Tribute to Harcourt M. Stebbins, DDS, Colonel (Ret), USAF

There are a few individuals whom one meets throughout life who project auras that command respect, stimulate inquisitiveness, and induce profound reflection upon a legacy forged by firsthand experiences. Dr Harcourt M. Stebbins, a forefather of the American Dental Society of Anesthesiology (ADSA) and an original charter and founding member, was such an individual. Dr Stebbins received the Heidbrink Award, the highest honor of the ADSA, which is presented to the individual who has/had most significantly contributed to the advancement of anesthesiology in dentistry, at the 2010 Annual Session.

Dr Stebbins was the first editor for *News-monthly*, the forerunner of *Anesthesia Progress*, while he served as ADSA's vice president. Born in 1921, Dr Stebbins was raised in Puerto Rico and was fluent in Spanish. He was a graduate of Loyola University School of Dentistry and was trained in anesthesia at N.O. Baptist Hospital. He was in private practice in Lake Charles, Louisiana, served in the Air Force Dental Corps, assisted in his local dental society, and taught head and neck anesthesia and sedation. Dr Stebbins was presented with the Louisiana State Dental Association Distinguished Service Award in 2006 for "outstanding service in dentistry and the community," their highest honor.

We are deeply saddened by the passing of Dr Stebbins on July 23, 2019, at the age of 97. It has been almost 6 years to date, July 17, 2013, when his dear wife and life partner, Carol Helen Adiger, passed away. This couple was truly one of the "power couples" who shared a love for each other and the ADSA. He shared with me through correspondence upon notifying me of her passing,

"She thoroughly enjoyed her close association with the ADSA, the 'original bunch'! And being our unofficial editor's helper; attending the 'early' meetings, knowing personally the nucleus of our 'early' members, the trials and tribulations of the first 'baby steps.' Our 66-year personal run was great."

I was fortunate to have met Dr Stebbins and Sally, his daughter, and was mentored by him since 2010. He readily accepted my invitation to be a part of our Committee on Archives due to his longstanding membership with the association.

Dr Stebbins would frequently e-mail me or call to "catch up." I

was always honored that he would think of me when he reminisced about the association that we both dearly love or how the Dental Corps of our respective services have changed in terms of anesthesia delivery.

Sometimes, Dr Stebbins would send an e-mail with encouragement during my presidency:

“Give me a call/e-mail/snail mail when you can. I believe the ADSA is doing exceptionally well, thanks to a lot of intelligent, hard work, and leadership on your part; and having great folks along. . . .Best, Harcourt.”

Dr Stebbins was especially very proud of his original rendition of the ADSA logo, which was displayed on letterhead and envelopes for several decades. The original seal was adopted from the Second Chapter of Genesis, the 21st and other verses. It represented the First Anesthetic given by The Anesthesiologist to Adam when he had his rib removed from which Eve was created. He quoted, “scientia omnem dolorem vincit,” which is translated as “science conquers all pain.”

One of the greatest gifts he presented to me on behalf of the ADSA was an 18- × 19-inch black-and-white photograph of the annual convention dinner at the Hotel Statler Hilton in New York City on October 14, 1961. He identified many at the head table to include Drs Bruce Douglas, Joseph Osterloh, Morgan Allison, Lawrence Kerr, Daniel Lynch, and Leonard Monheim. Present in that room were the founding members of the ADSA, including Drs Kinney and Mervis, and a cohesive conglomeration of oral and maxillofacial surgeons, dentist anesthesiologists, and practitioners interested in pain control, sedation, and general anesthesia.

During the ADSA Annual Meeting in Palm Beach, Florida, in April 2013, Dr Stebbins was warmly surrounded by everyone who loved him. I presented him with a special surprise, my presidential coin with ADSA’s new and past logos.

Receiving a challenge coin was quite special for this retired Air Force officer, who designed the original logo. That evening, it was heartwarming to see Dr Stebbins and Dr Dan Laskin share in the many memories of their exciting adventures during their careers, a wonderful illustration of the tone of the meeting and the purpose of this auspicious group.

Another amazing legacy gift he presented to us was a video interview on April 25, 2013, with Dr Joel Weaver, then editor-in-chief of *Anesthesia Progress*. His vision for the future coupled with his experiences since the beginning of the ADSA was a request for continued and expanded cooperation with the American Dental Association and all those interested in anesthesia and pain control.

Dr Stebbins cared deeply about the ADSA and was very proud of its development and cooperative nature with all specialties within medicine and dentistry. His goal for anesthesia, sedation, and pain control expertise within the ranks of dentistry was without compromise. He is truly an inspiration to those who served in the past, are currently serving, and will serve in the future. He was and will always be a model provider and individual for many of us. I will reflect on his accomplishments and his kind and amazing mentoring in the days ahead. ADSA and I will be forever grateful that our lives crossed paths. God bless Harcourt!

Image – Dr Harcourt Stebbins with ADSA challenge coin.

Peter M. Tan DDS, MSHS
ADSA Past-President