

Good morning and thank you for being here to see the business and the administration of your Academy. The grandeur, the dignity and the success of this Academy are all measured by the quality of people who serve it, be it staff or volunteers.

As I look around this room I see friends and colleagues from regions spreading across the US, Canada and Puerto Rico bonded together by this Academy. I am awed by your presence, by the wealth and depth of knowledge, the diversity, the commitment, and the zeal you demonstrate now and have done over the years.

On your behalf and the Academy's behalf let me start by thanking Dave, Paula, Linda, Jeff, Howard, Roger and Vinny. They were instrumental in propagating your Academy through the last couple of years of turmoil and change, especially Paula, for the time, the energy, the perseverance and the fortitude to be there when the Academy needed her most.

Personally I want to thank some of those that mentored me, advised me, encouraged me, redirected and supported me throughout my journey to this point in time, standing before you as the president of this most illustrious Academy.

A quiet beloved man with a soft heart and a generous personality, a teacher, a mentor, a friend, a confidant and an unsung hero to so many. That was Horace Floyd. He passed away a day before flying in to attend the AGD's annual meeting in Denver. Thank you Ace wherever you are.

My Region 9 and their Boards thank you for your generosity, friendship and patience in times of uncertainty and adversity. Sam, Dennis, Rick, Tony, Nahid, Francine, Carl, Mike, Christine, Lou, big John and all my Wisconsin buddies' thank you so much.

Trustees that served with me over the years Peter, Maria, JJ, Gordon, Sami, Manolo, comisi, Larry, Lloyd, Muhammad and Schneider man, just to name a few, thank you. Your devotion, hard work, loyalty and service to the Academy and the principles we all stand for is exemplary.

I would be remiss if I did not thank my two adopted brothers in my adopted country. We became friends in dental school and have been friends ever since. They were my sounding board, were my roommates off and on. They stood up in my wedding and I in theirs, celebrated with me my children's births and graduations and I theirs. We shared in each other's happiness and in each other's grief and sorrow. They are here today, my two brothers Dr. Phillip Badalamanti and Dr. Mark Frenchi.

I want also to thank our staff and our Executive director Mr. McFarlane and last but not least our corporate sponsors, partners and exhibitors. Please patronize them now by visiting the exhibit floor and in your daily business dealings back home in your offices.

Nothing happens but first a dream. The Academy was born more than fifty years ago out of a dream, a dream of a few devoted general dentists. It was born out of camaraderie, friendship and the pursuit of excellence through continuing education. Their dream came true.

I had a dream when I came over to this country, to live in peace and freedom, a dream to further my education, to build a future for me and my family in the land of opportunity.

My dream came true also as did theirs. But in my wildest dreams I could never have dreamt standing before you today as the incoming president of the Academy of general dentistry.

Fortune smiled upon me, this profession, this organization, this land and you blessed me unequivocally and for that I am eternally grateful.

Yes, we must do all of that and we must do it well. More importantly we must get the word out and spread the message across with force, enthusiasm and conviction.

Those were my words to this house exactly two years ago in Orlando. They were true then and are still as true as they can ever be. We made a few advances since but the fact remains that we have much much more to do.

The professional world around us is changing and is gaining momentum. We as general dentists have to change the way we practice, the way we promote and the way we advocate for our

profession. We must unselfishly support, embrace and market our organization. And we as an organization must also advocate on behalf of our members, promote our FAGD and MAGD and uphold our ideals and values to all. That is what I am advocating.

Remarkable associations as ours should never forget their mission or their members and should never stop improving the value they provide. They should always remember that their members are focused on value received from membership and the quality of that experience whether it is at a continuing education course, at an annual meeting or just a casual contact with headquarters and staff. We should never stall in improving the value or the experience our members deserve. We should always ask as to how we can better serve our members and their needs but more importantly anticipate those needs. Needs of our members not only here but in Canada, Puerto Rico and where- ever we have members now and may have them in the future. That is what I am advocating.

