



**“A tribute to Felix G. Bauer, DC, DACBR (Hon)**

Behind every profession, there are unsung heroes. Some are pioneers, innovators or inventors; some are plain hard workers. Many are modest, and work only behind-the-scenes. All receive less recognition than they deserve. The time has come for Canadian chiropractors to pay tribute to one such member of the chiropractic profession in Australia – Felix G. Bauer. He deserves recognition not only because he reaches his 50th anniversary as a practising chiropractor on November 2, 1986, but because he has made many significant contributions to chiropractic – particularly in the field of chiropractic radiography. As his story reveals, he clearly qualifies as one of chiropractic’s unsung heroes.

The story begins in Waedenswil, Switzerland where Felix Gerhard Bauer was born December 6, 1915. He grew up there, beginning a career in the field of architecture – a career which led to a serendipitous introduction to chiropractic. While working on a construction site, he severely injured his thoracolumbar spine when a building plank fell on his back. He suffered through six months of medical “horsecures” with no improvement. Felix’s brother, who had been helped by chiropractic, convinced Felix to consult Emil Siegrist, D.C., in Zurich, Switzerland. After just one adjustment, Felix was “entirely out of pain”. That was enough of a “miracle” to persuade both Felix and his brother to enroll at chiropractic college in America.

Before shipping off – literally – to the Palmer School of Chiropractic in Davenport, Iowa, Felix took the opportunity to visit Dr. Fred Illi in Geneva, Switzerland. Among other things, Dr. Illi was experimenting with long target-film distances in full-spine radiography. He was aiming to improve diagnostic quality by reducing magnification and distortion. (The four-metre, or thirteen-foot, TFD had the added benefit of reducing radiation considerably.) Felix was impressed. That meeting not only initiated a lifelong mutual respect and friendship between what were to be recognized as two of chiropractic’s pioneers, it also initiated Felix Bauer’s lifelong interest in radiography – but more about that later.

Felix’s undergraduate education at Palmer occurred during a very exciting time in chiropractic history. The depression was in full swing all around America, but the chiropractic profession was growing in quantum leaps under the command of another pioneer, Dr. B.J. Palmer, then president of Palmer School and son of chiropractic’s founder, D.D. Palmer. Felix’s generation of students found themselves directly in the centre of the excitement. They received unequalled grounding in the art and philosophy of chiropractic. In addition to his curricular studies, Felix’s incessantly curious mind took him to Palmer’s

osteological museum where he studied various skeletal structures and where he continued his “self-education”. His graduation ceremonies took place November 2, 1936. At age 21, he was ready to begin his new life.

Rather than return to Switzerland to immediately begin practice, he seized the opportunity to complete his internship at the B.J. Palmer private clinic. At that time, this special internship was limited to a period of two months – B.J., as he was affectionately called, would not allow any one intern to stay longer – and was limited to a maximum five interns. The intern was expected to pay B.J. \$100 per month for the opportunity to learn there. Recognizing Felix’s enthusiasm and knowledge in the field of radiography, B.J. not only asked Felix to stay longer, but paid Felix \$100 per month to stay! Felix remained there from October 15, 1937 until October 1, 1938.

In addition to his daily tasks in the x-ray department, Dr. Bauer toured visitors through the clinic. B.J. said “you can make any experiments you wish when your usual work for the day is finished”. Felix’s day began at 3:50 A.M. (because B.J. began at 4:00 A.M. and Felix thought it wasn’t right to allow the boss to get there ahead of him), and ended somewhere around 11:00 P.M. Despite that gruelling schedule, Felix made time to examine the occipital condyles of more than 150 skulls in the museum. He concluded that asymmetry was so common that routine x-ray views would result in faulty listings by failing to reveal the asymmetry. That stimulated him to invent the Base-Posterior view, now commonly in use as the Vertex view of the occipito-atlantal junction.

