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Parker College Board "Removes" Dr. Jim Parker from Campus

Dr. Parker Sues Board Member and College's Legal Counsel

By Editorial Staff

Dr. James W. Parker, who recently celebrated 50 years in chiropractic (see "Dr. James Parker: A Remarkable 50 Years of Chiropractic Service," Aug. 15, 1996, DC), founded Parker College of Chiropractic in 1982, and succeeded in making the college debt free in its 13th year. The college was a natural extension of the Parker Seminar program that Dr. Parker inaugurated in 1951, which has enjoyed a long history of large chiropractic attendance.

But on March 31, 1997, the father of Parker College was removed from the campus by the Board of Trustees. While this event apparently coincided with Dr. James Parker's failure to sign a new contract with the Board, how did the dismissal come to pass?

When the Parker College Board of Trustees met on September 27, 1996, Chairman Robert Czopoth made a motion to depose Dr. James Parker as president of the college, give him the title of president emeritus, and appoint Dr. W. Karl Parker president of the college (see "Dr. W. Karl Parker Appointed President of Parker College," Oct. 21, 1996, DC). The Board passed the chairman's motion with three dissenting votes.

Robert Hildreth, DC, one of the dissenting Parker trustees has some strong feelings about that action:

"I have had the honor of serving on the Board of Trustees for over 12 years, and in the position of vice-chairman for 10 years. (I expect I will be 'kicked-off' the Board when this appears in print.)

"There are good reasons to suspect there was much planning by certain Board of Trustee members and nonmembers that resulted in Dr. Parker's dismissal as president. As an example, in the September 1996 Board meeting, the majority voted to add two new members to the Board, in violation of the by-laws which were in effect at the time. The addition insured the Board they would have a clear majority, even

though one of the new board members was not in attendance, but knowing he would be elected, gave his proxy to another Board member to dismiss Dr. James Parker. The vote was 3 to retain, 7 to dismiss.

"In January 1997, the Board decided to form an Executive Committee with certain powers and authority. This would be composed of the officers of the Board.

"In the March 1997 Board meeting, the majority of the Board voted to remove me as vice-chairman, and Dr. Cobian-Silver as treasurer. They retained the chairman and secretary and elected a new vice-chairman and a new treasurer. In effect the board 'stacked' the executive committee with its retention and 'new' members.

"I wonder if the Commission on Chiropractic Education, and the Southern Association of Schools and Colleges would be interested in how the Board of Trustees of Parker College of Chiropractic are governing this institution.

"I'm aware of the warnings (threats) to Dr. James Parker that he is not to make public announcements by statements or interviews with the press, or generally to the staff or student body, etc, etc.

"It appears the Board and others are paranoid regarding their actions against Dr. Jim, by issuing these threats.

"Ironically, if the Board has the audacity to dismiss such a great person as Dr. James W. Parker, what base they would have in dismissing Dr. Karl Parker in a year or so, when he doesn't matter anymore.

"Dr. James W. Parker is and has been 'Mr. Chiropractic' for many years. He revitalized the chiropractic profession in the 1950s, he saved chiropractic in the 1960s (remember?). He gave himself, his money, his love and devotion and commitment to principles when he founded school named after him, achieved non-debt status and now is the 3rd largest in student enrollment in the chiropractic world.

"Dr. James W. Parker seeks to continue the guidance of Parker College until his contract ends, September 12, 2000.

"I feel ashamed of what the majority of the Board members have done to our beautiful college. The Board members did not build the school; the vision, energy, foresight of Dr. James W. Parker did this, along with the students, faculty and staff members.

"May I appeal to the thousands of BBs and alumni of Parker College to write or fax telling of their strong support of Dr. James W. Parker, the greatest living man in the chiropractic world and beyond, who by his efforts and yours, have brought healing and health to millions of people."

Dr. Jim has stated that the Board's action was taken without any complaints made or reasons given. This apparent lack of cause evoked a sense of betrayal and motivated Dr. James Parker to seek the services of attorney Steven T. Long.

On December 2, 1996, Dr. Jim filed a lawsuit against Ray E. Green & Associates, the legal council for both Dr. James Parker (in his divorce action) and Parker College. The suit alleges conflict of interest and "false and misleading statements (regarding Dr. Jim) to the (Parker) Board of Trustees."

On January 11, 1997, Mr. Long filed a suit for Dr. Jim against Parker trustee Leander Eckard, alleging violation of trust and misrepresentation.

On March 17, 1997, Mr. Long released a statement exclusively to Dynamic Chiropractic regarding Dr. Jim's position:

"On September 27, 1996, the Board of Trustees of Parker College met.

"A motion was made by Chairman Robert Czopoth to remove Dr. James Parker as the president of the college immediately and to appoint Dr. Jim as president emeritus. The motion was passed without unanimous consent, resulting in a division of the trustees by virtue of the split vote.

