

East Coast Dental Society Foundation, Inc.
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in support of the
Robert L. Kaplan Visiting Professorship
University of Florida College of Dentistry

WHO ARE YOU? AND WHO YOU ARE.

JUNE 11, 1976

Alpha Class-Charter Class
University of Florida College of Dentistry
by Robert L. Kaplan, D.D.S.

Well, Paul, Craig, Andres, Bill, Ron, Charlie, Alan H., Paul, Alan K., Louis, Ken, Bill, Steve, Gary, Ray, Mike, Park, Jeff... we made it!! This is finally it. The marriage of intellect and money and dedication and commitment; enthusiasm and zeal, talent and drive, pride and, yes, even quiet prayer and desperate hopes and, of course, just plain hard work, has brought us to this moment. This moment of what---surely we all know that: The University of Florida College of Dentistry's first born---that's who you are---you are the Alpha Class---you are the charter class, not the 47th class of 200 students at a dental school whose Professor of Occlusion has told me he only knows the few most gifted and the very slowest learners in the class. No, not at all. Rather, to paraphrase a great leader of my twenties.. "never have so few learned so much from so many," or if you wish to turn the coin, "never had so many taught so much to so few."

Oh, I know when you were dependently and desperately looking for a faculty member to approve a preparation, or to give you credit for an eighth's in crown and bridge, or hold a seminar at your convenience, it didn't seem so. But, I promise you---one day you will know the accuracy of, "never have so few learned so much from so many." Which brings me to an observation.

Times have changed a great deal. I happen to know that the average I.Q. of the class is over 115. I graduated dental school in 1944, and my I.Q., I understand, doesn't quite reach 100. So, you see, I couldn't even get admitted to your dental school class. I could teach, but a student?...Uh, uh, never! I do know you've had it tough, especially in the area of clinical dentistry, and that you struggled through surgery and the psych building basement. I knew it was difficult when I saw the October 1973 newspaper whose lead paragraph I will quote in full, "Two Dozen African Baboons at the University's Animal Research

Farm are Now Having Dental Appointments at the College of Dentistry." Come clean, how many of you were that desperate? How many eighth's did you make that way? You won't believe this unless you see the accompanying picture, but there it is, Dr. Harold Stanley keeping the appointments with the baboons. Also, working on the baboons were Doctors Larry Hench, John Montgomery, Seth Weintraub, O. Walter Donnenfeld, and Robert E. Going. I was relieved though, I didn't see Dr. Eric Jackson whispering in Doctor Stanley's ear. Before you reach any conclusions---no, it is not the intramural program, but a research program in bioglass-ceramic implants, and research is an important area of competence and performance by your faculty. Yes, never have so many taught so much to so few.

There has been a union of intellect, dedication, commitment, money, enthusiasm, zeal, talent, drive, knowledge, desire, pride, prayer and hard work that has brought us to this moment of delivery---this moment of graduation.

The union that brought you to this moment, beyond the private union of your physical creation, represents civilization and our democratic system, and our way of life at one of its most creative moments. The qualities I have recited are not only descriptive of your efforts, but those of your faculty, their staff, the university (soon to be your Alma Mater), your legislators, your governors, your regents, the dentists of Florida, the tax payers of Florida, yes, even the Federal Government to the tune of a 19 million dollar construction grant. That is what our educational system is all about---the creation of institutions which will function to pass on to a chosen few the general body of knowledge associated with the term "an educated man" and the specific body of knowledge sufficient to do what the university will soon do for you---the granting of your doctoral degree as a dentist. But, why? Why so much by all in this collective union of creation? In broad philosophic terms, so that you can use your education and knowledge and skills to reach out and return to society---to those who need your skills for a better existence--in a very special civilized manner--through direct private practice in the main, through teaching for others, research, and communal efforts to a lesser number. But, it is difficult to deal with life just on broad philosophic terms. So, let's be specific about what is going to happen. You are the first graduates on the College of Dentistry. In a few minutes, you are the tradition of the University of Florida. That's the good news. The bad news is, this is module 1976--you have all passed your pre-test. The bad news is you have a post-test, not by the faculty, not by the A.D.A., not by the State Board (that's your professional puberty rite society requires). It will be a post-test ad infinitum by your families, your

patients, and your fellow citizens.

By the way, speaking of post-tests ad infinitum reminds me of the 42 year-old on the campus who woke up late one morning and said to his wife, "I just don't want to go to school today. The students don't like me; some of the faculty don't like me. I'm behind in my work. I'm having a hard time getting the money I need. I just feel bad, and I'm not sure I'm getting anywhere." His wife listened sympathically and said, "I've heard enough of that. Now get up and go to school!" "But, why, Winnie, why?" "Because you're the dean!" Perhaps there was a day like that, and maybe there was more than one. But, here we are Dean Allen, about to start a tradition, and your strength and leadership has brought the school a strong faculty, full accreditation, with dedication to creating a tradition unique to the University of Florida graduate. And so we come to the title of today's talk, "Who Are You? And Who You Are".

In a few minutes something akin to magic is going to happen, and you won't be the same person any more. It is not quite the difference created by priesthood ordination, but in the tradition of the University of Florida College of Dentistry, there is a kinship relationship. It is not the difference created by the DMD degree, but in the tradition you can create from the University of Florida College of Dentistry--there is a strong kinship relationship. It is the difference to be made in your lives by achieving a Doctor of Dental Medicine degree from the University of Florida. What has it all been about? Ask yourself, "Who are you?", and then listen to me as I tell you who you are. There is a new element of you beginning.

It started with Samuel P. Martin, M.D., Provost of the Medical Center in 1963. He could not comprehend what it meant for a dental school to be periodontally oriented, or full-coverage oriented, or gold foil oriented, or occlusion oriented, or research oriented, or biologically oriented, or for that matter prevention oriented. He could only comprehend people oriented.

In other words, in the areas of concern which dentistry represents, it is to be people-problem oriented and its corollary: problem people oriented. That brings us to:

M E M O R A N D U M

December 30, 1969

To: Faculty, College of Dentistry

From: Jose E. Medina, Dean

Subject: CHARGE TO THE FACULTY REGARDING PROGRAM

provide corrective emotional experiences with our contacts. That is the nature of the true humanistic professional man.

When you act impulsively to help a child in danger and apply specialized skill and knowledge in doing it, that is a professional act. When you apply your specialized skill and knowledge with an effort at the same time of selflessness for an appropriate fee, that is ideal private practice.

Maybe the title should be: "Who am I Now, and Who Do I Choose to Be?" Remember, nothing in this great moment is to be construed as keeping you from being the best gift wrapper and carrier to the curb of the garbage for the family, and a super dog and car washer and all that is implicit in the bumper strip which says, "Have you hugged your kid today?"

Your faculty has faith in your potential. Now prove they're right and make yourself proud! Good luck, and welcome.