

I grew up with my mom telling me that anything was possible, and a father who strongly encouraged me to do the right thing. As a youngster, I was drawn to those bound to a wheelchair or affected by some type of health challenge. Though not understanding my urge to reach out, it became clear I wanted to help, through touch.

Fast forward to my time at UCLA many years later. Kinesiology seemed a good major, as I prepared for some sort of healing profession. I resisted approaches that required only minimal physical contact, writing scripts or talk therapy, and was not fond of scalpels and blood, particularly if it involved working on those who were not in condition to talk back.

Assuming good grades would be necessary for success, in addition to the post graduate studies needed, I graduated as Salutatorian in the college of Bachelors and Science. However, my frustration mounted by my Junior year, as I was still confused about my next steps. Just months away from graduation, I applied to the Physical Therapy program at San Francisco State University and was accepted. UCLA had a rehab hospital, so I headed off to observe there. Instead of experiencing an atmosphere of hope and excitement, a day at the ward left me depressed; I was certain that this was not my calling. Most of the patients were either victims of motorcycle accidents with brain injuries, or amputees. While improvement and rehabilitation was certainly possible for these folks, the path involved was too slow for my temperament.

Graduation was looming, with still no direction. Westwood, the home of UCLA, had many alternative opportunities for learning. At the end of my senior year, I enrolled in the Los Angeles School of Massage. At that time, only 100 hours were required for graduation, in contrast to the 500 plus needed today. It was clear to me that this profession would demand more rigorous training to become truly competent, but I completed it, nonetheless and gained tools in therapeutic touch that would prove to be useful in the long run.

Down the street from my apartment was a premier school of Jin Shin Do, run by Iona and Ron Teegarden. Iona still teaches today and is considered one of that disciplines' outstanding practitioners. I launched into this training of acupressure. The art of using finger tip pressure along the meridians to support healing definitely allowed me to gain respect for the power of moving energy or chi. At the end of this training, I felt one step closer to finding my way, but this work seemed too slow and the results a bit too intangible. I felt intuitively that there was a profession that would allow me to touch people and see measurable changes more quickly. As I look back now, my impatience served me well in my pursuit!

Graduation had come and gone and my father was now showing concern. The checks to supplement my room and board had stopped coming as it was my turn to support myself. I worked as a waitress in an upscale steak house. Wealthy clientele and their tips kept me afloat, but I was treading water. My father offered to pay for medical school. This incredibly generous offer looked tempting, but I knew it was the wrong path for me. Orthodox medicine was not my passion. There had to be a better healing path for me than writing scripts for medication.

An unexpected event that happened next was nothing short of a miracle. One sunny afternoon, while standing at a crosswalk waiting for the light to change, my eyes were drawn to a very tall man standing to my left. He was at least six feet tall, but with his Sikh turban, he looked seven feet tall. A Caucasian Sikh was not an uncommon sight in Santa Monica, but somehow his unusual presence caught my attention. I looked up to the left and caught his smile. He simply said, "Do you want to come and watch me where I work?" Dumbfounded, to my surprise, I quickly said "Yes," and we walked in silence for three blocks to his office. One would think that a few more questions might have been appropriate before I blindly following a stranger to an unknown destiny, but on that day, it seemed like the right thing to do, to follow along in silence and without question.

When we approached his office, I did not bother to study the writing on the door or look for a sign. Instead, we walked in, to find a man perched uncomfortably on a chair in the reception area. My new friend asked him to come down the hall, signaling me to follow. I watched carefully as he listened compassionately to this gentleman's story about how he ended up bent over and in pain. The Sikh then moved him around on the examination table, exploring his limitations. What happened next took me by surprise. It seemed to my un-

trained eye that he pounced on this man, followed by a great cracking sound emanating from his lower back. The man got off the table much quicker than when he got on, this time with a smile on his face and standing much straighter.

I had a sense of excitement as we walked down the hall to find his next patient. This time, a woman was holding her head in her hands. When the Sikh asked her to follow him back, it was clear she had been crying. Still, no words had been exchanged between this mystery man and myself. He guided her back to the room with a hand on her shoulder, turned down the lights, and began listening to her story. As he had done for the gentleman before, after a period of listening, he carefully started moving her neck and shoulders and feeling her spine. While gently holding her head one moment, he asked her to breathe and with lightning speed, moved her head to the right, and another great crack was heard, this time emanating from her neck. She instantly began to cry and my spirit was touched with concern. I felt that perhaps the expectation of success with this method was too good to be true. But then, I realized she was crying with happiness as she informed him her headache was finally gone.

Walking back down the hall, I tapped him on the shoulder. "What are you?" Up to that point I had never had any interaction with a Chiropractor, having only heard that they were quacks. He smiled and explained he was a Chiropractor and he was restoring the natural ability of his patients to heal. He then encouraged me to attend a spinal care class that evening. Sitting in that room, I finally realized without a shadow of a doubt, that I had found my calling. The next step was to go about planning for my education.

I loved the West Coast, but wanted out of the Los Angeles area. I learned of a new Chiropractic college in Sunnyvale, near the city of San Jose, called Northern California College of Chiropractic. It was located not far from where I grew up, so I matriculated at my first opportunity. My commitment to good grades at UCLA made this an easy accomplishment. Because the school was so new, the college had not yet been recognized by the Council on Chiropractic Education, but I know it would only be a matter of time, and I was right to have chosen to study there.

Having no money at the time did not deter me. I found two jobs, one teaching exercise classes at a nearby gym, and one waiting tables at another fine restaurant. Thankfully, the college did manage to achieve accreditation late in my studies, which allowed me to secure a \$5,000 loan, tiny by comparison to the student debt today.

The moment I sat down in the chair that first day at school, I felt at home. My father was concerned that his daughter would throw her life away pursuing such a poorly understood discipline. However, this upset was soon set aside after he developed acute lower back pain, and was unable to find a cure through allopathic medicine. After much distress, he traveled down to the college where I had my good friend and mentor, Dr. Ed Cremata, care for him and resolve his condition. Ed was not yet graduated, but his commitment to chiropractic and his skill set helped my dad immediately feel much better. To this day, my dad still gets regular chiropractic care. My heartfelt thanks goes out to Dr. Cremata, who continues to do amazing work today, for that important and strategic success!

Since that magical day long ago when I met my 7 foot tall Chiropractic friend, his identity and location have remained a mystery to me, in spite of my attempts to locate him. I hope that this book somehow ends up in his hands one day, so that he will know of my eternal gratitude for taking that chance to reach out to me way back when, on that sunny day in Los Angeles. In turn, my husband, Dr. Dana Weary and I have trained several young people over our 30 plus years in practice, as we try to honor those who paved the way for us. As our younger docs grow to become successful in their careers and healing abilities, we feel grateful for the opportunity to "pay it forward" and invest in the future of this wonderful profession!