

COMMENTS ON THE ROBERT G. DICUS AWARD

Charles M. Magistro, P.T.

I am honored to have been asked to make a few remarks about the Robert Dicus Award and about Bob himself. Even though I have been accorded many honors throughout my professional career, to have been selected as the first recipient of the Robert Dicus Award remains one of my most treasured professional rewards. It is also a happy coincidence that this year's recipient, Jack Close, President of the Section in 1981, presented me with this Award.

Bob and I first met in 1950, soon after graduating from our respective physical therapy schools and becoming members of the Southern California Chapter of APTA. It was obvious from the outset that we were to become good friends, because so many of our aspirations and desires for the profession of physical therapy were similar.

Between the years of 1950 and 1954, Bob, Jim McKillip, who formed a private practice partnership with Bob, and I became feverishly involved in laying the groundwork for the establishment of a Self-Employed Section within the APTA. It was at the APTA Annual Conference in Los Angeles in 1954 that we assembled as a group of interested therapists from throughout the country and gained support for this movement. Two years later at the Annual Conference in St. Louis, establishment of

the Section was approved. I might add this was no small feat. Bob, of course, became the first President and the private practice movement in this profession was off and running. Bob drove this fledgling organization with an enthusiasm and intensity of a man with a real mission.

I recall vividly how critical it was to the founders of this Section that we recognize how important it was for us to maintain close ties with the APTA and that we not be perceived as a group whose motives were different from those of other members. If Bob were alive today, I am certain he would continue to expound and defend this strong belief.

I remember reading Francis Gaglielmo's remarks made at the time he received the Dicus Award. He spoke of the impact Bob made on him at their first meeting. Francis was one of the people who assisted Bob out of his customized van and into his wheelchair when he came to Annual Conference in Anaheim to receive Honorary Membership in the APTA. As President of APTA at that time, I had the privilege of presenting that award to Bob. As I said at the time, "It was one of the most gratifying experiences of my life." The impact of that very special event did not leave a dry eye in the room.

The sad event of last week when

Magic Johnson announced that he had tested HIV positive and the manner in which he made that shocking pronouncement took me back to Annual Conference here in Chicago 30 years ago. As was usually the case, Bob, Jim, and I were rooming together. One evening after partying and raising a little hell, Bob and I stayed up and talked until the wee hours of the morning. Jim retired early. Out of the blue, Bob said to me, "Charles, I know you pride yourself in being an astute clinician. I want you to look at my hands and tell me what's wrong with me." I really did not pay too much attention to what he was saying, and for a moment thought that the evening had caught up with him as it had with Jim. But, when looking at his hands closely, a sick feeling came over me when I observed considerable atrophy of his intrinsic hand muscles and very obvious fasciculations. I guess my looks gave me away, but in his typical fashion Bob took me off the hook and told me he had been recently diagnosed as having amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS). Then he proceeded to tell me of the many things he had yet to accomplish before this disease would whip him. I am certain Bob knew that the life expectancy for someone with ALS was about two years.

The disease followed its natural

progression, but Bob did not conform to the lifestyle or longevity of the usual ALS patient. Even though he was confined to a wheelchair and respirator-dependent, he accomplished more in the next 18 years of his life than most of us could do in a lifetime. He continued to work with Jim in various administrative and consultative capacities for a while; he founded the ALS Society of America, he was constantly badgering me and others in the profession about a long list of agenda items he deemed important to the profession, and he was always available to lecture to students and fellow physical therapists. He remained interested, concerned, and involved with our profession until his death in 1980.

I know many people who wished he could have stayed longer to help us deal with the serious issues confronting us today. He had no peer when it came to the courage of his convictions or his zeal to analyze and attack a problem with unrelenting intensity. In that regard, he was very much like Steve Rose who told things as they were and let the chips fall wherever, but who did cause people to think.

My regret is that there are but a few recipients of this Award who will have known Bob personally. As time passes, this Award must not lose its significance. I trust that the character of this man will be indelibly inscribed in the archives of this Section, and that future recipients of this honor will have a complete understanding of the man

for whom this Award was named and of his significant contributions to our profession and to private practice.

It is an added pleasure to have Shirley Dicus, Bob's wife, as well as his son Steve and daughter Ann here tonight. That famous cliché, "behind every great man is an equally great woman," really applies to Shirley. Shirley somehow managed to hold her family together throughout those trying years and did so in a manner befitting the gracious person she is. Shirley, we all owe you and the children a special debt of thanks for providing Bob with the love and encouragement to endure and to contribute despite incredible circumstances. ■



