

James F. McGinnis, D.C., N.D., C.P. (1873-1947), Spinographer, Educator, Marketer & Bloodless Surgeon

Slide 1: NICR logo

Acknowledgments

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Introduction

James Franklin McGinnis was born at Iowa City, Iowa on 25 July 1873, the eldest of 15 children of Joseph William McGinnis and Clara Eleanor Donaldson McGinnis. Little is known of his early life. He grew up in small-town Iowa, and as a young man took up photography, probably at the Luscombe studio in Iowa City. McGinnis married in the late 1890s and several sons were born in the first years of the new century.

He divorced sometime during 1902-1904, and married Edna Clara McGill in 1904. Edna bore him twin daughters, Neola Clara and Leola Madonna, on 14 June 1909 in Iowa City. At about the same time McGinnis enrolled at the Palmer School of Chiropractic (PSC) in Davenport, and earned his doctorate in November, 1910. Among his contemporaries in the 12 month curriculum was

Slide 2: Sylva Ashworth

Sylva Ashworth, who earned her DC on May 31 of that year. Edna McGinnis, James' wife, is listed in chiropractic directories in later years as a "DC," and we assume she also graduated from the Palmer School. McGinnis mentioned that he "knew D.D.Palmer very well," but none of the details of their relationship are known to me.

Slide 3: DD & BJ

Slide 4: BJ atop the world

Slide 5: BJ lecture poster

During McGinnis' years in Davenport the "Fountain Head" of chiropractic schools was experiencing considerable innovation and dissatisfaction. In 1910, B.J. Palmer brought the first x-ray equipment to the PSC, a Scheidel-Western instrument. Some faculty and students considered X-ray a form of "mixing," since it violated the notion that chiropractic meant "done

by hand.” It has been suggested that it was the introduction of X-ray that prompted the formation of the Universal Chiropractic College (UCC), but this is not certain.

Slide 6: Joy Loban, D.C., circa 1908

It is known that **Joy M. Loban**, D.C. resigned as chairman of the PSC’s philosophy department and as assistant editor of *The Chiropractor* in order to lead the rebellion that produced the rival institution.

Palmer gave his first lectures on X-ray in April, 1910, and hired McGinnis to work as school photographer and spinographer soon after his graduation in November that year. By this time, BJ’s Spinographic Department had already taken some 2,000 x-ray exposures. Soon thereafter, the first spinography instruction, an elective course, was introduced, with McGinnis and C.C. Adams, D.C. serving as teachers. Although BJ may be credited as the first “spinographer,” McGinnis deserves recognition as one of the first spinography instructors. Family members’ recollections suggest that McGinnis may have also worked in the X-ray laboratory at Iowa State University during his two or three years on the PSC faculty. He was employed by the Rock Island Arsenal during the First World War, possibly as a photographer.

By late 1913 or early 1914 McGinnis had moved his family to Rockwell City, Iowa, where he set up his own practice and began to advertise extensively in the manner taught at the PSC. His ads brought him to the attention of the local medical community, with predictable results. A newspaper clipping reveals his legal entanglements for unlicensed practice, his Palmer straight orientation, and his willingness to sarcastically mock his persecutors. Like so many DCs of his day, he was fearless in the face of medical harassment.

McGinnis took an active role in organizing the profession. He was elected an official of the Iowa Chiropractors’ Association, and when this group merged with the Iowa Federation of Chiropractors in 1914, McGinnis served as president of the newly formed United Chiropractors of Iowa. (Otis E. Cronk, D.C., who served for many years on the PSC faculty, was second vice-president during McGinnis’ term as chief executive officer.)

McGinnis was a staunch supporter of the PSC and the UCA, and a frequent contributor to the *Fountain Head News (FHN)*, BJ’s personal newsletter. His innovative advertising efforts continued and expanded after his move to Maquoketa, Iowa on 1 November 1915. The

newsletter that McGinnis established for mass distribution to his patients, their friends and other chiropractors, entitled *Chiropractic, Palmer System*, earned BJ's admiration. By March, 1917, Palmer had purchased the advertiser and renamed it *The Chiropractic Educator*; it continued in publication for decades.

McGinnis continued to confront the medical community in Maquoketa, Iowa. The *FHN* reported that he sustained at least one conviction, in 1916, but his 1917 trial resulted in a "hung jury." During America's participation in World War I, McGinnis petitioned Newton T. Baker, U.S. Secretary of War, for a commission in the Army's Medical Corps, but once more came up against the medical oligarchy and was rebuffed.

