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A Profession for 'Bohemian Chiropractic': Oakley Smith and the Evolution of Naprapathy

MERWYN V. ZARBUCK, D.C.*

The author has spent some two years researching the public library and museum archives of Illinois and Iowa to trace the career of Oakley Smith (1880-1967), an early graduate of D.D. Palmer who later attended medical school and with S.M. Langworthy and M.L. Paxson founded the American School of Chiropractic in Cedar Rapids in 1904. Later Smith would discover and formulate his own separate and distinct health practice, based upon Bohemian movements and thrusts, coining it as naprapathy. The survival of naprapaths, at least in Illinois, are discussed along with Smith's impact on early manipulative healing trends.

Naprapathy is a drugless system of treating human ailments discovered in 1905. The theory underlying it is that many of the ailments of the human body are due to a tightened or shrunken condition of a ligament; that such a condition is referred to as a ligatight, and where it takes place near a nerve it brings a mechanical tension on that nerve and induces an abnormal function. This conception of human ailments is peculiar to the system of naprapathy and is one of its fundamental principles.¹

Naprapathy was founded in 1905 by Oakley Smith, D.C., who graduated in 1899 from D.D. Palmer's School and Cure at Davenport, Iowa. The development of naprapathy was preceded by Dr. Smith's association with two other early graduates of D.D. Palmer; Minora C. Paxson, D.C. and Solon Massey Langworthy, D.C.² In the 1903-1904 period, Drs. Smith and Paxson joined the faculty of the American School of Chiropractic and Nature Cure in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, founded by Dr. Langworthy sometime in 1903.³ Langworthy's school departed from D.D. Palmer's chiropractic model in several areas that culminated in sharp disagreement in the chiropractic profession.

The naprapathic scenario requires an understanding of D.D. Palmer's chiropractic principles, the manipulative practices of the last century, and the impact of the personnel and departure of Langworthy's American School.

The founder established chiropractic as a science, art, and philosophy, and in his precise manner defined his terms.⁴ Chiropractic science was delineated as an accumulation of biological, anatomical and physiological facts systematized as principles.⁵ The facts were assimilated from allopathic, homeopathic, eclectic, and orthopedic texts current in D.D. Palmer's lifetime. The references to

text and author sources cited in D.D. Palmer's book, *The Adjustor* have been partly investigated and are voluminous in size and number. Principles were also formulated from biology, natural philosophy (physics) medical and standard dictionaries and other healing arts. D.D. Palmer often stated that the facts and principles were not new, but that he organized them in a logical matter to establish the chiropractic science, art and philosophy.

Chiropractic art was defined as the act of doing or "something to be done".⁶ The "something to be done" was the act of osseous adjustment, the replacement of displaced vertebrae by using the spinous and transverse processes as levers to rack subluxated vertebrae into normal position. This was a singular manual movement, one move, designed to replace a displaced vertebrae by one designed directional thrust to remove a nerve impingement.⁷

Chiropractic philosophy was stated to be (1) the understanding of the principles and facts of the chiropractic science and art; (2) the understanding of anatomical osseous displacements and their relationship to nerve passageways and relationships; (3) the knowledge of the cause of unexplained occurrences of body dysfunction and disease in the chiropractic sense, and the reasons for such occurrences; (4) the knowledge of the vital energies and forces of the nervous system and the life process, and (5) the natural philosophy (physics) of universal laws.⁸

Manipulation was in the last century and in D.D. Palmer's time commonly used by allopathic, homeopathic, eclectic, and particularly orthopedic physicians and as the basic treatment of other healing arts. Such healing arts included naturopathy, Swedish gymnastics (Ling), kलगrenism, physocultopathy (McFadden), osteopathy, magnetic healing, suggestive therapeutics, manual therapeutics, hygienics, neuropsychology, ophthalmology, mechanotherapy, and others. The following definitions reflect the manipulative concepts of that time.

Manipulation was defined as: "The act of doing with

*In private practice, Urbana, Illinois.

