



In Practice

WITH DR. RONALD GOLDSTEIN

Finding the Pearls in a Sea of Oysters



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A few months ago I found myself in Washington, DC at a lecture during the International Federation of Esthetic Dentistry (IFED) Meeting. The American Academy of Esthetic Dentistry hosted the meeting. With these credentials attached to this meeting, one might think that almost every morsel that came from the lecturing clinicians would be a delicate pearl. That might be true if one only attended such a meeting once every 5 years. If you are as fortunate as I am

to listen to a number of lectures presented by the top clinicians in our profession, the tastiest morsels are getting fewer and fewer [QA: Okay as edited?].

As I listened to dentists' comments exiting the lecture, I was not surprised by what I heard. Most everyone spoke highly of the clinician's knowledge and the audio/visual presentation. Truthfully, it was an outstanding lecture. My notes recorded three pearls on a single page and, frankly, that was well worth my attendance. Even if I found just one pearl, it would have been a success for me, which leads to this column's purpose.

The standards I judge a lecture by are entirely different than most dentists. A lecture is a success if the speaker keeps me awake and teaches me something new. However, most of my friends (noted lecturers and authors) tend to be very critical. It is indeed rare for me to hear of a presentation that is outstanding. I believe the problem is most of us suffer from "total learning syndrome" left over from dental school.

In dental school, almost every lecture was on a new subject—the terms, the points made, the research, and the visuals were all new for us. So we quickly came to judge a presentation by how much we absorb in our "learning sponge." In reality, the more you learn and the more lectures you are exposed to, the more repetition you become accustomed to. Mind you, repetition is not bad. In fact, it is a vital part of perfecting the mastery of any field. Repetition reinforces the principles or techniques that you may well be using. It also supplies a collective wisdom and clinical research, which is so necessary to determining which techniques you should continue and which you should depart from.

So, are those of us who could be called "meeting junkies" destined to sit through reinforcement sessions? Yes and no. The approach I take to any learning experience is to look for at least one pearl. If I leave with one new pearl, I consider my time well spent. I am not talking about a lecture that covers a completely new topic—for those lectures I usually take pages of notes. However, I generally attend lectures on restorative and esthetic dentistry that cover my specialty. When I discover even a slight variation of a technique that could produce a better result, I am ecstatic. That one point makes the lecture worthwhile for me.

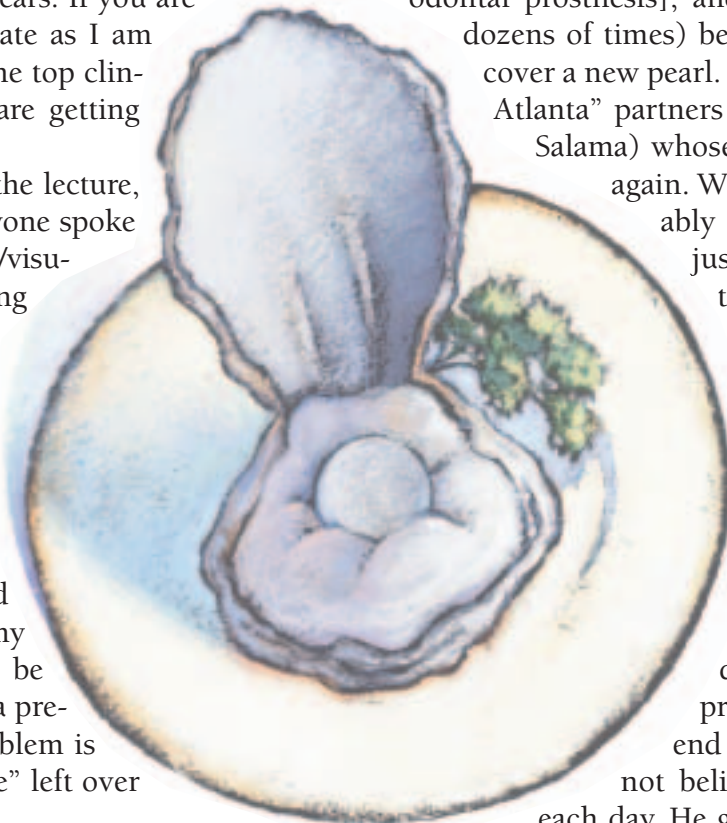
LISTEN TO THE MASTERS

I love listening to the "masters" (eg, John McLean, Lloyd Miller, Pete Dawson, Lenny Abrams [the only clinician I saw draw simultaneously with both hands], Mort Amsterdam [the father of the periodontal prosthesis], and a host of others whom I have heard dozens of times) because at each lecture I never fail to discover a new pearl. I even get pearls from my talented "Team Atlanta" partners (David Garber, and Henry and Maurice Salama) whose lectures I have attended time and time again. Why? Because I look and listen, and invariably they will say what new pearl they have just discovered—the pearls they learned in their travels, their exposure to other clinicians, their newest experiences, and, of course, their reading of dental literature.

SAME LECTURE, DIFFERENT PRESENTATION

I gave a series of three 6-hour courses in 3 states in 3 days. During that time, I had the same host who drove me to all the meetings. Although I presented the same course all 3 days, at the end of the third day my host said he could not believe that the same course was different each day. He gained many pearls each day listening to the same material. Had he simply not listened sufficiently each day? No. The fact is I vary my presentations. Each time I look at my own material on the screen, I see different points to emphasize. I even learn from my own lectures. That is just one reason why others, including myself, are constantly changing material for the same lectures.