McGinnis' expertise in photography led to him to establish the Chiropractors' Moving Picture Association (CMPA) in 1918. The organization grew out of early efforts to film the PSC's annual lyceum parade. McGinnis served as secretary of the society, in which capacity he essentially ran the organization for several years. The CMPA grew to more than 300 members,

Slide 7: James R. Drain, D.C.

including such notables as **James R. Drain**, D.C. (future president of Texas Chiropractic College), **Sylva L. Ashworth**, D.C. (matriarch of the Cleveland

Slide 8: Sylva Ashworth, D.C., 1918

family of chiropractors) and Charles E. Caster, D.C., a leader among Iowa chiropractors and grandson of the magnetic practitioner whose work had inspired D.D. Palmer to take up healing.

During the flu epidemic which swept the nation following World War I, McGinnis, like many chiropractors, ministered to the ailing. Housecalls by doctors were still common despite the quarantines imposed upon flu patients. McGinnis reported to the readers of the *FHN* about a number of his successful cases that had been given up for gone by medical practitioners.

McGinnis' referred a number of students to his alma mater. Among these was a young man who came to him with a diagnosis of appendicitis, and apparently benefited from McGinnis' adjustments. The young man was Forrest C. Shaklee, who earned his degree

from the PSC in 1915 and soon thereafter bought McGinnis' Rockwell City practice. Dr. Shaklee was later came to be known for the food supplements company he founded: the Shaklee Corporation.

Slide 9: McGinnis: "The Big Office"

California Bound

By 1921 McGinnis had relocated his family and practice to Santa Barbara, California for reasons unknown. The first few years of the 1920s were very harried for California chiropractors, who were seeking a licensing law to prevent the persecution from organized medicine. McGinnis joined with Palmer and his West Coast followers in a call to "Storm All Jails," which meant, to flood the jails with mail addressed to incarcerated chiropractors. McGinnis was arrested in early April, 1922, in a sweep of arrests made by an agent of the Board of Medical Examiners. He was released after posting \$100 bail. Whether his case came to trial or not is unknown, but in November of that year the citizens of the Golden State passed a chiropractic act by means of popular vote.

Slides 10 & 11: office scenes in Santa Barbara

Soon after passage of the chiropractic law in California, McGinnis became a co-owner of the newly formed Golden State College of Chiropractic. Located in Los Angeles, it was one of many such for-profit institutions which sprang up in anticipation of legalization of the profession and in response to the federal government's tuition benefits for veterans of World War 1. Among the best known of the Golden State College's faculty members was physiology instructor John L. Hurley, D.C., future co-author of *Aquarian Age Healing*, a book dealing with bio-mechanics, from which Logan Basic Technique is said to have derived.

Slide 12: T.F. Ratledge, D.C.

The Golden State College purported to be a straight chiropractic institution, and featured "Palmer System Chiropractic." This would have been consistent with McGinnis' adherence to BJ's ideology of Innate Intelligence. However,

Slide 13: Ratledge, BJ & Compton, 1931

rival school leader **T.F. Ratledge** questioned just how "straight" the Golden State College actually was, noting that many of its faculty members were hard-core "mixers."

The Golden State College boasted a curriculum 50% in excess of the 2,400 hours of training required by California's statute. The institution graduated its first class in May, 1924, comprised of 7 new chiropractors and 3 "post-graduates." The valedictory speech, entitled "Uncharted Seas," was delivered by Mabelle Kelso Shaw. Dr. Shaw, who later earned a naturopathic doctorate as well, became very well known and admired among generations of students as a faculty member of the College of Chiropractic Physicians & Surgeons of Los Angeles, one of the ancestor institutions of today's LACC.

The Golden State College was one of several schools which clashed with B.J. Palmer over the neurocalometer. The Pacific coast school directly challenged the "Developer's" claims to an exclusive patent for the spinal heat-sensing instrument. Golden State's dean and treasurer, Edwin C. Fortin, served as "exclusive Pacific Coast Representative" for the "neuropyrometer," a similar device manufactured by the Wm. Meyer X-Ray Company of Chicago. Moreover, the rival instrument was prominently advertised in the College's magazine, the *Golden State Chiropractic Message*. Fortin explained that his College felt compelled to adopt the competitor instrument because BJ had supposedly restricted his instrument to Palmer students and graduates; this claim may have been incorrect. In any case, the episode marks the earliest known occasion that McGinnis would have been, however indirectly, at odds with his former mentor in Davenport.

Slide 14: BJ Palmer

McGinnis had been pleased to welcome **BJ** to California just a few months earlier during Palmer's 1924 tour of the West Coast. The Drs. McGinnis drove to Los Angeles in February, stayed the night at BJ and **Mabel's** hotel, and drove

Slide 15: Mabel Palmer

the Iowa couple to Santa Barbara the following day. In anticipation of a public lecture that Palmer was to give, McGinnis filled the Santa Barbara newspapers with promotional ads.

