

LEADERSHIP: COACH NOT CAPTAIN

Finally, the importance of leaders appreciating the humanism of their charges. From Dr Cooper's Address: "We must not allow them to be treated either like cash cows or schoolboys in need of petty discipline."⁸ Some of the happiest or least stressed surgeons I know are those who are salaried. Facts are a relative value unit–based compensation system contributes to lower job satisfaction.⁹ The "captain of the ship" mentality persists; however, in 2020, this approach has potential to be disruptive inside and out of the operating room. Coach should replace captain.¹⁰

FUTURE

Character development includes themes of humanism and well-being, and continue to be central to presidential addresses; however, there is a gaps need for the professional adaptation of the evolving definitions. The future shines bright.

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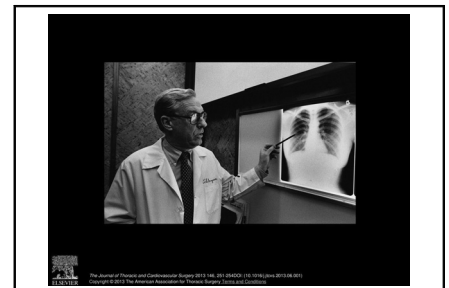
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Commentary: Reflections on the past and how they impact reflections of ourselves

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The American Association for Thoracic Surgery (AATS), founded in 1917, has long espoused as its core values leadership, education, and mentorship. In this issue of the *Journal*, Han and colleagues¹ present their second manuscript in a 2-part series describing common thematic messages delivered by past presidents. More specifically, they



Thomas Ferguson, MD, 62nd President of the AATS (1981).

CENTRAL MESSAGE

Messages shared by past presidents of the AATS have similar themes regarding character development. Understanding these themes allows the reader to acquire presidential wisdom and concurrently engage in self-reflection.

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Disclosure: Author has nothing to disclose with regard to commercial support.

Received for publication March 16, 2020; revisions received March 16, 2020; accepted for publication March 17, 2020; available ahead of print April 9, 2020.

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J Thorac Cardiovasc Surg 2020;160:1000-1

0022-5223/\$36.00

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<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jtcvs.2020.03.108>

discuss character development and focus on the areas of humanism, maintenance of well-being and life balance, leadership, and finally the future of our subspecialty. The authors examined messages attributed to 28 presidents who were selected due to availability of their presidential addresses as well as interviews from *In the Words of the Presidents*.²

Historical reflection can be a powerful approach to identifying patterns behind which reproducible outcomes may be achieved. Past AATS presidents have a unique set of perspectives from which we can gain impactful insights. Over a 34-year period, these 28 innately different presidents have focused on a wide range of topics for their presidential addresses, representing clinical expertise in adult cardiac, congenital, and general thoracic surgery, the products of highly diverse geographic backgrounds. Regardless of these heterogeneous variables, the messages cited in the article have significant thematic similarities.

Regarding humanism, a central message was the need for focused commitment to patients. The drive to be relentless in delivering excellent clinical care was of paramount importance. For the maintenance of well-being and life balance, the value of early recognition and the creation of behavioral patterns to be mindful of this trait from the infancy in one's career were deemed essential. For leadership, a deliberate and genuine desire to put the success and the recognition of others ahead of self and for the allowance of their individual advancements to be celebrated was a common message. Finally, in discussing the future of our subspecialty, presidents cited the need for adaptability and a recognition that learning must continuously

evolve irrespective of one's experience level or career stage.

The field of medicine and our subspecialty continue to undergo immense changes. We have transitioned to digital radiographic imaging with 3-dimensional reconstruction capabilities. We have expanded toward minimally invasive and percutaneous interventions. Our documentation and medical records are completely electronic and accessible from any location. Work hours and the manner in which we transfer care responsibilities have changed significantly. Concepts of public reporting and the transparent sharing of outcomes metrics continue to expand. Our current workforce is highly subspecialized in specific disease entities and areas of technical expertise. Despite these remarkable changes, however, the messages, reflections, and sage words of our leaders have remained consistent. Reflection is valuable. How do we feel about ourselves when we see our reflection? How do these common presidential messages resonate within ourselves as a roadmap to navigate our seemingly uncertain future? Han and colleagues have gifted us with a manuscript that allows us to reflect on, learn, and hopefully then use the powerful thematic messages our past AATS presidents have shared.

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