

A Virtuous Friend

I was very fortunate. I had the great privilege of spending the past few years of Slick's life with him. We treated patients, drove together, ate dinner, talked about life and teeth, teeth and life...

Slick had an authentic and unique personality, he was elegant and polite. Everybody knew him for his honesty, nobility, and his great integrity. I remember when I just started working for him, after seeing a patient; he turned around and asked me what I thought about the treatment. I was shocked that he asked my opinion. As respected as he was in our field, he was modest enough to ask someone with much less experience. He taught me that part of being humble means realizing that you do not have all the answers. In fact, he was always seeking to learn and become better. He thrived to achieve excellence.

He was a kind and generous person who was concerned for others, always ready to help those near to him. He made sure one felt respected. Even during his illness, he helped others and let others help him. It takes humility to admit you need help and he happily received it. He never complained about his adversities and when asked about his discomfort he usually answered: "I just keep going, I don't pay much attention to it." After he finished his work day he thanked each person at the office for their help running the practice, he was a grateful person.

I admired his courage and fortitude through all the adversity he had in the past few years. He never gave up and was positive until his last minute. He not only influenced us professionally, but he influenced many of us on a personal level with his example. Thank you Slick!

IGNACIO BLASI
Maryland

Mi amigo «Slick»

Todo empezó en el año 1992, estábamos en pleno apogeo del curso de la filosofía Roth en San Sebastián cuando oí hablar por primera vez del Dr. Vanarsdall, «Slick» para todos. Nunca supe porque le llamaban «Slick», pero es así, como todos le llamaban. En inglés, «Slick» quiere decir pulido, refinado, pero cuando se refiere a una persona viene a significar espabilado o incluso vivo. No creo que fuera ni lo uno ni lo otro, pero lo que sí sé es que era una muy muy buena persona, que tenía un corazón enorme y que era muy amigo de sus amigos. Yo tuve la suerte de ser muy amigo de «Slick». Como dije, todo empezó en San Sebastián cuando el Dr. Roth nos enseñaba casos de ortoperio y, por muy buena formación que tuviéramos, no sabíamos apenas de periodoncia. Era normal, ya que, en las consultas de ortodoncia en esa época, los adultos escaseaban, no había llegado aún la ortodoncia del adulto. Sin embargo, como intuíamos que estaba por llegar decidimos organizar primero un curso privado en Madrid (en la consulta de la Dra. Marisa Ramírez de Arrellano) de ortodoncia y periodoncia y, a continuación, un curso abierto al público. Fue nuestro primer contacto con la periodoncia relacionada con la ortodoncia, nos quedamos todos estupefactos y encantados con ambos cursos y nos abrieron los ojos hacia una nueva realidad. Personalmente me quedé con ganas de más y le pedí permiso a «Slick» para acudir a la Universidad de Pennsylvania con el propósito de seguir aprendiendo. Cuál fue mi sorpresa cuando me propuso acudir a nuestra consulta (de Pilar y mía) de San Sebastián y ver los casos *in situ*. Me quedé con la boca abierta y sin pensarlo dos veces, le dije que sí. A continuación nos pusimos a preparar la mejor forma de organizar las visitas y así aprovechar al máximo su estancia. Después de cruzar unas cuantas cartas (¡¡¡no existían entonces ni mail ni ordenadores!!!), decidimos empezar con unos 40 casos (era la época de la abundancia de pacientes), él vendría cada 4 meses, así pudimos

empezar los casos bajo su dictado. En su primera visita, nos dedicamos casi tres días completos a diagnosticar y planificar los tratamientos. Era para mí como tocar el cielo, no paraba de aprender, y hoy día aún conservo los cuadernos donde apuntada todo, y cuando los releo me vienen a la memoria recuerdos imborrables. «Slick» era tan cercano y tan cariñoso que un buen día me dijo que eso de ir a un hotel no le gustaba mucho y qué me parecería si se quedaba en mi casa. Le contesté que por nosotros ningún problema, pero tenía que saber que había 7 enanos en casa con edades que iban de los 2 a los 13 años. En lugar de asustarse se le iluminó la cara y con su lenguaje tan peculiar dijo sin pensarlo dos veces, «*man, that's exactly what I am looking for*» es decir, «eso es lo que yo buscaba». Era hombre de familia y estar en un entorno familiar es lo que le hacía feliz. En los siguientes viajes se quedaba en casa y, al poco tiempo, ya había aprendido todos los nombres de mis hijos y les trataba como si fueran suyos, y mis hijos le adoraban. Años después me preguntaba por mis hijos y se acordaba perfectamente de los nombres de cada uno de ellos. Estuvo viniendo durante unos 18 meses (en 4 ocasiones) y pudimos empezar todos los casos, resolver unos cuantos y dejar bien encarrilados todos los demás. Fueron unos años maravillosos y descubrí un hombre con un corazón de oro, con una pasión por la profesión que he visto en pocas ocasiones y un amigo para toda la vida. Tengo decenas de anécdotas, pero lo que recuerdo con mucho cariño (además se repitió varias veces) fue cuando mirando una panorámica o una periapical veía un diente que había perdido, por ejemplo, el 80% de su soporte óseo, y miraba al paciente y le decía «*this is the best tooth in San Sebastián*», es decir, «este es el mejor diente de San Sebastián». Lo decía totalmente convencido y hacía lo imposible por salvar el diente. El otro es lo que siempre decía, “para tratar pacientes periodontales hay que tener alicates en una mano y la turbina en la otra”. Se me quedó grabado, y hasta el día de hoy le hago caso. Fueron unos meses deliciosos y aún hoy, cuando trato un paciente con enfermedad periodontal, miro hacia arriba y digo «*thanks Slick*».

