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## Accreditation Success Story: No Man is an Island

Professional growth is not a linear experience. Rather, it is punctuated by phases of stress, frustration, accomplishment and, finally, satisfaction. When I began practicing 20 years ago in Annapolis, Maryland, I was a functionally based, Dawson/Pankey-style dentist. I believed that I had the tools and training to provide the best care possible; I was ready to conquer the world. What I did not realize was that this new phase of my dental education was not going to be “spoon fed” to me. I had to begin to learn from my mistakes, understand my limitations, and seek out mentors and training that would enable me to improve my skills. In furtherance of that pursuit, I completed continuing education continuums from St. Petersburg to Seattle, from Beverly Hills to Manhattan. I worked hard to integrate the concepts of complete dentistry into my everyday practice.

Joining the AACD seemed to be a natural fit for the direction in which I wanted to grow. Previously, my education had been a solo experience. What I was about to learn, thanks to the AACD, was that there are many great teachers in our profession who are not only willing to share their knowledge, but who also want to support us and help us to implement this knowledge to achieve our goals. Having “real world” mentors can speed our growth by sparing us from mistakes that others have already made.

When I joined the Academy in 1995, I was dogmatic about my treatment approach and buoyed by my clinical success; Accreditation seemed only to be a formality. What I did not anticipate was how much I would learn along the way.

*“You don’t know what you don’t know until you know it.”* Whoever first told me that could not have been more right. I began to realize, in Accreditation Workshops, when I looked at my cases projected onto the wall (with central incisors the size of Yao Ming), that maybe my professional skills did need to be refined. Now I was challenged.

I quickly began to appreciate that in order to move forward with my commitment to become Accredited, I was not going to be able to do it alone. I needed a mentor to encourage me and to help keep me focused. I needed my team to help me identify those wonderful patients who would allow me to diligently labor over the smallest of details to improve my skills. And most

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importantly, I needed my family, who enabled me to focus so much of my time and energy on the quest to grow professionally.

It is easy to become distracted, frustrated, and burned out along the Accreditation journey. I am blessed with a supportive wife and daughter; and with my team, who supported my every step and took pride in the growth and accomplishments that we had achieved together. The proudest moment of my career came at the AACD's Annual Scientific Session in Atlanta in 2007, when I was called to the stage to receive my Accreditation award. My family and team, who had come to support me, greeted the announcement of my name with cheers, whistles, air horns, and confetti. The outburst might have been embarrassing to some, but I could not have been

happier that they shared my pride and excitement in what we had accomplished together. Only those closest to us can really understand the sacrifices and investment that we make throughout this journey.

The real keys to success are focus, commitment, support from others, and passion for what we do. My experiences with the AACD and my journey through the Accreditation process have helped me focus more on what I enjoy doing most in dentistry: Giving people the smiles they want and deserve. My Accreditation journey has had immeasurable positive effects on my professional confidence, on the success of my practice, and on the lives of my patients.

We cannot go it alone on the road to Accreditation, and we do not have to, thanks to the support that

the AACD can offer. To have leaders in the field of dental esthetics who will thoughtfully look at our work and provide encouraging and constructive mentoring teaches us more than just how to improve our skills; it demonstrates the passion and humility that a true leader needs to possess. I have been inspired by these experiences and relationships. Accreditation can be a virtuous pursuit and, for those who truly commit to achieving excellence, the rewards are greater than we can imagine.

Carpe Diem—seize the day: Have fun, realize that you need the support of those around you...and know that you have it. *AF*



Margeas, Robert C, The Diagnostic Wax-Up: A Blueprint for Success, Contemporary Esthetics, April 2003, V-7, No. 4, 80-82  
\*photos by Dr. Douglas A. Terry

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