Slide 16: Charles H. Wood, 1917

The Golden State College did not last for long. At the end of 1924, the school was purchased by Charles H. Wood, D.C., N.D. Wood, who founded the Eclectic College of Chiropractic in Los Angeles in 1917, had already purchased

Slide 17: Eclectic College of Chiropractic

the LACC, combining the Eclectic College with the LACC and retaining the latter's name. In this sense, then, McGinnis can be seen as one of the forefathers of today's LACC.

Slide 18: Charles H. Wood, circa 1930

From Palmer Straight to Super Mixer

Sometime between 1925 and 1935 McGinnis' orientation as a chiropractor changed, and he adopted a broad scope "philosophy." In 1926 he earned the scorn of straight chiropractors when he applied for a license as a drugless practitioner from California's Board of Medical Examiners (BME). Not later than October, 1935, McGinnis began to advertise his practice of "bloodless surgery" in the state's mixer journal, *The Scientific Chiropractor*. About the same there appeared in this magazine a series of ads from McGinnis' former patient, Forrest C. Shaklee, D.C., Ph.C., who offered "Bloodless Operative Correction" at his Shaklee Foundation on Broadway in Oakland, California. Shaklee's technique involved an "operative lens" sold for \$25 and various "secrets of Bloodless Operative Technique." Whatever cross-fertilization may have existed in theory and method between McGinnis and Shaklee is not known to this writer.

Slide 19: McGinnis in Indianapolis, 1938

One of many demonstrations of bloodless surgery by McGinnis, conducted in July, 1938 in **Indianapolis**, appeared on the cover of the June, 1991 issue of *Chiropractic History*.

McGinnis' interest in bloodless surgery paralleled that a dozen other free-lance chiropractic instructors in the 1930s and 1940s. Best known among these were:

- Thomas T. Lake, D.C., N.D. of Philadelphia, and
- Major B. **DeJarnette**, D.O., D.C., future founder of the Sacro-Occipital Technique

Slide 20: DeJarnette, circa 1939

DeJarnette collaborated with Randolph Stone, D.O. of Chicago in developing his non-surgical, operative procedures, and published a textbook entitled *Technic and Practice of Bloodless Surgery*. Commencing also in 1939, he edited and published the *Journal of Bloodless Surgery*, which featured articles from his pen and those of Stone and Richard Van Rump, D.C. of New York City.

Slide 21: Francis Kolar at 1944 CCA banquet with Ralph Martin DC, ND

Another well-remembered chiropractic bloodless surgeon was Francis J. **Kolar** of Wichita, Kansas. Kolar may have been a student of Viennese orthopedist Adolf Lorenz. Kolar developed a thriving practice, with a clientele referred by chiropractors from around the nation who had seen him demonstrate his methods at state and national conventions, or had encountered his extensive advertising in the National Chiropractic Association's *Journal*. In the early 1940s Kolar relocated his practice to Southern California. There

Slide 22: Chirogram

he advertised his bloodless surgery methods in the LACC's **Chirogram**. Like McGinnis, Kolar made use of special goggles to produce "anesthesia," and advertised extensively.

McGinnis advertised and demonstrated his bloodless surgery skills throughout California, the United States and Canada. He made liberal use of testimonials, including praise from nationally known chiropractor Annie Farmer, D.C. of the Bon-Aire Sanitarium in San Antonio, Texas.

Slide 23: Chiropractic Painless, Bloodless Examination by Dr. McGinnis

McGinnis' methods involved stethoscopes used to locate adhesions in the "stomach, spleen, colon, uterus, intestines or liver." Chromotherapy, involving colored light, was thought to produce relaxation of the viscera and associated nerves. Bloodless surgery involved external manipulation of internal organs in order to "break adhesions," which were thought to produce "nerve impingement," drooping of various internal organs, obstruction of blood and lymph, and toxic effects, presumably including cancer. McGinnis claimed that:

Such conditions as Gall Stones, Adhesions, Congestion, Tumors, Diverticula, Abscesses, Goitres, Constipation, Prolapsed Viscera, Prostate and Lung Trouble, Enlarged Glands (Thyroid, Liver, Pancreas, Spleen, Prostate), High and Low Blood Pressure, and many other abnormal developments respond readily to the Advanced methods of today.

