

of the Health Care Committee of the Massachusetts Legislature, Representative John McDonough, who moderated our session this morning, called Myron to ask if "access to dental care was a problem." Myron informed him of the neglected dental epidemic in Massachusetts with endless facts and figures and then he met with Representative McDonough and his staff for 2 1/2 hours mapping out the problems and potential solutions. They then drafted a bill that resulted in authorizing oral health to become part of the Massachusetts CHIP program and creating a special legislative commission on oral health. The ensuing oral health report from the commission resulted in over \$35 million in new funding for oral health and raised the visibility and focus on oral health.

Myron is a diplomat and served as president of the American Board of Dental Public Health. He has served as

president of AAPHD, as well as a host of other organizations, and is the second dentist and first Vietnam veteran to serve as president of the American Public Health Association (APHA). Last year Myron became the first dentist to receive the Sedgwick Memorial Medal, APHA's oldest and most prestigious award.

Myron currently serves as the director of oral health for the Boston Public Health Commission, a position he has held under different titles since 1970. He developed, nurtured, and still supports a network of 17 health center dental programs in Boston providing more than 100,000 patient visits a year. He created one of the first dental programs in the country to serve homeless populations in 1984, and in 1990 he initiated an HIV dental program, in addition to his efforts to expand dental hygiene and dental assistant duties in Massachusetts. He was also responsi-

ble for mandatory continuing education for dental relicensure in his state. As a result, the Yankee Dental Congress is now the third largest dental meeting in the country. Last month, the Massachusetts Dental Society honored Dr. Allukian for his many achievements in front of their Board of Trustees.

After 30 years in dental public health, we can see that Myron still finds his career stimulating. Just last year he began an innovative AEGD program in Boston health centers that is expected to bring them more than \$700,000 in free dental care in the coming year. We are lucky that, instead of his going to another county to improve dental health, Myron realized there was plenty to do in Massachusetts and the United States.

Congratulations, Myron, for all you have done to improve oral health in your city, state, and our country.

## Remarks on Receiving the 2002 Distinguished Service Award

### Myron Allukian, Jr., DDS, MPH

My dear friends, colleagues, students, and former students, I am very pleased and honored to receive the 2002 Distinguished Service Award of the American Association of Public Health Dentistry (AAPHD), especially here in Danvers, one of the first communities to fluoridate in Massachusetts in 1951.

This award is really for all of you, and what you represent, and all those before us, who laid the foundation for the specialty and discipline of dental public health. I am just a symbol or reflection of our work and our dedication to serving the public.

About 37 years ago I was a dentist at the 3rd Marine Division Field Hospital in the rice paddies outside of Danang, Vietnam. All the Marine casualties in Vietnam were brought to our tent hospital, and usually as mass casualties, in the middle of the night. It was a horrifying experience at times. During the day it became so hot, by noontime you couldn't treat dental patients, so I initiated a people-to-people

program. I began with the three orphanages—Catholic, Buddhist, and Protestant—and then went to the refugee camps, schools, and villages. At the Buddhist orphanage at the end of the day, after we treated the children, they would sing a "thank-you song." It penetrated me from head to toe. If someone offered me a \$1 million instead, I wouldn't take it. As a result of my experiences in Vietnam, I decided to enter the field of dental public health, although I didn't know what public health was at that time.

It has been a great career. The challenges are unlimited, I still can't wait to get to work in the morning, and I have difficulty leaving at end of the day. It's been an honor and an privilege to be in public health and to be able to help our fellow human beings. Although I have been in the field over 30 years, I am still mid-career, as I have five children in school and three in college for the next four years.

I would like to thank AAPHD, its members, leadership, and staff who

have taught me so much and given me many exciting opportunities to work with you and for you. A few examples:

- Taking AAPHD from a budget in the red to one in the black.
- Restructuring the annual AAPHD meeting, beginning with the infamous Latha Hotel in Atlanta.
- Recertifying the specialty of dental public health.
- Creating the climate for a positive national dental policy for persons with HIV/AIDS.
- Getting dental public health questions included in the National Board Examinations.
- Sensitizing HRSA and its administrators to make oral health a much higher priority.
- Working to have oral health included as part of a national health plan in the White House and in Congress.
- Convincing the Northeast Regional Board of Dental Examiners (NERB) to implement the CDC recommendations on infection control.
- The reauthorization of dental

public health residency training by Congress.