Sometimes in the wind of change we find our true destination. It is choice not chance that determines our destiny. We must make the right choice to insure a bright future. We should view the marketplace with a wide angle lens and adjust our focus accordingly, whether that marketplace is local national or global. That is what I am advocating.

Changes are coming no doubt. We have to steer those changes coming our way, redirect and modify them to complement our mission, our vision and our members' expectations. We should never be caught off guard napping unprepared and unaware. We should never compromise or appease any organization or entity if it means lowering our standard or our members' expectations. We should never allow unwanted change to be thrust upon us or on the profession without a fight. That is what I am advocating.

We should never waiver in our resolve to defend the right of the general dentist so that my son a sophomore in dental school as well as all dental students graduating along with him, those that graduated before him and those that will graduate after him can practice without undue influence by other entities, agencies, or any other special interest groups. That is what I am advocating.

Yes we were caught napping, unprepared and unaware, But no more. We have to pool our resources, stand firm for our principles, plan for the expected and anticipate the unexpected. We see the camel's nose under the tent's flap; let us make sure that we will not see the whole camel in the tent anytime soon or at any time in the future.

We faced a few challenges and a few skirmishes lately and came out unscathed. We had a few successes thanks to our leadership, to our staff and to our advocacy. We stood up to the defense of our principles and our members' rights. But make no mistake the battle has not been won. It is just beginning.

Our reputation for doing the right thing gained us a lot of respect and renowned accolades and remains untarnished by falsehoods and jealousies or misrepresentations.

As general dentists we are what we repeatedly do. Excellence then is not an act with us but is our habit and on that premise of excellence through continuing education, our association was created and nurtured since its inception. And that will always be the case.

But times have changed, the culture has changed, the demographics have changed and more importantly the psyche of dentists has changed.

Dentists in general as well as the rest of our population have become more complacent, instant and immediate gratification whether at home, in the business world or at the office is the norm nowadays. We no longer can remain or afford to remain a predominantly C.E. recording organization. With the help of every region we must transform into an integral supplier and provider of quality C.E.; into an organization whose members' benefits are cherished, are valued and are sought after by members and prospective members alike. That is what I am advocating.

We should pool our resources with other organizations of like minds to overcome and to defeat those challenges; defeating them with our alliances through the legislature, through our advocacy

or in court. We proved that it can be done this past year on a couple of occasions didn't we. That is what I am advocating.

We all know that our core is continuing education but our essence is our members.

Yes we have about 20% of general dentists as members but we need more, much more. Strength in numbers that is what I am talking about. Our members are committed, devoted and hard working. They are zealous in their strife to keep our FAGD and MAGD the beacon of accomplishments in General Dentistry. That is what I am advocating.

Let us build on this a brighter, stronger membership base for a more secure future. Our CE gives us our credibility but our strength lies in the value of our membership, the success of our advocacy and the perception of our image.

We should enhance membership benefits and offer our members the services that they want, the benefits that they need and those that they deserve in a culture of candor and trust. They have earned it. That is what I am advocating.

Increasing membership, strengthening advocacy, and publicizing our image are the ultimate goal of every administration present and future. But more than that, growing the Academy's business infrastructure by building strong and profitable alliances and partnerships as well as streamlining the Academy's operations to be more nimble in meeting the wants and needs of our members in this ever changing business world is what adds strength, longevity, durability, value and long lasting success. That is what I am advocating.

Intelligent organizations look to the future, they adapt their operating models and update their governance not only to maximize their resources, but also to maximize the talents and time of both volunteers and staff. We must do the same. We must examine our operational systems, redesign our services, accommodate a more virtual environment yet keep that personal touch and involvement that only a membership based organization can provide. That is what I am advocating.

To reexamine our organizational and regional map, to reevaluate our annual meeting venue, and to reassess our programs and our governance were and still are a work in progress. Everything is on the table. In order to rebuild we have to tear down and in order to restructure we have to reshape. The status quo is the status gone. That is the only way if we are to celebrate a centennial with the success that we desire and deserve. We can do that. That is what I am advocating.