Durante años cada vez que iba a la reunión de la AAO, siempre buscábamos un hueco en nuestra agenda para cenar o comer juntos, y nos reíamos hablando de aquellos días de San Sebastián... Le echaré de menos ¡¡¡Pero tuve la suerte de conocerle y tenerle de amigo... Vaya lujo!!!

Q.e.p.d.

*DOMINGO MARTÍN, JOSÉ ANTONIO BADÁS,
TERESA IRIARTE Y AMAIA MATÉ*

Tribute to a Legend

Lucky me! 27 years and ZERO re-treatments! I consider myself to be the most fortunate orthodontist ever because I not only studied at The University of Pennsylvania - under Dr. Vanarsdall's leadership but also then had the consummate privilege of practicing beside him, for the next 21 years. He was the most incredible individual I've ever known; he blended brilliance, charisma, concern, meticulousness, energy, enthusiasm, and humor like no one else could. Moreover, what made him most inimitable was his perceptiveness - he had a keen and innate ability to notice things that the rest of us couldn't and didn't and he called our attention to them, thereby pioneering much of what is now known, in orthodontics -from the ortho-perio interplay, to the routinely predictable and successful treatment of impacted teeth, adult orthodontics, early treatment orthodontics, occlusal considerations, and planning and ensuring long-term stability - from day one of treatment, among others.

I can vividly remember my first exposure to TAD use (in Japan), during an AAO Conference lecture, and excitedly telling Slick about TADs and that he had to become our “TAD expert” - in the USA, once TADs received FDA approval; as it turned out, he didn't have the option to not be our expert, because every U.S. manufacturer was lining-up to solicit his assistance and expertise for their lectures, training videos, publications, and hands-on courses, before long.

God Bless you, Slick and a million thank you's - I am forever indebted to you; my patients and orthodontic patients - worldwide, are receiving better care, thanks to you!

*SALVATORE P. DE RICCO,
White Plains, New York*

Uplifting Slick

Uplifting! Yes, Slick Vanarsdall had the power of making people feel good. His charisma was like a magnet! People wanted to be around him, work with him, listen to him, and ask for his opinion because his words had more weight or some sort of truth just because they happened to come from him. Through his charisma and hard work, he led the Department of Orthodontics at the University of Pennsylvania to its pinnacle. He formed several leaders in our field, wrote several books, gave hundreds of presentations, and contributed to several societies and more. In fact, he did it all! He made orthodontics a better specialty. On a personal note, I was blessed by having the opportunity to be his student, colleague, coworker at the University, and friend. For more than 10 years, he was there, like a father, helping me in every little step I did in my career. Congratulating me when things were going well, and supporting me when things were not. His footprint is in everything I have done. When I joined the Angle Society as a young orthodontist, we would room together to minimize my expenses. I learned Slick's morning routine very well! He would wake up at 4 am, get ready, and leave the room quietly, so I could keep sleeping. He would then explore the venue, read his newspaper, and put his bag and computer at the front row of the meeting room. Around 7 am, he would go back to the room and wake me up with a fresh cup of coffee. We had such a great time. Slick was unique... and only God knows how much I miss that fresh coffee!

ANTONINO G. SECCHI
Devon, Pennsylvania

He was inspiring

Orthodontics during my undergraduate studies had been the most boring subject! However, in 1985, I listened to one of Slick's presentations in Germany. He was talking about orthodontics in perio patients and showing his incredible results! After Slick's brainstorming presentation, orthodontics was no longer boring and I decided to apply for a specialty training in ortho. So thank you Slick - you were the most inspirational role model that led me to my professional choice.

UTE MOSER
Bolzano, Italy



With Morton Amsterdam having a good time- 1989.



With Salvatore DeRicco at the AAO San Diego 2016.



Bryan Mwar, PA 2014 with Ignacio Blasi Celebrating a Special Occasion.



Slick with Jim McNamara and Ignacio Blasi at The 43rd Annual Moyers Symposium. University of Michigan. 2016.



Slick's 75 birthday party with Antonino Secchi.



Slick with Dave Musich and Charlie Dodds in an Italian Restaurant, Philadelphia 2016.



Slick with his friend Domingo Martin, Philadelphia.