**GRADUATION SPEECH**

**FOR**

**LOU SPORTELLI**

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, thank you, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for that generous introduction! To \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, family and friends, faculty and administrators, and distinguished guests, it is an honor to be here and a privilege to take a few moments to congratulate this year’s graduates, and to, hopefully, impart some heartfelt wisdom that only time and experience can yield. For those of you that have completed your course, survived the tests and trials thrown your way, and have gotten to this point, **FANTASTIC**!!! While you may really want to think of this day as a point of completion, you are all really just beginning. The foundations have been poured.... now it’s time to build your legacy.

The times in which we are living are very exciting indeed.... or so “they” tell me... I’ll explain that in a minute.... we live in a world of new possibility... of the proliferation of technology, the growing ubiquity of virtual connections.... the increased access to information... but you know what??? You’ve chosen to enter a profession that relies on the **ONE THING** your iPhones and Androids and Google Pixels cannot provide..... and that’s **HUMAN TOUCH...** so for all the credence we place on that hunk of external brain weighing 7.34 ounces, it **CANNOT** replace your basic, fundamental purpose as a doctor of Chiropractic. By the way, as a tribute to our profession and as a “**unicorn**” of sorts, I think I am possibly the last person on earth to have resisted owning a mobile phone.... is it because I have a “weak spot” for (**Name your local phone company**) Pennsylvania Bell??? (**Wait for the laugh**)... Is it because I love to hear the sound of a phone ringing from the next room ..... yes... phones used to ring and they used to be left in other rooms... and if you can believe it, some were even **ATTACHED TO A WALL!**!! Can you imagine??? (**Wait for the laugh**).... No. it’s because I’ve chosen my life’s profession as a Doctor of Chiropractic... one who diagnoses and serves through human connection... one who has spent a lifetime honing his instincts, searching for a visceral connection, being in as much **PRESENT** contact with reality and the patient in order to divine the cause and implement the care required to bring each patient to a greater state of well being. I may not be “**mobile**,” but I know what’s going on!!

As Chiropractors, we literally touch the lives of others, the power of which **CANNOT** be underestimated. As far as I know, there has not yet been an app invented to do what we do... but what do I know??? **No mobile phone**!!! (**Wait for the laugh**). What I **DO** know is that over a lifetime and a career that has spanned almost \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ years, I’ve observed. I’ve taken notes. I have experimented with techniques, learned from my missteps, and I’ve grown from all of those experiences. I’ve worked with patients that have had all manner of ailments and aches and issues and there was one single, clear, fundamental connection that linked each patient, every experience, and every resolution, and that was the power of one to one human connection and the force of nature that distinguishes us from metal and glass and teeny tiny circuit boards.... and that is **TOUCH**. Through touch, we learn to be **PRESENT**... through being present, we gain the ability to penetrate through layers of signs and physical symbols... through the superficial... to really aim for, and **reach** the essence and core of each person with whom we have the privilege to work.

Lily Tomlin once said, “Reality is the leading cause of stress among those in touch with it.” I think we all can understand and agree that life is tough.... stress patterns are morphing and adapting to the increasingly rapid pace with which we live our lives, assimilate information, and sacrifice our well being. It will be up to all of you, as practicing Doctors of Chiropractic, to bring healing, relief, and solace to those in need... and to **yourselves**. For those of you that may not realize, and for those of you that have grown accustomed to new kinds of “touch,” what I’m talking about goes way beyond pressure sensitive device screens... it goes much deeper than pressing that invisible start button.... you have chosen to re-educate yourselves to balance and blend new technologies... the world and ways of the future... with the gifts you’ve been given through the legacy of humanity.... May we **NEVER** lose touch with **that**.