A second reason we learn from seeing the same lecture over and over is because we absorb different information each time the material is presented. I recall seeing one of my mentors (Bob Stein) so many times I knew what was coming next. But I never left one of his lectures without learning something new. The same goes for Charlie Pincus, Earl Pound, Peter K. Thomas, Maury Maosseler, and many of



the other greats who, unfortunately, are no longer with us.

At the recent Quintessence World Symposium in Japan, I made time to hear Mort Amsterdam present a lecture. What a pleasure it was to listen again to one of my first mentors. At 81, Mort was still inspirational. I left with some new pearls—just as I

always do from hearing Walter Cohen and Arnold Weisgold.

One problem is that most dentists have no clue just how much time good lecturers spend preparing their material. For instance, when Henry Salama finishes treating a patient—or even between treatments—he returns to his office and immediately

works on his computer. This occurs every day, all day long. When I asked Henry why he spends so much time on his already excellent lectures, he replied, “I am trying to make them better for my audience.” Like David and Maurice, Henry is a wonderful communicator and one reason is he puts himself in

the audience—constantly analyzing just how he can make each single slide better. He also routinely sees things in the same slide that he could point out to the audience; therefore, he improves his presentation after each lecture. Now, I am obsessive and I have always done this, but Henry is the opposite of me. He is relaxed, easy going, and brilliant, whereas I am compulsive and driven to be the best I can be. Yet we both do the same thing. We hone our lectures to help the audience find the pearls. I realize that all great clinicians do the same thing.

Now For Some Of My Favorite Clinicians...

John Kanca has a potpourri of computer modules he updates constantly. Every time I see Harald Heymann, he has the most detailed and easy-to-understand teaching slides that help me decide which dental materials to use. One of the nicest things that Harald has done is to impart his knowledge, style, and legacy to the talented Ed Swift, his replacement as chairman at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Before that, Harald shared his knowledge and talent with the equally capable and knowledgeable Van Haywood before he left for the Medical College of Georgia School of Dentistry.

Nasser Barghi never ceases to amaze me with his new research and technical updates. He also is exciting to listen to. In fact, our audience at the annual Dorado Beach Symposium asked us to bring Nasser back for a second year. This 1-week course is generally held the first week of March each year (March 3–7, 2003). In addition to ourselves and Nasser Barghi, the talented Robert Winter, and popular endodontists, Dennis Brave and Ken Koch, will accompany us. Mornings will be spent listening to top-notch clinicians. The afternoons and evenings will be spent enjoying the area’s magnificent beaches. Anyone who attends this symposium will quickly learn why this is one of my favorite vacation spots. [QA:

Okay as edited?]

OUTSTANDING EXAMPLES

At the recent Quintessence Symposium in Japan, an audience of more than 1,000 dentists was as impressed with John Kois as I was. I appreciated the high quality of our Japanese colleagues' presentations as well as

at the IFED symposium in Washington. I especially laud the presentation of Masahide Tsutsui. This is one man who does it all to perfection. Others that usually evoke that same response are the "Seattle Team" of Frank Spear, Vince Kokich, and Dave Matthews.

If you want to see outstanding

examples of meticulous state-of-the-art ceramics, try to catch European clinicians Bernard Touati, Fritz Kopp, Jorg Strub, Konrad Meyenberg, Didier Dietschi, Uli Grunder, Nitzan Bichacho, and Peter Scharer. I am always inspired when listening to great ceramists such as Willi Geller, Masahiro Kuwata, Pinhas

Adar, and Klaus Muetertheis.

If you have not seen Brazil's own Newton Fahl Jr. and his beautiful lecture on direct bonding techniques, you have really missed something. Who has not walked away from a lecture by Cherilyn Sheets, Barbara Steinberg, Linda Miles, Linda Niessen, or Cathy Jameson without picking up some crown jewels? Is there anyone in dentistry that has not learned from Gordon Christensen's overhead projector or videotapes? And who can deny the deserved popularity of Ross Nash, Irwin Smigel, and Doug Terry? For enthusiastic motivators, I have always enjoyed presentations by Jeff Morley, Bud Mopper, and Larry Rosenthal. If you have not heard Harry Albers, Dan Nathanson, Dennis Tarnow, Gerard Chiche, Ted Croll, Noah Chivian, Stephen Moss, or the Rifkin brothers, you have missed some of the best teachers in their respective fields—wonderful communicators. I have only scratched the surface of those who dedicate so much of their lives to help make you and me the best we can be.

RECOGNIZING THE BEST LECTURES

Dentistry is blessed with a multitude of great teachers who really care to share their knowledge, rather than those self-proclaimed teaching wizards who go from city to city presenting courses. When it comes to quality lecturers, I look for three ingredients:

1. Their content is evidence-based.
2. They give credit where credit is due.
3. The tone of their lectures is not "show and tell," but dedicated to teach you to be better at work the next day.

It is not true that the more lectures you attend, the less you learn from each lecture or each clinician. Never say, "There is no reason to go to that lecture because I have already seen him or her." If they are good, they are always changing and improving. ○

