

# The reason for remembering significant people: The story of Mary Ann Chance and why our profession is what it is in Australia today

---

Rolf E Peters OAM

---

## Introduction

*'Accept the things to which fate binds you, and love the people with whom fate brings you together, but do so with all your heart.'*

Marcus Aurelius

There are reasons why our profession is what it is today, and behind every reason there is a story that needs to be told.

Chiropractic in Australia was mainly a rubble of divergent views for most of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Around the 1970s some shaped started to be given by legislation and education, driven by association. A significant association was the *Australian Chiropractors' Association* which initiated a newsletter which became a magazine which became a '*journal of record*' of global significance.

This *Journal* carries a paper that is classified as the *Mary Ann Chance Memorial Paper*. 'Why?' is a reasonable question.

This paper by Rolf Peters goes some way to explaining why, by telling the story of Mary Ann Chance and why she became a driver within Australian chiropractic.

One of the joys of this *Journal* is that as Editor, I can tell a story, any story in fact, in the way I think best. Here we break with all conventions and tell the story of Mary Ann Chance through the eyes of the man who became her lover, husband, adoring fan, and life-long partner, even in her earthly death.

The *Journal* is not telling this story in this way for any reason other than to do so fulfils our mission to disrupt all the comfortable ideas about chiropractic publishing.

This story pushes the boundaries and it damned-well needs to, in the way Mary Ann pushed the boundaries about what consisted an Association journal. Her belief in the heart and soul of

... the *Journal* remembers Mary Ann Chance and this paper helps to explain why. This Editor was trained by MAC and even today can not place a comma without trepidation I will be 'called out'. This is a 'must read' paper for every Palmer Alumnus'

chiropractic, in the broadest yet most narrow sense, is a lesson to every reader today, especially the students of our profession.

Why do we have passion? Why do we care? Why do we celebrate the power of women and the shape they bring our profession?

I hope that what you now read goes a long way to answering these important questions

### Mary Ann Chance

*A love story, as told by Rolf E Peters*

I started at the Palmer School of Chiropractic, Davenport, Iowa in January 1955.

It was not many days before I noticed a female teenager who would walk through the front door of the cafeteria to have coffee and then leave through the backdoor onto an alley way which led to the Davenport High School.

I had no idea who she was, but the entire faculty, who had their own table, seemed to know her.

Eventually I found that her name was Mary Ann Chance, probably through my house mate Reggie Gold, who always knew everything.

I did not think any more about it.

Mary Ann did not have a choice regarding a profession. She was destined to become a chiropractor. As a child she spent a lot of time in BJ's home

Her father, Hugh Emery Chance, was Executive Director of the *International Chiropractors Association*.

His two brothers, Dean and Laverne were chiropractors

Her paternal grandfather, Hugh Chester Chance, was a chiropractor, Class of 1924, Professor of Neurology and Director of the Student Clinic, and a close friend of BJ Palmer.

Chester's wife Edna was a 1924 Palmer graduate

On Mary Ann's mother's side (the Chamberlins) there were 7 Palmer graduates of 1910 to 1914. On Edna's line there were three graduates of 1921 to 1924, and on another line of her family were another 3 graduates of 1916-1923

In 1956 a classmate of mine, Frank McLeod, returned to Melbourne to attend the 1956 Olympics. He had been able to accumulate sufficient funds being employed by the City of Davenport as a Tennis Instructor.

After his return he resumed studies at the PSC. One of his classmates was Mary Ann Chance. The two married and after graduation he took her to Australia where they first settled in Mount Gambier, South Australia.

At Homecoming, on 25 August 1957 I married Gwendy Hagler, whose parents had just graduated.

She was given away by her uncle, Dr Sonny Jones, who had been a WWII Fighter Pilot. He was attending Homecoming.

The marriage took place in BJ's personal auditorium which was decorated with a lot of flowers, since he had been ill and hundreds of well-wishing flower greetings had been delivered.

A wedding cake had been donated by a class mate and the obligatory pictures of the newlyweds feeding each other were taken in front of BJ's collection of swords and sabres.

Music was presented by Mary Ann Chance at the piano. We honeymooned at the Wisconsin Dells.

Gwendy was a Baptist by religion, while I was a Roman Catholic. As neither of us were prepared to change to the other's religion, we contacted Hugh E Chance, Mary Ann's father who was the chair of the Davenport Baha'i Community and we studied the Baha'i faith.

After graduation Gwendy and I moved to California where Gwendy's mother was practising in Redondo Beach

We decided to visit her father in Carbondale, Illinois, a RED NECK area. Gwendy's grandfather has been Sherrif and his gun-belt was hanging off the four poster bed.

