A dead heart means a dead man. Regardless of a man's title. Regardless of a man's rank, wealth or position, if the heart is not great then he cannot be great. But if the heart is great that man remains great under all circumstances, rich or poor, large or small, for it is the heart that makes one large or small.'*

Mohammed Ali

Guy Riekeman

DC



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