"This was a disappointing surprise to Dr. Parker, as it was done without an appropriate consultation with Dr. James Parker; (without) notice of any complaint by the Board as to the performance of Dr. James Parker; (without) an analysis of the reason(s) of such drastic moves, or any opportunity for Dr. James Parker to explain, rebut or otherwise respond to any allegations against him or his performance. Dr. Parker is devastated and feels betrayed.

"Beginning in October, 1996, Dr. James Parker made several requests for a simple statement as to the reason or reasons why the founder of the college and the man who had dedicated his life, as well as contributed his personal assets to chiropractic and to Parker College of Chiropractic, Inc., had been summarily removed as president of the college he had created and had supported financially with his very spirit.

"Though Dr. Parker, his attorney and others interested in Dr. Parker and Parker College were promised that the information outlining the rationale for the removal of Dr. Jim would be presented to Dr. Parker, none was subsequently produced. Finally, on February 13, 1997, four months after being removed and his first request for information, Dr. Jim's attorney received a correspondence from the attorneys for the college stating: "The college is not required to give an explanation of its actions." Dr. Parker considered this response rather sterile and the response inappropriate.

"Dr. James Parker has consistently stated that he has and will continue to dedicate his life to chiropractic and seeks to ensure that Parker College of Chiropractic, Inc. produces quality graduates and the highest moral and ethical professionals in the field.

"Evidence exists which suggests there may be ulterior or otherwise self-serving motives. The issue of conflicts is raised with reason. Questions such as why did a nonattending, nonmember provide proxy to a member for voting prior to the nonmember's illegal election to the Board? Further, questions such as: Are there persons with financial interests and specific goals contrary to the interest of the college, influencing members or persons with interest?

"To further heighten and complicate this travesty, it has become necessary for Dr. Parker to question the acts of his prior attorney. Dr. Parker has brought suit against his attorney. He has discovered that his attorney appeared before the Board of Trustees on or about September 27th and discussed matters with the members which Dr. Parker believes were questionable, confidential, inappropriate and to his detriment. Dr. Jim is curious of the ethical considerations under the attorney-client privilege. He believes that his personal life should not be discussed by his attorney with his employer, the Board of Trustees. However, absent an official statement from the college outlining the reasons for his removal, it is difficult for Dr. Jim to respond appropriately.

"Dr. Parker believes he has done nothing to mismanage, bring criticism upon or otherwise cast shadow on Parker College of Chiropractic, Inc. and that his being dispossessed is based upon inaccurate and irrelevant statements of those with a personal, self-serving agenda.

"Now, the constitutional rights of Dr. Parker have been threatened. He is informed that should he:

'make any public announcements by statements or interviews to the press, any general announcements at the college during assembly or generally to the staff or student body in any other manner, an

announcement at the seminar of a general nature, by mass faxing or any other methodology of making a generalized statement regarding (his) displeasure with the recent transition will be deemed as (his) negative response to the recent President Emeritus Employment Agreement. That response will be considered (his) way of telling the Board that (he) has no intention of attempting to work out an employment agreement with the Board and, therefore, (he) is choosing to no longer be involved with Parker College of Chiropractic.'

"Oddly, Dr. Jim Parker's existing contract does not expire until September 12, 2000. So the talk of a "new" contract is, truly, curious. Dr. Parker questions, therefore, why he has been given a March 31, 1997 deadline to sign the new contract, execute a release for the college and the Trustees and a long list of other demands under threat of humiliation and detriment to Dr. Jim by being permanently removed from the college under legal action. Dr. Parker has expressed, without reservation, that he will not be coerced into doing something that is not in the best interest of the college and chiropractic for his personal gain."

On April 4, 1996, Dr. Jim offered his own comments:

"When I read the release my attorney sent DC, I was disturbed about wrongful identification of 'the Board.' I felt in keeping with my contractual obligation of 'devoting his best efforts on behalf of the college,' that I should make some clarifications.

"I was informed that those voting against my removal as president were Drs. Fabrizio Mancini, TX; Ana Cobian-Silver, TX; and Robert Hildreth, FL.

"I was informed those voting to 'depose' me as president were Drs. Robert Czopoth, PA; Leander Eckard, ID; Joe Abeler, MN; Dennis Semlow, MI; Robert Mawhiney, WI; Tim Murphy, MS; and Mr. Joy Springer, TX.

"On the weekend of September 26-28 during the PSPS Seminar last year, of those seven present they refused to hear my reports; one of which was to clear up a misunderstanding; (which essentially was, as I understood it, that I refused to use college money to pay my own legal bills and that I was an 'alter-ego' risk); I was told they inducted Drs. Semlow and Mawhiney, the later of whom was not even present but provided a proxy to Dr. Eckard.

"This weekend in September, I was 'deposed' as president and offered a contract for \$125,000 a year as "president emeritus" with many duties but no authority. My contract since 1984 paid me one dollar a year. The college has never written a check to me for any expenses I've incurred during the 20 years prior to this past September, except for 94 and 93 cents each year with Social Security, etc., removed, which are now framed in our museum.