After Frank and Mary Ann graduated they moved to Australia. On their voyage they stopped off in Lost Angeles. We picked them up from the ship and took them on a general trip through Los Angeles, Beverly Hills, Rodeo Drive, and the beautiful parklands of the Hollywood Hills.

We practised for a while in Beverly Hills but could not last financially.

We phoned Hugh Chance and as it happened Stanley Bolton was visiting there, with the purpose of hiring young graduates for his Australian practices.

We took up an offer by Stanley Bolton Senior to work for him in Australia. He and his son serviced some 20 clinics from Toowoomba in Queensland to Albury, on the NSW-Victoria Border by visiting them fortnightly. We were transferred to Wagga Wagga, also serving Leeton and Cootamundra.

After 5 years as indentured servants we purchased the practices at a throwaway price. At Christmas 1957 Gwendy and I visited Mary Ann and Frank in Mount Gambier.

### **Vickie Palmer's babysitter**

As a teenager Mary Ann had been the Baby Sitter for Vickie Palmer, and they became lifelong friends.

The Chances spent many a Christmas at BJ's home, since Hugh Chet Chance, Mary Ann's grandfather was a close personal friend of BJ.

Gwendy divorced me in June 1980.

In October 1980 the Federal Conference of the Chiropractors Association of Australia was held in Perth at the Sheraton Hotel.

Mary Ann was going through her second divorce, and when she found out that I was single again, she claimed me.

And the rest is History as the saying goes.

### **The deets**

Mary Ann was born on 6 October 1937 in Muscatine, Iowa, some 46 km west of Davenport. I always wondered why she was born in Muscatine while her grandfather lived in Davenport. My research found the following:

It was September 1929 and the leaves were beginning to turn in the small college town of Mount Vernon, Iowa. Tall, slim, attractive and idealistic, Margaret Chamberlin had come to this place to enrol as an English major in *Cornell College*, a Methodist institution with a good reputation for academic excellence and high moral standards. Margaret's Grandfather Chamberlin, a retired Church of God minister, would have approved, as would her grandmother, a staunch member of the Women's Christian Temperance Union.

It was Autumn in 1929, a few short weeks before the Stock Market crash of 29 October, and at *Cornell College*, Mount Vernon, Iowa, classes were seated alphabetically by surname. That is how her parents met.

Hugh Emery Chance had come from Davenport, Iowa, where his father headed the neurology department and student clinic of the *Palmer School of Chiropractic*. His parents practised chiropractic from their home in West Davenport. They had come from Southern Kansas, where their families had farmed for two generations.

Margaret Chamberlin's father was a photographer in Muscatine, Iowa, but before she was born he had graduated from the Palmer School and had practised chiropractic in St. Paul, Minnesota, where she was born. And he had also practised in Bloomer, Ohio, where her sister Marian was born, and other cities where his siblings practised. Finally, his wife warned him that their next move would have to be the last, so they settled in Muscatine, where her parents lived.

In 1934 Hugh was in law school and during that summer Hugh and Margaret married,

It was early in 1936 that Hugh Emery Chance JD, obtained the position of Justice of the Peace for the Muscatine Municipality.

Now, in the Australian context that does not mean anything. In New South Wales Justices of the Peace were volunteers appointed by the Governor. Their primary role being to witness a person making a statutory declaration and to certify copies of original documents.

In the United States a Justice of the Peace is an appointed judicial officer who handles many minor legal issues.

Justices of the Peace are often lawyers, but this is not required in all jurisdictions. The duties of a JP differ according to the State or Municipality.

The most common duty is performing legal marriages and civil unions. Another most common duty is to preside over small claims courts and minor criminal courts.

Hugh performed some 600 marriages. The salary for that position was \$1000 per annum, or \$83.33 a month as his wife would state.

With a secure income they decided that they could afford to have a child, and Mary Ann was born in October 1937.

She grew up in Muscatine and had her early schooling there. In 1945 her family moved to Davenport, where Mary Ann attended High School and graduated with honours.

A gifted pianist she gave her first recital, while still a seventeen-year-old junior in High School. She played Bach, Mozart, Rachmaninoff and others. In later years she embraced Jazz.

It might have been that Bix Beiderbecke, a Davenport cornetist, had something to do with it, as Mary Ann had met Bix's old babysitter.

For some fourteen years MAC hosted a Jazz program on the Wagga Community Radio Station 2AAA-FM.

Her collection of Jazz CDs numbers more than 200, and some 100 CDs of Musicals which both of us presented under the title of *'Two on the Aisle.'*

There was a surprising side to my beloved Mary Ann. Being born with a lumbo-sacral abnormality she was unable to become an athlete and instead earned her Athletic Letter at Davenport High by being a crack rifle shooter, competing on the boys' team at State level.

