

## HISTORY OF THE MITCHELL'S MUSCLE ENERGY TECHNIQUE (MET)

The term "Muscle Energy" was given by Fred L. Mitchell, Sr. D. O. to the techniques he developed in the 1950s, first to treat mechanical problems in the pelvis. It is unclear how he named the techniques, except that the techniques involved using isometric and isotonic contractions. First Fred used the patient's muscles to restore physiologic movement to the pelvis, which has passive joints, i.e. they are not moved by direct muscle action. He then expanded the concept to include treatment of all joints except the cranial sutures. Next he developed techniques for the spine using isometric and isotonic contractions of the patient's muscles to treat vertebral dysfunctions. After the contraction the patient is asked to relax the contraction before the operator "takes up the slack". Initially he recommended strong isometric contractions, but eventually evolved to using very light isometric contractions.

I first met Fred at a meeting in St. Petersburg, FL in the 1960's, and first heard him lecture at a meeting of the Iowa Osteopathic Medical Association in Des Moines in the mid-60s. His lecture was laced with humorous stories in his southern drawl, but what impressed me the most was the method he used to diagnose and treat what we then called "osteopathic lesions". I was particularly impressed with the changes he made in the rib cage using gentle techniques. I thought that those techniques would really be useful in my practice. Up until that time my training had been high velocity/ low amplitude (HVLA) techniques, some soft tissue techniques, and a Cranial course taught by Dr. Kimberly my third year of school. So, I spoke to Fred after his lecture and asked if he would teach me. He said, "Sure! Come on down." Subsequently I made two or three visits to Chattanooga where the Mitchell's hosted me in their lovely home/office for up to a week at a time. When I returned for the each visit, I hadn't retained a lot of what he had taught me, and I am sure he was as disappointed as I was. So, I told him that this wasn't working, so would he come to Iowa to teach some of us. He said, "Sure!"

When I was President of the American Academy of Osteopathy in 1969-70 I asked the Board if it would be willing to sponsor a tutorial given by Dr. Mitchell. The response was "Yes, as long as you do the work and it doesn't cost us anything." In March 1970 I hosted Fred's first tutorial in my home/office in Fort Dodge, IA. Six of us spent five days (and most evenings) as Fred taught us about this new Muscle Energy Technique. I had room for all to stay, and my neighbor Janet Secor had finished college in January and was without a job. So, she agreed to be our cook and housekeeper. Those attending the tutorial were Devota Nowland, John Goodridge, Ed Stiles, Rolland Miller, Philip Greenman and myself. We all agreed that this was the greatest learning experience we had ever had. We were each invited to assist him in future tutorials which filled quickly as enthusiasm grew to learn MET. Muscle Energy was received enthusiastically. He taught 4 or 5 more tutorials, but unfortunately Fred died of a massive heart attack in March of 1974.

Instead of serving as Past President of the Academy in 1970, I was asked to serve as Secretary of the Academy. For five years this consumed my time and energy until a full time director was hired. I was then asked if I would chair a committee to document what was unique about what Dr. Mitchell had taught. About twelve people were appointed to the committee, all of whom had taken a tutorial. His son, Fred, Jr. was familiar with his father's work, and was appointed along with Paul E. Kimberly, D. O. who served as our consultant. We met for three or four long weekends a year at Michigan State

University for five years. During that time we developed the curriculum for three 40 hour courses: a Basic course, as well as one for the Diaphragm and Above, and the Diaphragm and Below. Committee members became the faculty for these courses, which were often taught at osteopathic colleges in order to train their faculties. Thus, Muscle Energy is one of the models of manipulation taught in all osteopathic colleges and universities.