Good morning members and guests. It is my honor and privilege to serve as your President for the past year. I would like to thank the past presidents—Peter Schneider, Larry Kraiss, and Bill Pevec—for nominating me. Considering the talent in the society and recognizing that not all of us will have the opportunity to be president makes this honor a deep privilege. I would also like to thank the numerous people who helped shape my career along the way—my patients, trainees, mentors, and most of all my family: Christopher, Michael, and my wife Bev. Whatever I thought of, she could always make it better.

Presidential addresses can be uplifting, sobering, or a little of both.1-5 As we are in Hawaii in our finest Hawaiian gear, I chose a laid back message much like watching the waves and breeze. So, I decided to title my talk, "An Ode to Waves and Trainees."

I love being in Hawaii and watching the waves. They can be anything from small ripples to enormous towers of water dozens of feet high. They are caused by the wind and can travel thousands of miles before reaching land. Once they reach land, they deposit their goods and exit for the next wave to come crashing down. We are like waves in this sea of life.

Like a wave, my path was not predictable but random. It began in Taiwan, as the third son of a diplomat who finished high school and medical school. As a trainee, I never knew about vascular surgery until my third year of residency in the University of British Columbia general surgery training program. Up until then, there were few surgeons I admired. But, the proverbial light went on with my first night of call with Henry Hildebrand, an extraordinary surgeon and previous Western Vascular Surgery member. Henry was everything that other surgeons were not: calm, decisive, technically superior, and a gentleman. I had to become a vascular surgeon.

In those halcyon days, political correctness was not even on the radar. Henry enjoyed teasing the students and had his standard question about the hypoglossal nerve whenever there was a female student scrubbed in a carotid case. Henry would ask, “I am working in this part of the neck where there is an anatomic structure that is always larger in a female than male. What is it?” Henry finally met his match when a particularly astute female student said after reflection, “Oh, I know. It’s the brain!” And with that, Henry never asked that question again.

As a University of British Columbia vascular fellow, I had the good fortune of visiting my immediate senior fellow, David Taylor, who is still a great friend and trusted partner. David was doing his research fellowship down the road in Seattle under the guidance of the two “Genes,” the late Gene Strandness and Gene Zierler. Through Dave, I met the other residents in their pod—Greg Mentha, Ted Kohler, Robert Zwolak, Dave Dawson, and the chief general surgery resident, Ron Dalman. Little did I know that those residents would develop into vascular surgery leaders. Little waves have all the potential of becoming huge waves.

My research fellowship was in sunny California at Harbor-UCLA under the guidance of the two Dr “Whites”: Rodney and the late Geoff White. Both would become renowned international vascular surgeons. Their approaches to patient care and research taught me the importance of collaboration, aiming high but have fun while you’re doing it. We were endo pioneers, studying angioscopy, intravascular ultrasound, and everybody’s darling, the hot tip laser. My research was on examining what could prevent intimal hyperplasia post laser deployment, a problem that remains unsolved with whatever endo device is used. Harbor was a hot bed for vascular innovation and attracted a number of high-quality residents, many of whom would become national leaders. Residents and fellows who went through the Harbor system included Roy Fujitani, Carlos Donayre, Christian de Virgilio, and later Jason Lee and Omid Jazaeri.

My first experience of being involved with a Western Vascular meeting was the Whistler, BC, meeting, in 1998. Back then, volunteers were needed to run the...
meeting and Greg Moneta asked me to be the local arrangements person. That turned out to be both enjoyable for me and profitable for the society.

The experience taught me that if you have an opportunity to serve, grab it with both hands. Through volunteering, I have had the honor of working with outstanding surgeons, from Presidents Larry Kraiss, Bill Pevec, Steve Katz, and John Harris; to executive members Mike Conte, Wei Zhou, Misty Humphries, Sherene Shahlub, and our current executive team, Ben Starnes, Steve Murray, Vincent Rowe, and Venita Chandra. There are so many more excellent members and if I have not mentioned you, I apologize for this.

But the success of our meetings is much more than the contribution of transient volunteers. For the last 5 years, Heather Roderick, and Surgical Conference solutions, have been there to advance our vision and I would like to thank them for all that they do.

To my trainees, I am indebted to you for reminding me about how rewarding teaching and mentoring have been. But, occasionally one has to crack the whip. When a resident does something goofy, we name the maneuver after them. So, our Wall of Shame (to prepare them for the infamous Camel Dung Award) includes maneuvers for sewing in drains that require take backs to remove, making arteriotomies without clamping, placing the anastomosis right on the occlusion, placing the needle directly between the jaws of the Cherry clamp, putting the popliteal anastomosis on the popliteal vein instead of the artery, and, everybody’s favorite, dropping the carefully dissected vein graft on the floor.

Antics aside, the greatest reward for teachers is watching your trainees grow. Every time my resident or student is at the podium presenting the results of that idea that led to the hypothesis that led to the plan that led to the nights and weekends of work, I feel like a proud father. It feels every bit as good as a well-done operation (Fig).

And I am not alone. Each year, we come back to the Western Vascular Society annual meeting, to see my friends with their residents, to meet new members with their trainees, to see new devices from our sponsors. Our society, to me, is a force multiplier that generates high ideals and camaraderie and renews our fellowship.

And so, members and guests, take some time to watch the waves while you are here. Think of yourself as a wave surrounded by all your wave friends, carrying all your energy and knowledge and leave it all on the beach for other waves to add to. Have fun and surf’s up!

REFERENCES


Submitted Nov 7, 2019; accepted Dec 17, 2019.