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Correspondence to: 711 West Springfield, Urbana, Illinois 61801.

the hands; an operation or experiment in which the hands are particularly employed; dexterity in such acts. A Method of reducing dislocations, hernia and of treating aneurysms; massage,"⁹ and a Manipulator was defined as "one who manipulates; a masseur or masseuse."¹⁰

Massage was defined as a "method of effecting changes in the local and general nutrition, action and other functions of the body, by rubbing, kneading, and other manipulation of the superficial parts of the body by the hand or an instrument,"¹¹ and Friction Massage was defined as "superficial rubbing."¹²

Manipulation was a series of manual repetitive movements; massage-like moves applied by hand. Gradually, manipulation was extended, especially by orthopedic medical physicians, to include machines. The machines included literally hundreds of traction devices to apply repetitive moves and fix dislocations or deformities in a set position. The therapeutic purpose of traction was to reduce dislocation of bones and soft tissue and was the primary orthopedic treatment from 1880, particularly being developed into worldwide eminence by the American practice of orthopedic surgery, which was known as the "American Traction Method."¹³

The term applied more so in Europe was redressment, defined as: "the correlation of deformity, or replacement of a dislocated part."¹⁴ Two primary methods of redressment were extant; The French "redressment force," in which one or two mighty efforts corrected a displacement or deformity, which was then fixed in a corrected position by an appliance, usually a plastocast.¹⁵ The other was the German "modelling redressment" of a deformity or displacement, which consisted of hundreds of successive applications of measured and moderate force, to be continued until the displacement shows no tendency to return to its former displaced condition. The correction was then fixed in the corrected position usually by a plastocast.¹⁶

The latter method was used by Dr. Adolph Lorenz, orthopedic surgeon from Vienna, at a demonstration of redressment of a congenital displacement of the hip joint of the Armour girl in Chicago on October 12, 1902.¹⁷ D.D. Palmer, Minora Paxson and Oakley Smith were in Chicago at the time and were familiar with the redressment procedure.¹⁸ Possibly, Langworthy observed Dr. Lorenz in Davenport in December of 1902.

D.D. Palmer drew a sharp distinction between manipulation and the chiropractic adjustment.¹⁹ This was because of his vast knowledge, rather than a deficient knowledge of the various forms of manual and mechanical manipulation. The chief difference drawn was that the adjustment was one manual move or thrust predetermined to correct an osseous, usually vertebral displacement without subsequent casting.

Manipulation was a series of repetitive manual or mechanical moves on any body tissue to treat, reduce or

modify deformities, dislocations, herniae, circulation, muscles, nerves, ligaments, etc. D.D. Palmer's chiropractic adjustment was corrective in nature.

German redressment consists of repetitive moves. French redressment force was a singular corrective manual move, but both German and French redressment required and mandated subsequent casting, whereas D.D. Palmer deemed it totally unnecessary. The singular manual move principle was thus derived from the French redressment force, but with no casting. An investigation of D.D. Palmer's literary sources²⁰ shows his vast knowledge of manipulation. As a magnetic healer, 1885-1895, prior to his discovery of chiropractic, D.D. Palmer did use nerve massage, at that time often labeled "nerve vibration." The term vibration was defined by D.D. Palmer's time as:

A swinging, oscillation, or thrill, like that of a string of a musical instrument; fremitus. In massage, a modification of the kneading movement. It consists of making the alternative successive pressures and relaxations with very great rapidity. This may be done by hand, but it is better performed by means of some form of machine.²¹

D.D. Palmer distinguished the chiropractic adjustment from any form of manipulation and the adjustment was held as the basis of the chiropractic art, as illustrated by this 1904 declaration:

There is no rubbing, slapping, knife, drugs, artificial heat, electricity, magnetism, hypnotism, stretching or mental treatment, in fact nothing but the adjustment of the displaced vertebrae. The adjustment is almost instantaneous. The movements are unique and Chiropractic in every respect, no other system has anything similar.²²

The founding of the American School of Chiropractic and Nature Cure at Cedar Rapids, Iowa circa 1903 by Solon Langworthy, D.C., was the first "mixing" of other manipulative methods of D.D. Palmer's singular, specific and instantaneous adjustic art. American traction methods, some forms of German redressment,²³ and eventually "Napravit" methods were added. "Napravit" was a peasant practice in which the Bohemians (Czechs) massaged and even walked upon each other's backs.²⁴

Dr. Langworthy, and faculty members Minora Paxson and Oakley Smith collaborated to publish a book titled *Modernized Chiropractic* that stated that "every fundamental Chiropractic original idea (with meagre exceptions) was gained - either borrowed or stolen directly from the Bohemians." The account further intimated that Dr. Lorenz's "modelling redressment" was "Bohemian Chiropractic." The first division from the

Palmer chiropractic became modernized and labeled Bohemian Chiropractic,"²⁵ which preceded the development of naprapathy by Oakley Smith.