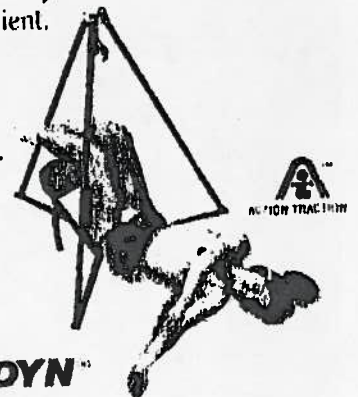
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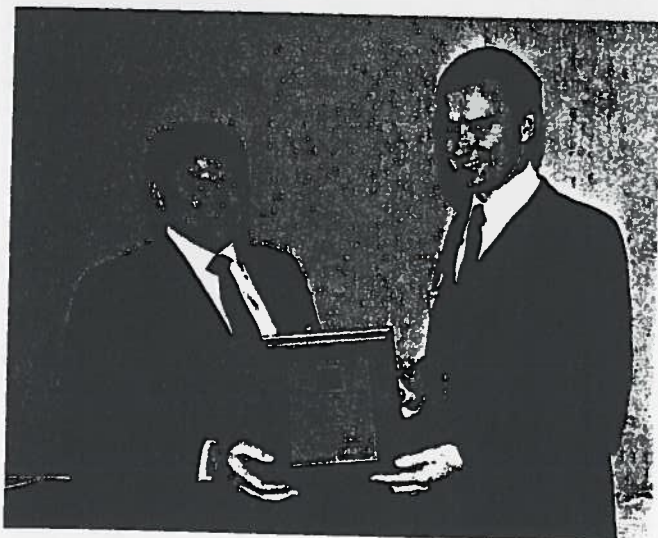


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1982 Robert G. Dicus Award

Ben Johnston has been a physical therapist for 17 years, 16 of those in private practice. He has served as president, chief delegate, and treasurer of the Washington Chapter, APTA, president and treasurer of the Private Practice Section, in addition to serving on most of the Section's Committees. On the APTA national level, he has served 14 years in the house of delegates, on APTA's Finance Committee, task force on third-party payers, and the task force on physical therapists in school settings. Other professional activities include 6 years on the Washington State licensure board, treasurer and organizing committee for APT-CAC, president of the Pierce County American Cancer Society, and president of the Junior Chamber of Commerce. Educational activities include organizing the Rocabado Institute for teaching advanced TMJ techniques for therapists and dentists, organizing Practice Dynamics for teaching practice management, and serving as consultant for many practitioners entering private practice. His current research efforts include funding and organizing, through the Rocabado Institute, research projects to establish the relationship between occlusion and head and neck posture. Following are Johnston's acceptance remarks.



Good evening, my friends. To say to you tonight that I am overwhelmed with this honor or that I am speechless is, of course, an understatement.

I was informed three weeks ago and asked to prepare a statement that could be published in our publication, the *Whirlpool*. The deep emotion that I am experiencing has not wavered nor did the words and thoughts come with any ease during these weeks. The emotion is deepened with thoughts of predecessors and colleagues that I champion as recipients of this fine honor.

Those of you that know me remember that I use as few words as possible in a public forum. I believe that when you talk you cease to be at peace with your thoughts. Consequently my comments tonight will be brief; which will please us both.

I feel like the man who was digging in the earth for roots and found a treasure. Tonight you reward me for that which I thought was my obligation. To create an appropriate perspective, I must share this moment with a few individuals who have contributed significantly to my growth and character. My father—who taught me to work and gave me a work ethic that guaranteed success, eventually. My mother—who taught me loving and caring. My mentor and first professional partner who taught me the joy of living—as Joseph Addison wrote:

To love, not to be loved
To give, not to receive, and
To serve, not to be served.

whirlpool

Application of these principles created the majority of my success in patient care and in the professional, business, and educational activities that exist in the periphery.

The Association, the Section, and you, my colleagues, and friends, provided a vehicle and an avenue on which to learn leadership, professionalism, techniques of business and to monitor the pulse of the profession.

Bob Dicus, in an article entitled, "Origins of the Section" wrote and I quote, "Our individual experiences were running several years ahead of our collective experiences." It is my observation that the same is true today.

The association with my colleagues allowed me to gather new ideas and techniques from them and to test mine in return. It allowed me to gain confidence in myself and in the profession.

It was selfish motives that brought me to this organization, and I learned quickly that the more involved I became, the more I learned, grew, and benefited.

It is you that should receive this award, because it is you that created the qualities which you honor in me tonight.

This is a magnificent profession we share. It has potential beyond our dreams. We as individuals will grow at a much faster pace than we will collectively. It

is extremely important that each member of the profession become involved in sharing so that the collective professional image is pulled along and remains close enough to individual realities to provide a pulse for the profession and cement for the avenue towards those dreams. Our predecessors made it easier for us because they were involved in sharing. We are easing the way for those to follow because we, too, are involved in sharing.

Our foundation will only remain solid if the sharing continues and intensifies. Individual members with unique qualities and members in unique practice settings have the opportunity to exercise a greater amount of freedom in their practice. These members have the freedom to accept the challenge to be the innovators of our profession, yet the freest among us often wear freedom as a yoke and a handcuff. The sharing process can greatly facilitate and balance the exercising of these freedoms.

Tonight I feel as though my teacher has given me an A+ for a final grade—yet it is only mid-term. You, each of you, are my teachers, and it is indeed only mid-term. I am very humbled by this honor, and it is only exceeded by the personal growth that you have provided for me. It is my hope that all that I have done and all that I have learned have prepared me for a greater contribution yet to come. □

PARTING SHOTS