It is a tall order but the process has already started. That is why this house elected me two years ago and with your help and the unwavering commitment of the administrations to follow, all of this will come to fruition in time.

The fact is that we are in transition. Taskforces and special committees are being formed to look at all that and I am certain this house will see the outcome in the near future and will nod with approval.

To increase our membership, to bolster our advocacy and to advertize our image does not fall on the shoulders of a select few be it headquarters, staff, officers or Board, but on the shoulders of each and every one of you, our leaders, and on the shoulders of every member in every corner of our regions. It is a collaborative effort among all those that belong, all those that care and all those that want to sustain this academy and nurture it for years to come.

Spread the word.

Be the messenger.

Bring in the young, visit the schools and mentor the students.

Give of yourself, your experience, your knowledge, your passion and yes your resources.

Educate and guide those fledglings, make them understand that the future of dentistry, their future depends on the choices they make and the stance they take now.

If we cannot always build our future for our youth then we must build our youth for our future.

Stand tall, sound your views and constructively act to right what you perceive to be wrong and take charge of your academy.

That is loyalty. That is courage. That is commitment. That is conviction. That is devotion.

That is the right thing to do.

"Standing for right when it is unpopular is a true test of moral character".

That is what you should expect out of yourself, out of your colleagues, out of your Board, your officers and that is exactly what this Academy deserves and expects out of you, nothing more, nothing less.

A strong association is built on the commitment of its staff, the sweat of its volunteers, the strength of its membership, the resolve of its advocacy and the perception of its image. Its leadership and staff are the reflection of its members and constitution to the rest of the world.

While management deals with today, leadership deals with change. Our vision and goals are well documented. We aggressively must act on those principles and stick to our long range plan and never abandon our basic character, our basic mission and our basic goals.

This adaptation necessitates change.

To change we have to act.

Those that Act win.

The vision is at hand, some changes will be simple, some will be drastic, some will be painful, and some even more painful but we will change, we need to, we have to.

It will take time, passion, determination, hard work and perseverance. We have to take risks, be daring, courageous and most of all diligent in embracing change; those who risk win.

In past times we have paid lip service to some of these issues. We even put them through many taskforces, committees, administrations and the house. We failed to deploy.

We have to change.

We have to morph.

We have to Act.

We have to adapt and we have to reinvent our self.

How do we do that you ask? I come from Detroit and what worked for Detroit can work for the AGD. In Detroit they downsized, reorganized, streamlined and refocused their sight on what is important to their clients. They reshaped and resized. Reshaping involves refeaturing by eliminating benefits that are less important and beefing up those benefits that are of higher values.

We must do the same.

As I said before we all will do the right thing each in his and her individual way, popular or not because "Doing what is right when it is unpopular is a true test of moral character", and you my friends have more moral character in your little finger than all those big shooters in Detroit, Wall Street or Washington.

We have to be cognizant of these hard economic times and how we spend our members' dues, yet not shy away if safekeeping and strengthening the Academy may necessitate an increase in dues or a special assessment. Strong associations cannot give back or reach their potential without strong resources.

Your staff, your Executive Committee and your Board is all tireless in serving and in planning all this and need your support. Ultimately it is your duty to reexamine, reevaluate and redirect the Academy. It is the duty of this house to insure the propagation of the principles of this Academy and its existence. It all rests with you.

With this I am planting in you a seed of expectation of unwavering commitment, of unselfish leadership and service, of transparency in words and action, of honesty and forthrightness in dealings, and of loyalty in the pursuit of a strong future. Join me in nurturing this seed.

Finally, I want to thank my family, my sister, my children sitting there with friends for understanding why I have been away so much. I want to thank my staff for putting up with my last minute change of plans. For Maggie my wife of 31 years, there are no words in my vocabulary or in any dictionary to express or define my feeling. It is beyond love, beyond gratitude, beyond appreciation, and beyond devotion. I am the product of your making, you're shaping and you're nurturing. I am a believer in destiny. You are my destiny.

Thank you all and may God bless you, may God bless this Academy and may God bless this land.