

Remarks on Receiving the 2000 Distinguished Service Award

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Thank you very much for those comments, Alex. I was pleased to learn that Alex would be presenting this award because he has a very warm and personal way of doing these presentations. Alex and I grew up about 20 miles (and probably about 20 years) from each other in a very rural part of North Carolina. Here, my family was always prepared for someone to stop by unexpectedly for Sunday dinner, everyone always came to the back door, which was never locked, and everything in town—church, school, shopping, and health care—was within a short 15-minute walk. This environment surely molds ones perspectives, values, and approaches to life.

The AAPHD has been my professional home for a number of years. What draws me to this organization like none other?

- It provides the advisers, mentors, and role models who inspire and guide me. Members of this association do what they feel passionate about, do a lot of it, and always keep an eye on its relevance.

- It provides information.

- It is unlike any other organization in the world because it is the official guardian for the specialty of dental public health and connects us to the American Dental Association and the rest of the dental profession.

- It provides an important connection to the world of others who work in settings different from my own. It is easy for those of us in academia to lose our perspectives on the relevance of our work. For me, particularly, this association provides a very practical and useful grounding in the practice of public health dentistry.

- And yes, it provides entertainment. Since my first meeting in Las Vegas in 1976, I have witnessed numerous and wonderful displays of Chris Matthews and Geraldo Rivera-type of entertainment.

So, this association has provided me substance, I care deeply about it, and this award is all the more important to

me because of the respect that I hold for the association and its members.

I would like to provide some brief reflections on my term as editor, which I will title "From Salmon to Warm Pumpkin."

On July 7, 1993, I made a trip to Rochester, NY, to transfer editorship of the *JPHD* from Dennis Leverett to myself. It was the hottest day on record for Rochester, close to 100 degrees. Dennis put me up in the third-floor attic of a convent that had been converted into a bed and breakfast, with no air conditioning—you know, you never need air conditioning in Rochester! The next morning, Dennis and I spent a couple of hours together, during which time he explained the paper flow back and forth between the editor and authors, the editor and referees, the editor and the production manager in Germany, the printer, the national office, and several others that are necessary to keep a journal afloat. At the end of the morning, with my head swimming, he handed me the one accepted manuscript and wished me luck! He did comment that I could find him in New Mexico if I really needed him, and he would be forwarding his address before too long. Fortunately, Dennis and his staff were extremely well organized, and I inherited a well-described and functioning set of procedures.

But as I flew back to Chapel Hill after my visit with Dennis, I thought that I surely had stepped into the closest thing on earth to hell itself, and I couldn't stop thinking about the lines of a poem that I once heard Dave Striffler recite as he neared the end of his term as editor of the *JPHD*:

The Editor stood 'fore the
Heavenly Gate,
His features pinched and cold.
He bowed before the Man of Fate,
Seeking admission to the fold.
"What have you done," St. Peter
asked,
"To gain admission here?"
"I was the Journal's editor, Sir,
For many a weary year."

The Pearly Gates swung open
wide

As Peter pressed the bell.

"Come in and choose your harp,"
he cried;

"You've had your share of hell!"

When I became editor, I learned that Gabriele Glang, the production manager, selects the color of the journal cover, which changes with each volume. But being the "new" editor, I wanted to exert some control and asked that she use the academic color for public health—salmon—which had been used by the Institute of Medicine for the Future of Public Health Report not too long before. Only later did I come to appreciate the symbolic nature of the color. I definitely was on a steep learning curve in my new position and was swimming upstream. When Gabriele called me this year to discuss her ideas for a color for the current volume, she suggested a "warm pumpkin." I said "sure," not having any idea what warm pumpkin might look like and having lost all hopes of exerting any control. Yet again, at this moment today, I appreciate the symbolism of the color she selected. I began my journey as editor swimming upstream, and it is time for me to turn into a pumpkin at the magic hour that I hand the reins to the next editor.

I believe the *JPHD* plays an important role in the life of the association, its members, and the profession. It contains the scientific evidence that underlies many of our professional activities, and it thus is one of the hallmarks of our profession itself. It also chronicles the life and times of the association and its members. Your journal has had nine editors in its 60 years, and I feel fortunate to have been one of them. I thank those who encouraged me to try it, those who have supported me over the last seven years, and for the opportunity to serve as the steward of public health scientific information for the association. And again, I thank you for this award.