Her interest in Jazz was shared by Vickie Palmer. Mary Ann and I tended to travel to Davenport annually to attend Lyceum, or Homecoming. The festivities would take place Thursday, Friday and Saturday, while attendees made their way back home again on Sunday.

The Sunday prior to Lyceum was reserved by Vickie for the Bix Beiderbecke Jazz festival. One of the bands that annually performed was the Sydney based New Wolverines, led by Geoff Power of Sydney, who played the cornet the way Bix used to play the cornet.

Lisa Killinger, Professor and Director of Diagnosis & Radiology at Palmer used to say: *'Dr Mary Ann Chance was a woman of rare beauty. She could walk into a room and her mere presence demanded that you take notice. Her grace, temperament, and smile all added to her beauty. I had the great honor of enjoying an annual reunion with Mary Ann when she would take the long trip to visit our alma mater, Palmer College, for Homecoming each year in Davenport.'*

As a Davenport resident, it was easy for Lisa to pop by Homecoming each year, but for Mary Ann, Homecoming attendance required a greater commitment. To say that she was a *'regular attendee'* would be a gross understatement. Few alumni could beat her near perfect attendance at Palmer Homecoming over the many decades, and surely nobody acquired more *'Frequent Flier Miles'* in the process! Even in her last few years of life, Lisa would scan the Homecoming crowds eagerly, to catch a glimpse of the radiant Mary Ann with her beloved Rolf by her side. Their warm greetings, ready smiles, and news from *'down under'* always completed the Homecoming experience for her. Rolf continued to make the long Homecoming journey solo, and neither of us can resist reminiscing about *'our favourite mainstay at the Palmer College Homecoming, our dear Mary Ann.'*

### **A complex and multifaceted woman.**

As a mother she kept in contact with her children,

As a doctor she cared deeply her patients and they loved her dearly

As a loving wife she was a great and very active lover. Having had uterine cancer she always used to say that she had no baby carriage, but a very active playpen.

As an administrator of the AAA-FM Board, as Chair of the *Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Wagga Wagga*; as Secretary of the Lion's Club of Wagga Wagga; as a member of *Reconciliation Wagga Wagga* she personally knew many Aunties; as Co-Founder and Secretary Treasurer of the *Association for the History of Chiropractic-Australia*; as Chair, *Chiropractic Research Journal Editors Council*; as Recording Secretary, *Australasian Council on Chiropractic Education*; as Secretary of the *Australian Spinal Research Foundation*; as a Member of the *Council of Representatives, Chiropractors' Association Australia*; as a member of the *American Medical Writers' Association*; as a member of the *Council of Biology Editors*, as a member of the *Society for Scholarly Publishing*, she served with distinction.

As Co-Editor with me of the *Chiropractic Journal of Australia* for some 30 years we had different approaches. My line of thinking was straight forward: Give me the facts, while Mary Ann's line of thinking was lateral, about the how and why, which made us a great team.

### **Bang. Gone**

We had an unbelievable 28 years of a loving relationship. During that time Mary Ann did not have a single sick day. So it was an emotional shock when she literally dropped dead.

On 8 June 2008 she had just placed rice on the dinner plates and was turning to the grill to take fish out to place it onto the plates when she let out a scream, and she was gone.

I called 000 and before long I had two ambulances and the police take over the house. I had attempted CPR, but of course to no success. The paramedics tried electro shock, but no response. To me it was obvious that she was dead.

The Coroner's report eventually stated that she died of a ruptured aortic aneurism.

The celebration of the life of Mary Ann Chance in Wagga Wagga at the *Bance and Sons Funeral Home* on 18th June was in accord with the rites and beliefs of the Baha'i Faith and was notable for the love and energy expressed by all present, and often to live music known to be cherished by Mary Ann. The common conversation after the celebration had her community friends saying

we had no idea she had done so much for her profession and her many professional colleagues in attendance saying we had no idea she had done so much for her community.

The service was a very beautiful and moving one, reflecting MAC herself, and was strongly influenced by her Baha'i faith. Baha'i prayers were offered before a series of family, colleagues and friends presented eulogies paying tribute on various areas of her remarkable life. Her three children and a stepdaughter shared their memories of MAC as a mother, a representative of the Baha'i Faith told of her commitment, and a local friend spoke of her involvement in her community particularly at 2AAA-FM Community Radio.

Her involvement in the chiropractic profession was presented by chiropractic historian Dr Stanley Bolton who conveyed the long history of her family's service to the profession.

