

only one student who failed on the first try. A majority of graduates stayed in the state to practice, and the program still exists—a major achievement now that baccalaureate degree programs within dental schools have become an endangered species.

She is also proud that multiple former students and protégés have gone on to graduate education, earned doctoral degrees, and made extraordinary contributions to the public's health; many hold leadership posi-

tions in dental hygiene, public health, or within broader societal institutions.

And finally she shared that against all odds, oral health became a component of several major surveillance systems at CDC, and has been retained in others, in spite of in spite of opposition. Without data to use for decision-making, there can be no public health process. The Surveillance Investigation and Research Team also made important contributions to the science base, e.g., two JPHD “best pa-

pers,” economic and other applied research and synthesis of science into recommendations. And they mentored more new “public healthers” than was expected, given the small number of federal employees they had at CDC.

Dolores, it is a real pleasure to present the 2005 Special Merit Award to you for a wonderful career in dental public health. Thank you for the important and lasting contributions you have made.

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## Remarks on Receiving the Special Merit Award

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**Dolores M. Malvitz, BA, MPH, DrPH**

As I enjoy and appreciate this really lovely moment, it seems important to note how widely my career deviated from the life I had envisioned, now some 45 years ago, when I ventured a few miles up the road to enter a certificate program in dental hygiene at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. That two-year education would allow me to move back to Carleton, marry my handsome high school boyfriend, have babies, live happily ever after as a pillar of the community, *and* buy a professional insurance policy, in case my handsome husband died. (That was how women were taught to think—or not—back then!)

That I am standing here, accepting this award for quite different contributions, stems from the efforts of many who touched, shaped—or bombarded—my life. In the interests of the meeting schedule, I'll neither list them all, nor wax endlessly eloquent about the quality of their contributions to my career.

I do recognize, however, that persons, places, and circumstances combine to affect our lives, sometimes in monumental ways. And so, my ab-

breviated list of those most responsible for my being here today:

- My parents, who put education first—and *somehow* found resources to fund that first college experience, which changed my life.
- Five dentists who altered my own view of what I could do. All valued my contributions—and said, out loud, to all who would listen, that I had skills and knowledge they did not. Each went out on a limb in order to hire me, nudged me to accept more responsibility, apologized for my directness (and who knows what all else. . . ), went well beyond the norm to provide crucial support, or “all of the above.” In chronological order, **THANK YOU:** William Spencer; David Striffler; Bill Brown; Larry Furman; and Don Marianos. (It's probably not a coincidence that two of the five received this very award, themselves . . . ) David Striffler, especially, deserves praise for his egalitarian mentoring of dental hygienists, in an era when

it was very, very, very rare among his peers.

- Taxpayers of the State of Michigan, who funded a world-class institution of higher education—as well as the scholarship I earned with my high school grades. . . and taxpayers of the U.S., who paid me a stipend (of \$300/month) to attend graduate school, during those halcyon days of public health traineeships.
- My many excellent, talented colleagues—together, over the years, we accomplished the progress for which I am being honored. It's a cliché, but the truth: The sum always IS far greater than the individual parts. As a retiree, working with these collegial peers remains one of the things I most miss.
- My nominator, Bill Maas, and the Awards Committee, who decided I met the criteria for the Special Merit Award.

THANK YOU all; I am *so* grateful to AAPHD for this recognition.