

2000 Distinguished Service Award: R. Gary Rozier, DDS, MPH

Presented by B. Alex White, DDS, DrPH

The Distinguished Service Award is presented annually to an individual for excellent and distinguished service to public health dentistry. It is the highest honor that the American Association of Public Health Dentistry can bestow. This year's recipient is Dr. Gary Rozier. Gary has had a very distinguished career and has committed himself to improving the public's oral health through research and teaching. Oliver Wendell Holmes once said, "It is the province of knowledge to speak, and it is the privilege of wisdom to listen." Gary brings wisdom and reason to most things he does, sometimes simply by listening. I hope you will agree that he is a most deserving recipient of this award.

Gary received his bachelor of arts degree from Wake Forest University and his doctor of dental surgery and master of public health degrees from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He completed a dental public health residency program at North Carolina Division of Dental Health in 1976 and became a diplomate of the American Board of Dental Public Health in 1983. He has published more than 55 abstracts and 69 articles, is a member of numerous professional organizations, and has been involved in multiple research and evaluation projects at local, state, and federal levels.

Gary has served the AAPHD admirably. He first became a member in 1974, was elected to the Executive Council in 1983, and served as president in 1990. For the past 18 years, he has attended Executive Council meetings twice each year. His input has been invaluable and his humor a welcome relief. You may recall that in the early 1980s, the AAPHD was broke. The financial report that Pat Main gave us on Sunday indicated that we now have more than \$310,000 in reserve. The only constant on the Execu-

tive Council during that time has been Gary. Maybe he should go into association management!

I asked Gary why he went into dental public health. His answer surprised me. At Wake Forest, Gary had mentors who nurtured his interest in archaeology and history. He used to go out to sites in Yadkin County, North Carolina, to dig for prehistoric fossils. He notes:

But, reason (and love) intervened, and Jeanette saved me from a life of studying bones in Europe to answer questions such as the effects of renaissance Europe's bubonic plague and deteriorating urban conditions on medieval populations, or summers excavating sites in the Mojave Desert to determine when human populations arrived in North America, or excavating castles—not cavities—in Scotland.

Thankfully for us, Gary didn't pursue a career in archaeology, and maybe we should have presented an award to Jeanette! But Gary still is trying to find answers to questions by looking at data and crafting stories that offer potential models for insight into the world around us. His quest for understanding has benefited us all. You may know that Gary has resigned as editor of the *Journal of Public Health Dentistry*. For the past seven years, Gary committed time, resources, and energy to make the journal the best it could be. In the course of our search for a new editor, Gary reflected on qualities that make a good editor. He wrote:

It goes without saying that the *JPHD* must help provide the knowledge base for the discipline of public health dentistry. The primary objective of the editor should be, therefore, to ensure the public health significance and

methodological rigor of all original research articles published in the journal. The editor needs to "know" public health, and have well-developed review skills and methodological sophistication.

The editor must have certain personal characteristics in addition to experience in publishing. In the end, many of the important decisions are very subjective. There are no rules for what makes the "bar" for publication, and the editor must be somewhat lenient and flexible, not adhering to textbook science. He must know what is possible and not possible, what is a fatal flaw and what is not, and how to balance the weaknesses of a study against its strengths. A dogmatic personality just won't work.

The editor has to be a person who is willing to listen to other people and accept advice and criticism magnanimously. Otherwise, the journal could become locked in a track paralleling the editor's positions and biases. That could be a tragedy.

It's too bad that Gary isn't an applicant for editor, since he demonstrates all of the qualities in his work with us.

Henry David Thoreau once said, "The greatest compliment that was ever paid me was when one asked me what I thought and attended to my answer." Through his questions and insight, by his wisdom and support, Gary compliments all of us by listening to our stories and encouraging us to improve our science and practice and, ultimately, the health of the public. It is indeed an honor and privilege to present the 2000 Distinguished Service Award to Dr. Gary Rozier.