Dr Dennis Richards, at the time President of the *Chiropractors' Association of Australia*, commented: *'I had the opportunity to detail her massive and multi-faceted contributions to the advancement chiropractic. I began by noting the esteem in which MAC was held in the profession by the letter of condolence that CAA had received from World Federation of Chiropractic President Papadopolous, and by the flower tribute sent by WFC Immediate Past President Dr Gerry Clum and Mrs. Clum.'*

The list of prominent chiropractors who attended also indicated the respect for her at the highest levels of the profession in this part of the world. They included the head of *RMIT University's Division of Chiropractic* Associate Professor Phillip Ebrall, *New Zealand College of Chiropractic* President Dr Brian Kelly, *Macquarie University Department of Health and Chiropractic* Head and NSW Registration Board President Dr Sharyn Eaton, Macquarie's senior staff members Dr Peter Bull and Dr Ray Hayek, former *United Chiropractors' Association* President Dr Ed Devereaux and Mrs Devereaux, former ACA NSW President Dr Tom Cole and Mrs Cole, former CAA NSW President and current NSW Registration Board member Dr Peter Cowie plus her Wagga colleagues Dr Gary Roberts and Ian Hope. CAA NSW was represented by its Executive Administrator Ms Christine McGillion and the Australian Spinal Research Foundation by its Chief Executive Officer Mr Roley Cook.

I am writing this on 8 June 2020, some 12 years after MAC passed away. And yet I see her every day. Her official portrait is in my dining room and also in the clinic. There are four more photos in 40 by 50 cm frames in the hallway and one in my den above the computer.

When the official portrait was created she insisted that there should also be one for me.

She told me what to wear, and directed how I should sit on the portrait bench in front of the black background, to sit slightly turned with the right shoulder forward, not to obviously smile, and she pressed the release button on the Hasselblad. She knew exactly what she wanted and could have worked as a professional portrait photographer.

My portrait is certainly a beautiful picture, especially with more and wavy grey hair now white and straight. How time is telling.

### Recognition

Mary Ann received certain Honors and Awards:

- ▶ 1980: Chiropractor of the Year, *Australian Chiropractors' Association, Victorian Branch*;
- ▶ 1982: Meritorious Service Award, *ACA*, the Association's Highest Award;
- ▶ Elected to Fellowship, *International College of Chiropractors*;
- ▶ Elected to Fellowship, *Australasian College of Chiropractors*;
- ▶ posthumously Elected to Fellowship, *Palmer Academy of Chiropractic*;
- ▶ Meritorious Service Award, *ACA*, the Association's Highest Award;

- ▶ International Chiropractor of the Year, *Parker Alumni Association*;
- ▶ CAA Awarded for 25 years of Editorship (CJA);
- ▶ Awarded Life Membership, Chiropractors' Association of Australia; and perhaps most proudly of all the
- ▶ Humanitarian Award, Australian Spinal Research Foundation.

Even after death she is looking after international students as a humanitarian.

May she rest in peace.

### **But never forgotten**

When Mary Ann had passed away, Vickie Palmer donated USD5,000 to a memorial fund.

I was able to build up that fund to some USD 60,000 and named it the *Chance Peters Heritage Endowment Scholarship Fund*.

Monies earned from the Endowment Fund are earmarked for awards and scholarships to international students.

The Selection Criteria are:

- ▶ The scholarship(s) shall be awarded to a Palmer College of Chiropractic full-time international student in good standing on the Davenport Campus
- ▶ Students must be enrolled in the 4<sup>th</sup> trimester or above
- ▶ Applicants must be involved in extra-curricular activities
- ▶ Preference will be given to students with financial need or if the student has shown great leadership in college activities, the scholarship could be given as an honor award, rather than financial need.
- ▶ The successful applicant will be selected without regard to race, age, or religious or sexual preference in accordance with the affirmative action guidelines or policies of Palmer College of Chiropractic.

#### *The Amount of the Award:*

The amount of the award will be a minimum of \$1,000, with the maximum being subject to the annual amount available, not to exceed the amount of one standard approved academic term's tuition.

### **The meaning of life**

The title promises an explanation of why chiropractic is what it is in Australia today. The Editor touched on this in his preface, but in summary it is because Mary Ann Chance drove a rigorous forum for debate and discussion in the profession at the time it was nascent with legislation and education emerging.

In fact Dr Chance was an early instructor with the *International College of Chiropractic*, the forerunner to *RMIT University's* program. Always looking to a better tomorrow, as a pedantic editor she nurtured a new generation of writers, of which there are many.

Rolf E Peters  
OAM, DC, MSc(Res)  
Executive Editor, Asia-Pac Chiropr J  
Editor Emeritus Chiropr J Aust

---

**Cite:** Peters R. The reason for remembering significant people: The story of Mary Ann Chance and why our profession is what it is in Australia today. *Asia-Pac Chiropr J*. 2020;1.1 URL [apcj.net/History/#PetersALoveStory](http://apcj.net/History/#PetersALoveStory)