Having completed his internship at the B.J. Palmer private clinic and having a flair for adventure, Dr. Bauer boarded a ship to Australia on August 29, 1939. On April 1, 1940, he established practice and residence in a house at 646 Pacific Highway, Chatswood, N.S.W., in the Sydney suburbs. He practises – and lives with his wife Margaret – at that location to this day (1986).

It wasn’t long before Dr. Bauer was applying his architectural and engineering skills to his home-office. One of his first projects was to build a basement under the existing house: it served as storage area, darkroom and air-raid bunker (the second world war was raging at the time, and there were threats of attacks on Australia). Built by Felix Bauer the perfectionist, it was no ordinary basement. With its 16” thick, hand-poured concrete walls, it was probably the safest place during the war (notwithstanding the fact that Australia never was bombed). This notorious basement is mentioned only because it is a vivid example of the quality of workmanship Felix devotes to everything he touches. He subsequently built a woodwork and machine shop – including a metal lathe, table saw, drill press and belt sander – all from scratch and from raw materials.

All the while, his practice was growing. And because he applied the same perfection to the treatment of his patients, he quickly established a name for himself as a very competent and caring chiropractor. An illustration of the respect he commanded – and commands to this day – is the case of the mother



of a two-year-old boy who visited Felix's office to deliver a photograph. She said: "Have this picture of *your* boy". Never having had any children of his own, Felix reminded her – there were three other ladies in the waiting room – that he didn't have any boy – or girl for that matter. "Oh yes, I know," replied the mother, "but we call him your boy because without your help when he was seven months old, he would have died that same weekend – hours after the 'specialist' had given up on him." The boy in question is now the proud father of four – all Felix Bauer patients.

Dissatisfied with the general quality of radiographs (in both chiropractic and medicine), Felix continued his experimentation into improving x-ray quality – a goal which he continues to pursue to this day. His experiments have been more than successful. It has been said by chiropractors and medical radiologists alike that "Felix Bauer takes the best x-rays in the world". And though that is a sweeping statement and difficult to prove, his radiographs have been demonstrated around the world and no one who has seen his radiographs has ever denied it. In fact, he has elevated the status of chiropractic radiographic procedures in Australia to a point where the health department and other health professionals are reluctant to ever criticize chiropractic x-rays.

However, the status of chiropractic radiography in Australia was not always so secure. In 1967, when the state health department in New South Wales was threatening to test all chiropractic x-ray facilities with a view to cancelling chiropractic x-ray licenses, Felix came to the rescue. He demonstrated that his x-rays were of far superior quality and issued far less radiation exposure than those of any other health profession. He persuaded the government to provide a two year grace, in which time he would be able to upgrade the quality of all chiropractic installations. He began by convincing twenty chiropractors to purchase new Siemens x-ray machines (for which he arranged a 20% price discount). Within twelve months, he had prepared state-of-the-art techniques for all chiropractors in his state. The result was that only two chiropractors lost their license – both of whom failed to take Felix's advice to upgrade. For his efforts, the Australian Chiropractors' Association awarded him an honorary life membership in 1973.

In order to reduce radiation exposure and produce top-quality spinal radiographs, Felix was suggesting a 200 cm (80 inch) Target-Film Distance, gonad shields (male and female), density-equalizing filtration, 100 kV, careful attention to detail in all technical matters (in and out of the darkroom), and the use of the latest technology in intensifying screens. He developed a nomogram to closely estimate radiation exposure issued with each and every film. It took him ten years, but he finally convinced the health department and some doubting members of the medical profession that chiropractors *do* take good quality radiographs with a minimum of radiation exposure. (One of Felix's favorite anecdotes illustrating medicine's stubborn antagonism toward chiropractic centres on the fractured humerus his wife Margaret suffered in a motor vehicle accident.

The medical doctor asked her to return for follow-up x-rays to monitor the healing. She said: "Thank you very much, but my husband, the chiropractor, will take the pictures". He grumbled something about chiropractors' inability to take good quality x-rays, but conceded that he couldn't protest too loudly with a chiropractor's wife. When she delivered the Felix Bauer x-rays later that day, she noted the doctor was silent as he examined the films. When Felix encountered him on a subsequent occasion, the doctor said "you chiropractors might know how to take x-rays, but you don't know how to read them".)