Every generation deals with evolution, revolution, a relaxing of standards, and the establishment of new mores and traditions. As with everything in our lives, we coexist in an atmosphere infused with memories of the past, demands of the present, and hopes, dreams, and intentions for the future. As one who has lived through the advancements and declines of recent generations, I’m able to see things that other, younger individuals may find elusive.  **I REMEMBER**. I’m sure when I was younger and the world was being introduced to “new fangled” innovations, those professionals who preceded me were pretty sure that technological marvels like television, self-defrosting refrigerators, and **FAX** machines... **I KNOW**... you’re thinking, “**WHAT’S A FAX MACHINE**???? (**Wait for the laugh**)... were clear and certain signs of the death of civilization... the **APOCALYPSE** was on its way and it was going **non-stop**. Back then, when I was sitting relative to where you are today, I laughed. I thought my elders were just not clued in. I **KNEW** we, the next generation, would show the way and lead the way.... and for many intents and purposes we did.... but we **DIDN’T** lose sight of our heritage, how we were inspired, or what encouraged us to be who we were and learn what we chose to learn in order to serve and heal people. With the vantage point I have now, after years in the profession, dealing with thousands of patients, observing hundreds of advancements, upgrades, and downgrades, I’m growing more and more concerned for our future and the consequences of living in semi-isolation.... and make no mistake... that’s how we live. With more and more relationships being fostered online... with so many jobs going remote... with so much of life lived on that 7.34 ounce hunk of tech clenched in your hot fists, how much room have you allowed for **ACTUAL, IN PERSON HUMAN** touch? It better be enough, because your lives... and livelihood depend on it.

As Doctors of Chiropractic, you’ve pledged an oath and accepted a professional code of ethics: “To consider the well being of the patient, the primary and ultimate goal for the greater good of that patient, to respect the rights and confidentiality of each patient, to let professional responsibility, integrity, and high standards of ethics be your guiding tenets, and **to honor your profession, it’s history, and tradition**.” I am here today to plant that seed... to hopefully be that gnawing, persistent voice in your head that will rear up... well after you leave here and go on to conquer your corners of this profession.

Throughout your own careers, you will have the honor and privilege of treating all manner of people in every imaginable predicament.... from the ordinary to the extraordinary.... and there are no limits or labels to which may be which. From every patient you will learn, from every intake and adjustment, you will have realizations. Some will be mundane, others will be metaphoric. I know of a colleague who had the opportunity to fulfill a very unique assignment. He was asked to go to Morocco on a regular basis, to adjust the Moroccan royal family. (**If you don’t want to mention the country, you can be more non-specific**). The point I found fascinating... in a situation **FILLED** with fascinating points, is that the family all seemed to have the same ailment.... weakness and pain in their upper back and shoulders... I remember my friend stating that it really was like “they all carried the weight of their countrymen on their shoulders.” When I think of that, and what it means, and the ramifications of who they are and what we have the ability to do, our work becomes awe-inspiring.... but our impact can only be achieved through **human touch**.

I have one last thing I want to share with you before you go out and “conquer the world.” Throughout my career, I persistently searched for ways in which to preserve the patient’s self respect and personal dignity. Whether it was the way the furniture was placed in each examining room.... no desks... no hierarchy... or the special gowns I had made to insure that surrendering their own clothing would not sacrifice the patient’s comfort and composure when needing to wear a robe or a gown for an exam and adjustment, I did my best to be thoughtful, present, and to leave a lasting, positive impact on each person I had the honor to treat. In order to do that, I did what I could to preserve my own personal dignity, appreciation, and respect for life. For **THIRTY FIVE** years, every Monday morning, I had a standing order with my local florist. **ONE** single rose was delivered. And every single Monday morning, as that rose arrived, I stopped what I was doing. I made sure to be very present... and I’d smell that rose. Never underestimate the “little things” in life. Those gestures.... those sense memories... those inspirations... those lessons that sparked **YOU...**  that **TOUCH**... will be what reveals your inner goodness... your intention to serve... and your appreciation of your family, friends, neighbors, colleagues, and **patients**. Here’s to each one of you and the meaningful careers you are about to create!! Congratulations! Thank you all!!