The addition of "Nature Cure" or Natural Healing by the American School also "mixed" other healing methods with the science of chiropractic. This first departure established the difference of opinion regarding the scope of chiropractic practice. The two positions in their furthest extremes being — the adjustic correction of nerve impingements as the cause of disease or the treatment of human ailments by any or all drugless or nonsurgical methods.

D.D. Palmer's reaction was almost predictable. Bohemian Chiropractic had insulted his research and development of the adjustic art. Possibly Langworthy confused Bohemia in Czechoslovakia with Sweden in the Scandanavian peninsula, and consequently Bohemian massage with the "movement cure," developed by the Swedish physician, H.P. Ling.²⁶ Ling's "movement cure," developed in the middle of the nineteenth century, was also known as the Swedish system;²⁷ Ling's system, gymnastics, kinesipathy, kinesotherapy or Swedish movements.²⁸

There was a Chicago Movement Cure School in Chicago, Illinois on the ninth floor of 120 North Randolph Street in 1907.²⁹ These were the offices of William Schulze, D.D., hired in 1910 by the National School of Chiropractic, becoming president of that institution in 1916 and serving in that capacity until 1936.

Dr. Ling, noting the prodigious strength of the Northmen in ancient classics, was led to the development of his system. There were several thousand of these remedial movements and among them were friction, vibration, and percussion. Massage, shampoo, rubbing, and lifting were all borrowed from this system.³⁰

The movement cure was introduced in the United States about 1860.³¹ Chiropractic or hand practice was known for its use of only one specific movement for each disease, as early as 1899.³²

The competition in the "school business" between the Palmer School and the Langworthy school also included the charge of theft or plagiarism of a published testimonial letter of a grateful patient written to D.D. Palmer. According to Reverend S.M. Weed, the letter was republished by the head man of an opposition school, which consisted of three chiropractors that had been taught under D.D. Palmer. This happened a few years after Reverend Weed had named Chiropractic and the exact charge was that this chiropractor stole the testimonial and placed his name in place of D.D. Palmer's.³³ The culmination of these events possibly explains the unfavorable reaction of the Palmers.

The necrology of Solon Massey Langworthy has been described by Russell W. Gibbons.³⁴ Solon Langworthy had received a diploma from the American College of Manual Therapeutics in Kansas City, Missouri, as part of a

devotion to the study of various drugless treatments of disease.³⁵

A later impetus may have been the change in his wife's condition of insanity after two weeks of adjustments from D.D. Palmer. Solon Langworthy paid his friend D.D. Palmer fifteen dollars for these services.³⁶ Mrs. S.M. Langworthy of Dubuque, Iowa was listed in D.D. Palmer's day records on January 10 and January 17 of 1901. On July first of that year, Solon Langworthy paid D.D. Palmer five hundred dollars, the usual tuition for the course at the Chiropractic School and Cure.³⁷

Minora C. Paxson was born July 11, 1855, the daughter of Amos C. Paxson and Elizabeth Killmer Paxson at Lockport, Illinois.³⁸ The Will County 1880 census listed the occupation of Minora as a school teacher.³⁹

The 1890 Will County census is deficient, but the 1900 census lists the widow Elizabeth Paxson and the single Minora Paxson residing at 1325 Jefferson Street, Lockport, Illinois.⁴⁰ Ms. Paxson graduated from D.D. Palmer's first school and paid five hundred dollars cash for her education.⁴¹

Dr. Paxson evidently stayed in communication with D.D. Palmer and Dr. Smith, being present with them in Chicago, Illinois at the Lorenz demonstration on October 12, 1902.⁴² D.D. Palmer had returned from California, where he had gone from Davenport, Iowa to find Dr. Thomas Storey on June 14, 1902.⁴³ Dr. Paxson and Smith also attended a clinic conducted by D.D. Palmer in Suite 15 of the Aiken Block, Santa Barbara, California on July 1, 1903.⁴⁴

Dr. Paxson was licensed May 24, 1904 under the Illinois Medical Practice Act of 1899, being issued license number 438, declaring her method of drugless practice to be chiropractic.⁴⁵ Illinois chiropractors usually claim Minora Paxson to be the first licensed chiropractor in the world.

