

Dr. Harold Shavell: Recognizing a Visionary in Dentistry

Few in dentistry have more positively influenced the practice of dentistry and our collective appreciation of the exquisitely high level of excellence that is possible than Dr. Harold Shavell. In recognition of his many contributions to dentistry, the American Academy of Esthetic Dentistry (AAED) honored Dr. Shavell at its annual meeting in Naples, Florida, with its highest award, the Charles L. Pincus Award. The Award was presented by Dr. Cherilyn Sheets, past president of the AAED, and Dr. Dan Nathanson, 2011–12 president. As a tribute to Dr. Shavell, the *Journal of Esthetic and Restorative Dentistry* is pleased to include both his acceptance speech printed later, as well as a masterful treatise, *Mental Imagery: The Key to Dental Artistry* by Dr. Shavell which follows.



Dr. Harold Shavell's acceptance speech:

Thank you, Cherilyn, for such a glowing introduction and for all your personal insights. Dr. Nathanson, esteemed Academy members, and welcomed guests:

Fourteen years ago I retired from practice. Three years before that (in preparation) I withdrew from the lecture circuit and—most lamentably—I stopped coming to our annual meetings. Then, somewhat reluctantly (and certainly with mixed feelings!), I began walking off into

the sunset trying hard not to look back at what once was, but looking forward to what was to be: spending more time with family, engaging in long put-off personal pursuits, leisure travel (as opposed to many years of professional travel), etc.

All was proceeding pretty much as planned until just recently when—out of the Clear Blue—President Dan Nathanson called regarding this special event. All at once, and certainly with no malice of forethought, Dan in one booming fell swoop had unremittingly torn down the carefully crafted protective curtain I had meticulously fashioned to cordon off my erstwhile professional past, thus reminding me of just how much I have missed Dentistry, my professional associations, and most of all . . . this Academy, and all the personal friendships I've garnered therein throughout these many years.

That being said, permit me to now take a slightly different tack. I want to address those here who are guests, prospective members, those who soon may be entering our ranks, and those who have already done so at this meeting. I will tell you this: there is absolutely NO Academy like the AAED! Herein, without the slightest doubt, are the brightest and best of our profession, from whom I have learned so very much . . . and for which I am so very thankful.

And, you should also know that this learned Academy has a very proud and outstanding professional heritage; among its distinguished members are marvelous clinicians, notable researchers, remarkable educators, talented aestheticians—individuals from every facet of Dentistry who selflessly dedicate themselves to maintaining the highest standards of the Art and Science of patient care. They know full well that every act of their dental care is an act of judgment.

AAED members know that the eye does not see what the mind has not taught it to recognize. They know how we see is as important as what we see. They know

that the best way to learn something is in the context of another discipline. They know that vision without action is fruitless, and action without vision is dangerous. They know that creative activity is a type of learning process wherein teacher and pupil are located within the same individual. They know that some succeed because they are destined to, but most succeed because they are determined to. They know that we are what we do every day, and—like Francis Bacon—they hold every man a debtor to his profession.

Contained within the Art and Science of Dentistry is a profusion of odd juxtapositions, artifices, and camouflages which conceal enchanting truths and enchanting beauty. It is THIS Academy's fervent and honor-bound mission to relentlessly pursue Truth and Beauty, for Beauty is Truth, Truth Beauty.

Moreover, I believe there are two kinds of truth: the truth that lights the way, and the truth that warms the heart. The first of these is Science, the second is Art. Neither is independent of the other nor more important than the other. The truth of our Art keeps our Science from becoming robotic and inhuman, and the truth of our Science keeps our Art from becoming base panderism. Hence that is why we speak of the Art AND Science of Dentistry, either which are totally useless without expertise. You can't simply wish your way into skill and success; skill and success are not given—they have to be earned! Only the mediocre are always at their "best." Remember: we are what we do every day.

Scrolling through the Academy's membership roster reads like a veritable "who's who" in all of Dentistry. Yet, to a person, each knows of no painless process for giving birth to clinical excellence. Excellence is NEVER

an accident, nor is it EVER negotiable. The nostrum has not yet been invented that will replace knowledge, skill, care, and judgment. What we think, or what we know, or what we believe is, in the end, of little consequence. The ONLY thing of consequence is what we actually DO! Truly, the deed is everything, the glory naught.

And, speaking of "deeds," viewing the accomplishments of the very select list of the previous recipients of the Pincus Award—well, it's simply viewing Dentistry's "HALL of FAME."

So then, with all that said—and with so many deserving members out there—you can easily understand how honored and humbled I am to be a recipient of the Pincus Award. My sincerest thanks and so much appreciation to all who made this possible. For me, this award is my Academy Award, my Star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, my footprint in the sidewalk of Grauman's Chinese Theatre, my Kennedy Center's Honor . . . all wrapped up in one. Thus, I can now continue my trek into that waning sunset with the knowledge that . . . while I may be gone . . . I certainly won't be forgotten.

I trust you've all had a really great—no, an OUTSTANDING meeting! Now, please have a really MARVELOUS evening!! Thank you all so very, very much.

Harald O. Heymann, DDS, MEd, Editor-in-Chief

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