Slide 24: Chiropractic Painless, Bloodless Operation by Dr. McGinnis

Slide 25: Chiropractic Blood Examination by Dr. McGinnis

One of his many demonstrations took place in a hotel in Salt Lake City on 26 May 1937; a promotional piece explained that:

Prior to the operation Dr. McGinnis explained that adhesions were the result of nature's efforts to give strength to weak organs...that many cases of constipation, particularly following a surgical operation, were the result of the formation of adhesions which constrict the bowel and partially close it, or bind the intestinal muscles in such a way that normal movement is impossible. Adhesions frequently produce female troubles, prolapsus or fallen organs, and even tumors...The patient was a lady 40 years of age who had suffered from constipation and pain in the region near her right hip following a previous knife operation...The abdominal area only was exposed. The doctor used a peg-leg stethoscope, and after adjusting it to his ear he struck a tuning fork on a hard surface, and while it was vibrating he placed it against the abdomen and by repeated soundings commenced locating the adhesions. Their presence was verified by palpation and also by certain movements of the abdomen...special colored goggles were fitted over the eyes of the patient, through which she looked at a bright light. This produced complete relaxation of the abdominal tract and a desensitized condition of the abdomen without the patient's losing consciousness...With deftness the doctor's fingers made contact with the correct spot for the detachment of the adhesions. The necessary movements were performed and the adhesion gave a perceptible "SNAP" and rapidly curled up under the skin.

Slide 26: Chiropractic Bloodless Prostate Operation by Dr. McGinnis
DON'T WORRY - WE'RE NEAR THE END

McGinnis organized the Association of Drugless and Bloodless Manipulative Surgeons of America, "incorporated under Federal Law in the District of Columbia." The Association issued certificates indicating proficiency in bloodless surgery. Dr. Paul Smallie notes that McGinnis formed the Advanced Manipulative Chiropractic Educational Association in Los Angeles in September, 1943. The activities of this organization are not know to this writer, but it continued in operation for several years.

Not later than January, 1940, McGinnis began to promot himself as a "Chirothesian Practitioner." What a chirothesian practitioner was is not exactly clear from his advertising, but he declared that:

A simple weekly lesson each week will give you all the FREEDOM you will require, better than any law which has ever been enacted. Believe it or not there is FREEDOM without question.

Start the new year of 1940 right, get new knowledge and FREEDOM at the same time. One attorney who has won 64 chiropractic cases without a loss says its good if followed...

I will continue my work of teaching and show you how to have FREEDOM. FREEDOM.

Perhaps McGinnis' new "discipline" was a response to the recent court rulings in California, particularly the "MacGranaghan Precise Construction Case," which threatened to limit chiropractors to a relatively "straight" scope of practice. Speculatively, the chirothesian practice may have been an attempt to practice under religious exemption clauses of various states. In any case, McGinnis represented himself as a "chirothesian teacher," "chirothesian practitioner," or simply "C.P." for the next few years. By 1944, however, when he announced that he had "retired from the road," the "C.P." designation had been dropped.

Slide 27: Pioneers Club meeting at NCA convention in Indianapolis, 1936; Sylva L. Ashworth, D.C. is seated sixth from left in front row; James N. Firth, D.C. is fourth from left in second row; C. Sterling Cooley, D.C. is fifth from right in second row; James F. McGinnis, D.C., N.D. is fourth from right in second row (from the NCA's *Journal*, September, 1936, p. 8)

McGinnis' ads for his bloodless surgery were concentrated in the NCA's *Journal* and in the *Journal of the California Chiropractic Association*. He was friends with Loran M. Rogers, D.C., editor of the NCA's periodical, and a steadfast supporter of the NCA. He regularly attended the NCA's annual conferences, where he often demonstrated his "bloodless" methods.

McGinnis' idea of "the chiropractic principle" was broader than ultra-straight college president T.F. Ratledge's notion of "obstructive nerve pressure." This is quite clear in a 1941 exchange of letters with Ratledge, who decried McGinnis' advocacy of "drugless therapy." McGinnis argued that bloodless surgery was consistent with D.D. Palmer's mandate to manipulate any anatomical displacement.

Slide 28: James F. McGinnis, D.C., N.D., C.P., circa 1940

Conclusion

An educator to the very end, Dr. James F. McGinnis died on 16 August 1947 while on a teaching tour of California's San Joaquin Valley. He was 74 years of age. Throughout his 37-year career as a chiropractor he repeatedly came to the attention of the profession as an innovator in clinical technique and marketing methods. Like many DCs who did not abruptly reject B.J. Palmer's leadership, McGinnis' allegiance to the UCA seems to have led him further from his Davenport mentor.

Unanswered by this investigation are the factors that turned McGinnis from his earlier, straight chiropractic roots to the much broader scope of practice that he later embraced. The source of his naturopathic training remains a mystery. Finally, the meaning of McGinnis' "chirothesian practitioner" designation has yet to be determined. In conclusion, James McGinnis merits further attention as one of the forgotten pioneers of the profession.

I'd like to thank you for your attention, and take this occasion to recognize Dr. McGinnis' grand-daughter, who is here with us today: Ms. Bonnie Beaver.

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