



Homenaje a Slick Vanarsdall (y 2)

AUTHENTIC LEADER

We want to dedicate another volume of the REO to our beloved Dr. Robert “Slick” Vanarsdall Jr. He deserves even more than these few words we put together to reflect all the good he did around us. Slick represented hard work, loyalty, duty to his family, friends, residents, and patients. He was a noble friend and a virtuous person. Thank you Slick!

IGNACIO BLASI, DAVID MUSICH and ANDREU PUIGDOLLERS

PROFESSIONAL REMARKS

In his statements from the last REO volume, Ignacio discusses the many professional contributions that Slick gave to our specialty. All of Slick’s contributions significantly impact, in a very positive way, how we practice orthodontics today.

In a book, True North, written by an accomplished CEO and business leader, Bill George describes authentic leadership¹. His findings, after his team had interviewed 125 leaders in a variety of areas of business and nonprofits, sound as if they might be describing Slick.

During an interview with the Wall Street Journal, Mr. George described leaders as follows: “They lead with their whole selves – their hearts as well as their heads. They don’t get pulled off course by seductions and pressures. Every leader who has failed, that I’ve seen, has not failed to lead other people, they’ve failed to lead themselves.

What we learned (from our interviews) was that leadership is not about traits and characteristics. What really stood out was their life stories. That’s where they found their passion to lead – their experiences. That’s what gave them the authenticity of leadership. A lot of the inauthentic leaders got pulled off trying to be something different than they were.”

To be sure, Slick was an authentic leader and nothing pulled him off the course that he, through his early experiences with Dr. Cohen and Dr. Amsterdam, had learned. He mentally documented and tried to understand why some patients advanced perio-restorative treatment were failing. He learned that restorative “camouflage” on teeth that were off the basal bone were doomed to failure. Observations that he made, he researched and shared with his residents and orthodontists all over the world. He shared his findings through his lectures, his many publications, and his book chapters. Many facets of this wonderful teacher and friend were described in remembrances which were read at his eulogy during the Society of Orthodontic Educators, SOE meeting at the Annual Session of AAO in 2017.

He was a giver:

TOM CANGIALOSI – past Dean, Columbia University and now Chair at Rutgers

One brief story, we were on a site visit together and when it came time to leave for home, he changed his plans at the last minute and flew to Texas to expose a cuspid for a friend who was having a problem bringing it in. That was the kind of person he was.

JIM VADEN – Past Chair, University of Tennessee

“Slick – THANK YOU for all you do for so many. The only way I can ‘pay you back’ for all you have done for us is to continue the good fight in our specialty and to help as many young folks who are entering our specialty as I possibly can. I promise you that I will do just that because you have set the bar so high for all of us.”

Slick was a lover

He loved his wife Sandy, his children and grandchildren. He loved Penn, especially Penn Ortho and the ortho residents. When the ortho class of 88 asked what he would like as a legacy – Slick’s answer came quickly – “an endowment

fund to help reduce the orthodontic resident's tuition burden." That is now in place and many in this room have made a contribution – for which his family is very appreciative.

Quotes from past residents: Slick had a “southern” way of describing important items!

1. On the transverse dimension:

Making a point “Look at that rodent arch”

“I’m gonna make him a wide, wide and that’s beautiful”

2. On the gingival tissue:

“Those gums are so thick you could make a pair of Nike’s out of them

3. On impacted canines – Scene in the clinic: “ Doctor V can you help me expose this canine;” usually Slick will do this with his sport coat on; you know it was a tough one when he looks twice at the X-ray and takes off his jacket.” Slick had a tough one in his office that he exposed 9 days before he passed away.

HE WAS INSPIRING

Inspiring definitely!!

There are nine department heads who graduated from Penn during Slick’s professorship of the orthodontic department:

ChunHsi Chung (University of Pennsylvania, Department of Ortho);

Jeff Godel (Temple University);

Vanessa Morenzi (Albert Einstein);

Cristina Teixeira (NYU) 2005–2016

Orhan Tuncay (Past Chair of Temple University);

Peter Ngan (University of West Virginia);

Franz Currier (University of Oklahoma);

Bob Boyd (University of Pennsylvania);

Ada Cavalcante-Adam; Head of the CSF Biomaterials and Molecular Biology Department at the Max Planck Institute for Intelligent Systems (Stuttgart, Germany)

Slick was a Beacon of Light

ELIZABETH MUSICH BARRETT, Program Editor, Angle East 1996–2017

I met Slick over 40 years ago in Philadelphia; he was my brother’s colleague and friend and he quickly became a friend, mentor, and inspiration to me. Slick had a way of making every person feel like they were the most interesting person he had ever met. His smile and his genuine and generous nature brought authenticity and warmth to every encounter. Slick’s ability to “light the way” made everyone of us who knew him shine more brightly.

After reading all of the emails about Slick, I finally figured out his nickname – it is really an acronym

S – sensational dentist

L – legendary Human Being

I – inspirational teacher

C – caring Clinician

K – kind to everyone.

DAVID MUSICH

REFERENCE

1. George W, Sims P. True North. New York: Jossey-Bass, John Wiley and Sons; 2007.