



Editor's note: *Dr. Organ presented this Presidential Address on October 19 at the Convocation in Chicago, IL.*

Fellows of the American College of Surgeons, Regents, Officers, Honorary Fellows, and other interested readers, permit me first to express appreciation to Dr. Sabo for his year as President of the College. Although he assumed this position on short notice, the transition was smooth, and the succession of leadership was uninterrupted, as he performed his presidential responsibilities effectively, admirably, and with dignity. Richard and Melanie Sabo have been true ambassadors for the College, and we thank them.

Join me also in expressing appreciation to the many spouses, parents, teachers, and friends for their support of our new Fellows during their long formative years.

I am honored to join the long line of distinguished leaders who preceded me in this position. When I surveyed the highly talented and distinguished men and women in the audience the night of Convocation, I was reminded that when President Kennedy was host to an impressive array of Nobel Prize winners in the White House dining room, he looked at the audience and said, "I think this is the most extraordinary collection of talent, of human knowledge, that has ever been gathered together at the White House, with the possible exception of when Thomas Jefferson dined alone."¹

Few of us recall the names of the speaker(s) at our previous graduations or what they might have said. Except for brevity, perhaps this address is no different. In one-and-a-half pages, Ernest Miles

sional efforts, which include becoming a specialist on nights, holidays, and weekends. But as they enter into this Fellowship, they should take away something more than this honor and a certificate.

As a Fellow, I admonish all surgeons to refrain from selfish isolation and remain a part of our educational process. Surgery is a lifelong learning experience. In 10 to 15 years, much of one's current knowledge will not be operative. The best guarantee of maintaining a relevant knowledge base is to remain active in the educational process. Surgeons should also give some of their skills and knowledge back to the system. Remember, you were once a student and a resident. You can make a difference in their lives, and they, in turn, will enrich yours.

Many new Fellows also may be wondering what the College represents and what it holds for its members. Are we a "good ole boys" network dedicated to preserving the status quo? On the contrary, the College is an organization that is in the process of significant transformation to address the needs of our Fellows and our discipline. The College is no longer a sleeping giant.

Our activities are being intelligently blended with those of other professional organizations to more effectively influence issues of mutual concern. Thomas Russell, MD, FACS, Executive Director of the College, is representing our interests and increasing our friendships productively and with distinction. These efforts go beyond just improving the image of the College. Our influence extends into serious policy-making decisions. This objective has been accomplished without losing our identity or sacrificing our principles. The College cannot, and should not, stand alone.

The benefits of College membership are constantly expanding. Consult the Member Benefit Hotline at 800/621-4111. A variety of informational services are available to you, including resources and materials on advocacy and health policy issues, research, optimal patient care, publications, scholarships, education, liaison with multiple organizations, and innovative products.

tute for good surgery. This is the fault of the surgeon, not of technology. We have spawned a generation of surgeons who are the high priests and priestesses of laboratory and radiographic triage. This trend has not only been costly, but has served to diminish our profession as a cognitive discipline. While embracing technologic advancements, we need not become technology addicts. Virtual reality, as an example, provides great promise. Simulation will be developed based on patient-specific data, while individualizing each surgical procedure.

A former President of the College, James Thompson, MD, FACS, educator and surgeon-investiga-

San Francisco, got it right, too. In an eloquent address to the Pacific Coast Surgical Association in 2003 he stated that our “professional status is not an inherent right but one granted by society.... This obligates surgeons to put their patients’ interests above their own.”¹⁰

This evening, I urge you to embrace a deeper professional purpose. You too can get it right and be the complete, concerned citizen of society.

This is the last of your springs. In the serenity and quietude of our profession, test the depth of truths, feel the hem of heaven, and as you leave, don’t forget why you came, believing that “every man is my brother,” and “each man’s burden is my own.” Where poverty exists, all are poorer; where hatred flourishes, all are corrupted; and where injustice reigns, all are unequal.

Thank you for this honor, and please join me in welcoming our new Fellows to the halls of learned, caring men and women where you can make a difference.

References

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4. Lincoln A: Address delivered at the dedication of the cemetery at Gettysburg, November 19, 1863. Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address in Translation—English. Library of Congress Web site, <http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/gadd/4403.html>.
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