

Thank you for that humbling introduction.

And thank you to all of my colleagues in the Missouri Academy for honoring me with this award.

It seems this a time that lends itself to some reflection on what has, “so far” been a very blessed career.

I want to reflect primarily on the professional aspect, but I will start and end with personal.

My parents were of modest means, neither one with college education, except for some night classes.

My dad was a machinist and worked well past age 70, but what set him apart in a crowd was his compassion and kindness. He was constantly scanning his surroundings to see if there was someone who needed help. Whether it was something as simple as holding the door for a total stranger, or dropping whatever he was doing to run someone to the nearest gas station if they had run out of gas – which seemed to happen often on our corner, being the exit ramp off of Interstate 55. Or going every single Saturday afternoon to set up the coffee maker for the social hour between church services the next day. He was always there for me, and he was always there for whomever needed help.

My parents’ sacrifices allowed me to go to Washington University for undergrad and St Louis University for medical school. My mom lived to be 86 and dad lived to be 90,

supporting me in every way, and nurturing a spirit of compassion and kindness.

I was on the educational fast track, which I don't necessarily recommend, but I graduated from medical school before my 24th birthday. Some people may be mature enough at that age to enter residency – but I am not sure that I was. I survived, and my patients survived, and by my third year of residency I thrived and was selected as chief resident. My program director in the early years of my residency had a huge impact and was a guiding hand in the first decade of my career.

Emmitt Lee Taylor was a country doc from Alabama who had joined the Navy later in his career and had just taken over as the residency program director at the Naval Aerospace and Regional Medical Center in Pensacola Florida. On the first day of orientation, Lee gathered the incoming interns and since he had just assumed the role, he announced “I want you to know I didn't pick any of you.” An intimidating way to start your internship, but that was Lee. From that point on, Lee had a huge impact on my career. After my residency, Lee had taken an assignment in DC at what the Navy called HSETC, health science education and training command. He was able to arrange for me to have the first ever Navy fellowship in Family practice faculty development. A few years later, after Lee had gotten out of the Navy to accept the chairmanship at the University of Alabama Birmingham, he invited me to follow him and be the Residency Program Director of that program, which I did for 3 ½ years before I had an opportunity to “come home”

to St Louis and start a new residency from scratch at a community-based hospital, Deaconess Hospital.

That was in 1987, and that is where I encountered the next mentor and guiding hand of my career, the Reverend Richard Ellerbrake. He was the CEO of Deaconess, and I had lunch with him as part of the interview. I had not ever thought that moving back to St Louis was going to be an option since it was clearly not a hot bed for academic family medicine, or one might say for family medicine at all. But I met Dick Ellerbrake, and I felt that Deaconess was a place you could grow something special. Dick retired about four years later, much to my disappointment – but we stayed in touch and in 2000 when the hospital had been sold to a for-profit, and the environment for medical education of any kind was deteriorating, Dick agreed to become part of the board of director of the new not-for-profit that I formed – the Institute for Family Medicine. He is still on my board, and for the last several years has served as the chair of the board.

Before we leave the Deaconess days, there was a side bar story during those years. One of my professors in medical school, a sociologist named Rodney Coe had been appointed as the chair of the Department of Community Medicine at SLU. Rod came to me and asked me to assist him in changing the Department of Community Medicine into the Department of Community and Family Medicine. Since he was a sociologist and not a physician, I represented the family physician in the new

department, and at his request I served as his associate chair while maintaining my role at Deaconess. We lost Rod a few years ago, but he also had served on my board of directors since the formation of the Institute in 2000 and until his death, and he also was an important guiding hand in my career.

When I left Deaconess to form the Institute for Family Medicine, one of the motivating factors was an opportunity presented to me by Dr. Paula Livingston. Dr. Livingston is a dentist, and is now in practice at Truman Medical Center in Kansas City I believe. At the time, Dr. Livingston was the Director of the St Louis County Department of Health. St Louis County DOH runs primary care clinics for the uninsured and underserved residents of St Louis county. Dr. Livingston had a vision and a desire to move those clinics to what she called “a family practice model”. She said she had been looking for someone to lead that effort for more than a year and then found me as a result of an inquiry one of my residents had made about referrals. For those who were in St Louis, or aware of what followed, it was nothing short of brutal. The pediatricians at a local and statewide level went to war trying to stop “Family Medicine” from taking over the county clinics. Some people jokingly say they get up in the morning and check for their name in the obituaries – well I would check for my name on the front page to see what new hysteria they were stirring up. Of course my plan was always to engage pediatrics, but no one asked, no one listened. It was my first taste of politics – but Dr. Livingston stood by me and stood by family

medicine and said that we had a majority on the county council, so don't fight back, and we will prevail. We did. And we had a great ten year run of providing quality primary care in those clinics with primarily family physicians.

So my speaking time is just about up and I haven't yet told you about the work of the Institute for Family Medicine, which we now call IFM Community Medicine. When we were awarded the contract from St Louis County in 2000, we had a brand-new start up not-for-profit with a 2.2 million dollar contract, and the question I asked was "what else can we do". The Deaconess residency had been particularly strong in community outreach, blending service and education at places like Crisis Nursery, Every Child's Hope, Job Corp and Covenant House of Missouri. Many of those organizations were no longer getting the same type of service from Forest Park Hospital and they came to the Institute for help. We reached out to one school district, Jennings, to see if they had an interest in elevating their school health program. Once we began to work with Jennings, more school districts came to us, some with common problems and some with unique issues. So that is what IFM does – we partner with schools, shelters and social service organizations to find creative and cost-effective ways to bring health services to their students, residents, or clients within their walls. I have a dedicated team of nurse practitioners and a small but very effective staff led by Tami Timmer, and we have 18 different locations throughout the St Louis area where we provide care, sometimes just a half day a week, other times as the medical

home. I am privileged to serve as the medical director for 12 school districts including St Louis Public and the Special School District. Along with the name change, we adopted a mission statement that says it all in its simplicity – We strengthen underserved communities, one patient at a time.

I said that I would start and finish with my personal heroes and my personal support system. My wife of nearly 44 years, my high school sweet heart – don't worry that is the same person – Veronica, who has been there supporting me, and a huge behind the scene “volunteer” for IFM. What we have chosen to do for the last 17 years is a financial strain, but we have persevered and succeeded together. My three kids – all grow'd up now – Julie had just turned 2 when we moved back to St Louis – have been the greatest kids you can imagine. Each has made us very proud. Julie is the director of the entire youth program at Peterson Air Force Base in Colorado; Lynn is a family nurse practitioner; and when your hips or knees go out, you will want to talk to my son Mark who has had great success with his own company supplying primarily Smith and Nephew joint replacement parts. They are each here with me tonight. Part of the support system, but unable to attend today are Lynn's husband Corey, and her two children, my grandchildren, Joey and Evie. Also Mark's wife Lizanne and their three boys Grant, CJ and Migel.

Again, I want to thank all of my colleagues for this honor. I appreciate the years I spent serving in the officer track of the

Missouri Academy. I will say that during that time we had a fair amount of turn-over at the Executive Director level, but a key stabilizing force for me, and for the organization was our lobbyist Pat Strader. I am so sorry that Pat was unable to join us tonight. Our hearts ache with the health battles she having to endure, but our prayers are always with her, and for a recovery that will allow her to enjoy the retirement she so richly earned.