Dr. Paxson was licensed to practice midwifery by additional examinations. The 1889 Medical Practice Act provided that those authorized to practice midwifery should not use any drug or medicine; or attend other than normal cases of labor. The midwifery licensee, was not permitted to practice obstetrics, but could attend women during normal delivery.⁴⁶

Illinois law required licensees to record their licenses with the clerk of the county in which they resided.⁴⁷ Dr. Paxson originally recorded her license at Lockport in Will County, but transferred her license to Cook County, which contains Chicago, on December 2, 1905.⁴⁸ Possibly a coincidence, Oakley Smith had founded the Chicago College of Naprapathy in 1905, and dated the founding of the science of Naprapathy as November 11, 1905.⁴⁹

There is no information of Minora's whereabouts after 1905; unconfirmed sources state that she practiced in several small Iowa communities or that she returned to

Illinois to practice chiropractic and/or midwifery. These statements have not been verified at this time.

Oakley Smith (1880-1955), the founder of naprapathy, was a native of West Branch, Iowa. As a boy, Oakley had survived a severe bout with scarlet fever, which left him a frail, stunted youth. His parents, being of some means, sent him to every new physician any acquaintance had ever heard of, but Oakley remained in poor health.⁵⁰ Oakley Smith took adjustments from D.D. Palmer⁵¹ and found relief and graduated from the Palmer Chiropractic School and Cure in 1899.⁵² At age 19, he had begun attending classes at the University of Iowa Medical School in hopes of learning how to heal himself.⁵³

Oakley made an extended trip to Czechoslovakia in the early 1900s and observed a peasant practice known as Napravít, a system of back massage for the treatment of disease.⁵⁴ He instructed his brother Horton in spinal massage, and under Oakley's guidance, Horton applied his hands to sections of his brother's back, developing the future naprapathic techniques.⁵⁵ Dr. Smith believed that the ligament and connective tissues in the spinal column could become damaged or scarred and this damage resulted in the blockage of nerve impulses.⁵⁶

Oakley Smith was issued license number 440 on May 24, 1904, the same day as Minora Paxson, under the Illinois Medical Practice Act of 1899, Smith declaring his method of drugless practice to be chiropractic.⁵⁷

Dr. Smith's presence on the faculty of Langworthy's American School of Chiropractic and Nature Cure, very probably explains the deviation from Palmer's specific segmental adjustment. The traction and stretching methods being more therapeutic in stretching tight ligaments of the spinal column, accounts for the label or title of "Bohemian Chiropractic" to the American School.

Evidently, Oakley Smith continued his investigation of spinal ligamental nerve pressures while at the American School, for the founding of the science of naprapathy is generally believed to have occurred at 11:45 p.m., November 16, 1905, when Oakley Smith first observed a "ligatite" (tight ligament) in a section of spinal connective tissue under his microscope.⁵⁸ Oakley founded his Chicago College of Naprapathy in 1905. Minora Paxson transferred her license to Chicago several weeks later. Therefore, it is fair to assume that these two chiropractors were no longer associated with the Langworthy American School of Chiropractic and Nature Cure.

Oakley Smith devised a system of charting the areas of tension of the spine, which has developed into some six thousand metric measurements of the spine. Symptoagnosis is a naprapathic term that identifies and classifies physical disorders as suggested by symptomatic conditions. Naprapathic chardosis is a study of spinal and pelvic articular symptoms, evaluation of the connective tissue damage present and a specific manipulative treat-

ment for the suspected condition.⁵⁹

Naprapathy has been cited as a branch of chiropractic. Due to Dr. Smith's educational background and Bohemian chiropractic experience, this possibly could be postulated; but by 1910, D.D. and the naprapathic advocates had agreed that chiropractic and naprapathy were separate professions. A naprapathic publication stated: "Naprapathy should not be confounded with Chiropractic. There is no more similarity between chiropractic and naprapathy than there is between a wood sawyer and a carpenter."