"I do not wish to take more money than I need from the college, 80 to 90% of which comes from students. I have always worked to keep tuition down, keep increasing faculty and staff salaries to get the best talent, and pay off mortgages. I felt if we had a "debt-free" campus and the profession hit a "down" period, as it appears that managed care organizations are bringing about, we could continue to help make chiropractic survive.

"As a matter of record, I have provided the college from 5-7 million dollars in cash and in-kind values. My downhill fall in money began when I cashed in a 1.9 million dollar pension plan in 1986 against court orders, but it was indispensable for the college, PCRFB and SHARE to survive, of which the college got more than 1 million dollars in cash and values. Anything 'the Board' could offer me in money now is insignificant by comparison.

"The last communication I received from 'the Board' concluded with the statement that if I did not sign their 'president emeritus' contract by March 31, they would 'not permit Dr. James W. Parker access to the grounds, buildings, students, faculty, staff or records of the college, except as required by law.' I am writing this clarification piece from my home in Irving, TX.

"Let me tell the profession a story very few know. As the college incorporation was completed in March 1978, and I secured the nonprofit status in October 1978, I began to invite DCs and other friends and supporters to be Board of Trustee members, my 'bosses.' I bought the 63-acre Omega Campus in 1981 (\$801,000), and we had several Board meetings, including one in January 1982 at the MGM Grand Hotel during the PSPS Seminar. Prior to this the Board had tried to fund raise. At this meeting three of the seven, by then on the Board, voted to close the college (even before it opened -- they said there was 'no mandate' for Parker College) with four voting to keep it open. Of course, I strongly resisted such closing. These three members honorably resigned, and I quickly built the Board back to nine, the number accreditation requires and as I planned, and the result today is that Parker College is of huge benefit to chiropractic education, and has about one out of every 10 future doctors in the world to keep our profession alive.

"If I were dead, it would be the most natural and easy transition, for there is no one, anywhere, anytime better than Dr. W. Karl Parker to assume the presidency by the time my contract is over on 9/12/2000.

"When there is a conflict in a democracy, there are two ways to settle it: One, legal, through the courts, and two, legitimate through the free press. Since I have given my all for chiropractic and Parker College, and since I have no funds to go legal, I am forced to go the legitimate route, through the wonderful free press in chiropractic, and elsewhere should I need to do so.

"As to my opinion of this monstrosity, I am aghast and astonished and heartbroken of what I, and I think a few thousand others think, is indescribably incredible.

"I hereby publicly request those who voted to depose me to resign irrevocably and immediately as honorable people, as others did back in 1982; that the remaining Board will expeditiously invite replacements, probably primarily from our alumni now, and, with good judgment and with pure hearts, move forward with this pristine, prestigious institution and making ready for our next reconfirmation of accreditation evaluation, which I led very successfully throughout the history of our institution, with the help and guidance of those I employed for that purpose.

"Insofar as the future is concerned, I shall continue my efforts as long as necessary, to right this wrong and to honor my contract to 9/12/2000. I will deeply appreciate everyone who will help me do so. I can be reached by writing to me at Box 177100, Irving, TX 75060, or by my message phone, 972-238-2707. Leave your name, phone and address. I will make contact as quickly as possible. In the meantime, I sit at home wasting my experience, teaching, writing and lecturing to both the profession and college student body (which they are paying for!), at a time when I feel great and when I feel I have some of my greatest contributors yet to provide the chiropractic profession, especially along with Dean Black, PhD, John Gedy, PhD, et al., who I have gathered together on my research team. It will be interesting to hear from those who are supporting me.

The Parker College Board of Trustees also presented their point of view on this issue as follows:

"The Board of Trustees of Parker College of Chiropractic stands firm and is confident in its actions taken to appoint Dr. W. Karl Parker as president, to succeed Dr. James W. Parker. The Board agreed that this was the best possible action to assure the continued growth and success of Parker College of Chiropractic into the next century.

"The Board extremely respects and appreciates the years of dedicated service Dr. Jim has rendered as president and publicly recognizes his contributions. As a result, the Board offered a lifelong contract as president emeritus to Dr. James W. Parker.

"This offer includes excellent financial benefits as well as an opportunity for Dr. Jim to have the resources necessary to enable him to pursue his longstanding other interests in chiropractic. It is the Board's desire that Dr. Jim continue in his present office at the college campus with his staff, to allow him to spend as many years as he desires speaking to students at college assemblies, continuing to teach teleology at all the PSPS seminars, continuing his research, and writing articles, papers and books.

"The Board also desires Dr. Jim to record audio and video tapes for the greater education of the chiropractic profession, as well as being available for consultations to all facets of the college, PSPS, the students at the college and the attendees at PSPS seminars.

"The Board feels this position will provide Dr. Jim a greater opportunity to advance his quest for truth and knowledge and sincerely hopes he accepts.

"The Board remains committed to the continued improvement and growth of the Parker College of Chiropractic as it continues to mature and develop into a world class institution."



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