I wish to give a special thanks to my parents for the values they inculcated in me. My father died several years ago, 10 days short of 102 years; my mother, aged 93, is here today. I also wish to thank my family, my wife and six children, for their understanding and patience for all my absences from home.

### The Future

There is still much to be done. Our realities and priorities as a nation have changed since September 11, 2001. We in dental public health must be more ingenious, better organized, and more focused than ever before.

- Oral health must become a much higher priority in our country. We need a population-based approach to respond to this neglected epidemic.
- The dental public health infrastructure in our country needs to be

strengthened in every state, major city, rural county, and in the federal government.

- Fluoridation must be a much higher priority in our country. It is unacceptable that over 100 million Americans do not have the health and economic benefits of fluoridation.

- School dental sealant programs must be available to every high-risk child in our country.

- Dental care programs such as Medicaid must be for families, not children only. Just as we can't separate the mouth from the body, we can't separate the child from the family.

- As more individuals become involved in oral health programs, dental public health science and practice should provide the framework for action.

- We need to attract more of the best and brightest of our students into dental public health.

- Healthy People 2010, the Sur-

geon General's Report, and a National Dental Plan must be guideposts for better oral health for the American people.

Thank you again for this award and the opportunities to work with you and to serve the public. I would like to close with a few "Armenian" quotes.

I am a part of all that I have met.

*Alfred Lord Tennyson*

At our best level of existence we  
are part of a family,  
And at our highest level of  
achievement,  
We work to keep the family alive.

*Maya Angelou*

Never doubt that a small group of  
thoughtful citizens can change the  
world. Indeed, it's the only thing  
that ever has.

*Margaret Mead*

## AAPHD 2002 Public Service Award: Senator Jeff Bingaman

**Presented by Rebecca S. King, DDS, MPH**

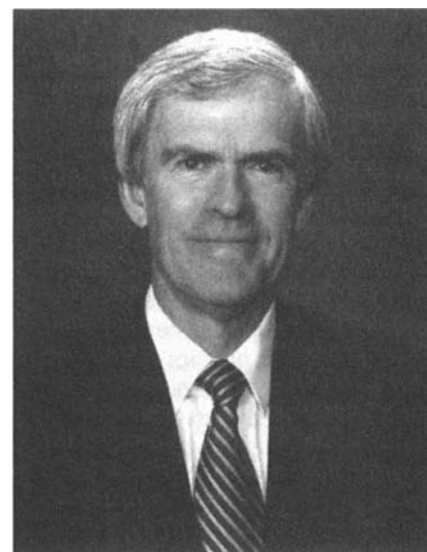
The AAPHD Public Service Award is presented to an individual for substantial contribution through action related to public health dentistry. The 2002 recipient of this award is Jeff Bingaman, Democratic senator from New Mexico.

Senator Bingaman was born and raised in New Mexico. The son of educators, he attended public schools. He earned a bachelor of arts degree in government from Harvard University in 1965, and in 1968, he graduated from the Stanford University School of Law. Senator Bingaman served in the Army Reserves from 1968 to 1974. After one year as New Mexico assistant attorney general and eight years in private law practice, Senator Bingaman was elected attorney general of New Mexico in 1978, and in 1982 he was elected to the US Senate.

Senator Bingaman is chair of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee and serves on a number of other legislative committees, including

Health, Education, Labor and Pensions; Armed Services (where he has been a friend of those enlisted in the various branches of the armed services); and Finance. As a member of the Senate Finance Committee, which has jurisdiction over Medicaid and Medicare, Senator Bingaman is in a key position to shape the health care debate in the coming years. He wants to use this role to improve and expand quality health care and access, and is working to expand health care coverage to poor children by expanding Medicaid.

Of particular interest to AAPHD, Senator Bingaman sponsored Senate Bill 1626, a bill to provide disadvantaged children with access to dental services. The short title of this act is the Children's Dental Health Improvement Act of 2001. Title I of this act includes grants to improve the provision of dental services under Medicaid and SCHIP and the authority to provide dental coverage under SCHIP as a supplement to other health cover-



*Senator Jeff Bingaman*

age. Title II includes grants to improve the provision of dental health services through community health centers and public health departments, dental