D.D. Palmer fully agreed and remarked: "For a time this method (Naprapathy) was confused with Chiropractic, insomuch as the three originators took a course under the editor of this journal (D.D. Palmer)." Twelve differences in theory and method were then cited.⁶⁰

Naprapathy was recognized as a method of treating human ailments under the Illinois Medical Practice Act of 1899. Graduates of the Naprapathic school were eligible to be examined and licensed as "drugless healers" or "other practitioners," and applicants from 1909 to 1922 stated Naprapathy as their method of practice. With the event of the passage of the present Medical Practice Act (1923), there appears to be no new naprapathic licenses issued, but the licenses issued by the prior acts were left in force, unless such license holder exchanged such prior license for a license under the 1923 act. Naprapathy was therefore recognized as a method of treating human ailments by the State of Illinois for many years.⁶¹

One of the first cases (1924) testing the constitutionality of the Illinois Medical Practice Act of 1923 (present act) involved the utilization of the naprapathic system of treating human ailments. The defendant, represented by Clarence Darrow, was found guilty of practicing medicine without a license and fined five hundred dollars. The Illinois Supreme Court stated that the legislature when establishing the 1923 Medical Practice Act was confronted with the necessity of regulating the schools of medicine or medical practice then in existence and those which might arise in the future. The term "medicine" is used in its generic sense, and generally means healing arts.⁶²

An Illinois appellate court in 1926, hearing the appeal of a conviction of a naprapath for treating human ailments without a license by the naprapathic method, stated that the Department of Registration and Education has ample power to examine and license applicants for permission to practice naprapathy.⁶³

An investigator for the Department of Registration filed information charging a naprapath with attaching a title or some other word or abbreviation to his name that indicated he was engaged in the treatment of human ailments (1941). The titles allegedly used were D.N., Doctor, Naprapathic physician, and Naprapath. The Illinois Supreme Court held that giving out pamphlets describing a certain method of treating human ailments

and signing or stamping one's name is sufficient to constitute a violation of the Medical Practice Act.⁶⁴

Naprapathy and naturopathy are often confused because of similar phonetics, degree abbreviations, and their drugless and nonsurgical nature. The degree granted naprapaths is Doctor of Naprapathy (D.N.), while the naturopath is titled Naturopathic Doctor (N.D.) and often titled Naturopathic Physician. As stated previously, the historically fundamental tenet of naprapathy is the manipulation of ligatights to relieve tension and any abnormal neurological function.

Naturopathy has been defined as a system of treating the abnormalities of the human mind and body by the use of drugless and nonsurgical methods,⁶⁵ or as a practice of psychological, mechanical, and material sciences of healing, such as mechano-therapy, articular manipulation, corrective and orthopedic gymnastics, neurotherapy, physiotherapy, hydrotherapy, electrotherapy, thermotherapy, phototherapy, chromotherapy, vibrotherapy, concussion, pneumotherapy, dietetics and external applications (all without the use of drugs or surgery).⁶⁶ The educational requirements are attendance and graduation from a college of drugless therapeutics and are to include, amongst others, clinical and physical diagnosis, x-ray, dermatology and the study of mental disease.

In brief, naturopathy is the treatment of human ailments by any system or method without the use of any drugs or surgery. The naturopathic physician after establishing a drugless and nonsurgical diagnosis, selects from his armamentarium of drugless therapies to treat a particular diagnosed disease. This selection may or may not include some manipulation, or for that matter the manipulation of a ligatight. This contrasts sharply with the practice of naprapathy and its clearly stated basic tenet and of practice, the correction of the ligatight and its effects.

While Smith founded the Chicago College of Naprapathy in 1905, another college of naprapathy was formed in 1949, also in Chicago, and titled the National College of Naprapathy. In 1971, the schools merged and became the Chicago National College of Naprapathy,⁶⁷ which is still in existence. There are purportedly 800 to 1000 naprapaths practicing their art in northern Illinois.

In summary, naprapathy states that the altered or scarred connective tissue, particularly the "ligatight" is the cause of nerve or vascular impingement. D.D. Palmer's fundamental principle states that displaced bones, particularly of the vertebrae, is the cause of nerve impingement.

Naprapathic treatment is the repetitive manual massage of structurally altered connective tissue to relieve nerve and vascular impingement. D.D. Palmer's chiropractic art was the singular, instantaneous manual adjustment of osseous displacement, particularly vertebral displacements for the correction of nerve impingement. The adjustment was unique and exclusive to chiropractic.

The tenets of naprapathy included other drugless treatment methods and procedures, such as the use of botanical substances. The original chiropractic tenets included no other procedure than the manual adjustment of osseous displacements for the correction of nerve impingement.

Bohemian chiropractic was the transition from D.D.'s original chiropractic paradigm to the founding of naprapathy. This was one of the earliest efforts to change the original principles of chiropractic, which culminated in the formation of another healing art. Many such efforts occurred in those formative years of chiropractic. We hope further investigation and clarification will be forthcoming to clarify the history of chiropractic.

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