

Academy of Dentistry International
Fellowship Class 2009
September 30, 2009

President Hession, Board of Regents, Fellows of the Academy, Colleagues, and guests. It is indeed a great honor and privilege to be invited to make a few remarks on behalf of the Academy of Dentistry International Fellowship Class of 2009. On behalf of my fellow inductees, I thank the Academy for the special honor bestowed on us today.

As I reviewed the ADI membership roster and look at those being inducted at this ceremony, I am humbled by the unbelievable achievements of this special group of dental professionals, individually and cumulatively. It is an honor to be invited into this prestigious Academy.

This is truly the golden age of dentistry. There has been an explosion of technological advances and technique refinement. Quality basic science and clinical research has provided for the capability for us to blend the art and science of dentistry as never before. The recognition of important inter-relationships between dental disease to cardiovascular disease, cerebrovascular accidents, and diabetes has brought to the forefront that fact that quality oral health is a significant component of quality overall health. All of these factors are likely responsible for the fact that never in the history of our profession has there been such a great demand for our services. As stated by Dr. Bruce Philstrom in the September 2009 Supplement to the Journal of the American Dental Association, "Dentistry is now on the brink of a remarkable transformation that promises to dramatically expand the role of dental professionals and improve oral health of people worldwide".

The ADI was founded with the purpose of serving the dental and oral health needs and to improve the quality of life of people throughout the world. Dr. Wasserman's concept also included elevation of dental standards by fostering world wide continuing dental education. From its humble beginnings in October 1974, the ADI now includes over 2,400 fellows representing over 55 countries.

The ADI Foundation's Thousand Smiles foundation, a special project of Rotary International has provided hundreds of young children and adults free treatment for facial and dental deformities around the world. ADI through its many initiatives serves as a beacon of light and hope for the future of dentistry.

We must always remember our purpose is to serve. I have been blessed with mentors who have shared not only their wisdom, insight, and voluminous knowledge, but a caring spirit and a passion for giving back.

Dr. Harold Wirth, a well-known faculty member during my dental school days provided a basis for the concept that our quality of caring is equally important as our quality of care provided.

Dr. Parker Mahan who has lived by the mantra that through the constant study of science as well as the study of all that is around us including ourselves we can best serve those who honor us with their trust.

Our friend and colleague Dr. Terry Tanaka whose example of giving back is exemplified by the fact that he, his wife Naomi and their dental team have traveled to Mexico for many years to care for disadvantaged children. This type of selfless service is the basis for the wonderful mission of this Academy.

It is because of the example set by individuals like these that Dentistry has been recognized as one of the most trusted professions for so many years.

We all have had the opportunity to serve others through a multiplicity of activities. I have had the great privilege of participating in mission trips on which care was provided to the impoverished in 3rd world countries as well as within the United States. The smiles and thank-you's that were associated with these activities provided abundant rewards. The opportunity to have been part of a continuing dental education mission in Kingston, Jamaica was the forum for witnessing first hand the thirst for knowledge that exists among dentists from many countries. Dentists who had limited access to acquisition of new knowledge. Dentists who shared a common reason for attending the program. They all wanted to enhance their knowledge, skills and ability to provide the highest quality of care for their patients. It is clear that the need for dental service and education is ongoing and expanding.

Having spend the last 20 years of my dental career in academics I can truly say that the greatest reward is seeing your students not only survive, but thrive in dentistry while demonstrating only the highest quality professional and ethical standards while serving others. In truth, sometimes we can learn from our students.

In my short time as Dean at LSU School of Dentistry I have witnessed the steadfast dedication to provide service as demonstrated by our volunteer outreach programs in areas with limited access, some of which still bear the horrendous scars left by Hurricane Katrina. Our students recently formed "MAKING IMPRESSIONS" an organization developed for the purpose of elevating the quality of oral health in the state. In less than 1 month, more than 100 students have joined this volunteer group and have engaged in 5 volunteer oral health screenings at health fairs and other venues. These types of service endeavors exhibited by our dental students is cause for great hope for the future of our profession.

It is indeed a pleasure to be inducted into the ADI at the same time as one of our students from LSUSD, Marshall Green, is presented the Terry Tanaka Student Humanitarian Award 2009.

Marshall and his wife Nicole initially became involved in dental community service through volunteering at a local church's mobile dental mission. This endeavor reinforced his desire to help the less fortunate. His appreciation for the fact that dentistry is a natural conduit to relationship development was enhanced. His desire to share with his colleagues the self gratification that can be derived through service grew stronger. This prompted he and Nicole to start their own ministry focusing on dental missions with special effort directed at involvement of his fellow students. Their activities related to humanitarian and educational initiatives locally, nationally, and internationally has been infectious, involving dental students, practicing dentists and other health care disciplines in provision of service.

In these times of turmoil and economic strife, a time when professionalism and ethical behaviors have been put to the test in every walk of life, it is truly heartwarming and cause for great pride to be involved with a group such as the Academy of Dentistry International.

On behalf of the ADI inductee class of 2009 I would like to thank the spouses and families who have been so supportive and integrally involved in our endeavors. Whatever we have accomplished is because of you.

The honor of membership in ADI will serve as a constant reminder of what we were put on this earth for, our ultimate purpose, to serve others.

In the words of William Arthur Ward, "Greatness is not found in possessions, power, position, or prestige. It is discovered in goodness, humility, service, and character."

Congratulations to the ADI Fellowship Class of 2009. I am proud to be a part of this wonderful group. Thank the organization and all in attendance who have made this occasion so special.

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