To fully appreciate Felix Bauer's inventions, it is necessary to examine the products and witness the results first-hand. He has invented an extensive set of density-equalizing filters for use in spinal radiography, a set of male and female gonad shields, a very simple method of steadying head and neck in cervical radiography and an easy-to-use but very effective bilateral compression device for lumbar and pelvic radiography. One of the unique aspects of these products is that he hand-crafts each item personally, in his own workshop. The items can only be purchased from him and every Felix Bauer device is hand-made by the master himself. Though imitations have been made and marketed (and even patented), the craftsmanship of Felix Bauer's products is unparalleled. (He was always more concerned with helping the profession than he was with making money, and as a result, he never patented his products.) In addition to his own inventions, he assisted the Solus x-ray company in designing the "Solus Chiroprax" x-ray machine, still commonly used in chiropractic offices in Australia and New Zealand.

Felix has always maintained that any x-ray machine (of reasonable quality) can produce x-rays; what's important is how the operator uses it. With that in mind, Felix has presented several post-graduate seminars covering everything there is to know about producing excellent quality x-ray films. He has lectured in Australia (Sydney, Melbourne, Perth, Adelaide and Brisbane), Canada (Toronto and Vancouver), New Zealand, Denmark and the United States. Of the chiropractic colleges, he has presented guest lectures and seminars at Anglo-European in Bournemouth, England, Canadian Memorial in Toronto, Canada, Western States in Portland, U.S.A., and Preston Institute in Melbourne, Australia. He published two manuals "Chiropractic Spinography" and "The Siemens Point System: Adopted for Chiropractic Spinography" in the 1970's. He has donated thousands of hours of his time in private chiropractic offices helping individuals refine their x-ray procedures. And, in his post as Chairman of the Australian Council on Chiropractic Roentgenology (Radiography Division), he designed – and continues to administer – a comprehensive radiographic survey of chiropractic installations. In 1978, the prestigious American Chiropractic Board of Roentgenologists awarded him an honorary fellowship (D.A.C.B.R.).

In 1979, recognizing the need to perpetuate Felix's knowledge in radiography, Sydney chiropractor Ray Sherman set the



wheels in motion to co-author a textbook with Felix. Long time friends, Ray and Felix worked well together. After almost two years of research, writing, editing, consulting and re-writing, Sherman and Bauer completed the manuscript. Entitled *X-Ray X-pertise - from A-X*, the work was published in late 1982 by the Parker Chiropractic Research Foundation in Fort Worth, Texas. Were it not for Ray Sherman's inspiration, determination and literary skills, the book might never have been written. (Felix was always more at home at his workbench than at a typewriter.) The text is an important contribution to chiropractic literature.

Behind every energetic and enthusiastic man is a very tolerant woman. So it is with Margaret. Originally from New Zealand, Margaret married Felix on December 19, 1957. Even then, she likely knew that when Felix set his mind to do something, she might not see much of him for some time. That hasn't changed much in thirty years. Felix is now semi-retired. That means that, each week, he spends only two or three

mornings treating patients, one day experimenting with radiography (with Ray Sherman) and "spare time" working on x-ray surveys. Then, too, he often arises - sometimes several times per week - at 4:00 A.M. to work on new sets of filters or compression devices. And, in his 71st year, he still regularly visits the golf course where his score - handicap considered - has been less than his age at least a dozen times. He usually manages a trip to Switzerland each year also. Somewhere in that hectic schedule, Margaret is able to track him down long enough for them to share some peace and quiet together.

Were Dr. Felix Bauer to fully retire tomorrow - a most unlikely occurrence - he would do so owing nothing to chiropractic. But chiropractic will always owe a great deal to Dr. Felix Bauer.

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