

American Academy of Gold Foil Operators Distinguished Member Award

Dr Craig Bridgeman



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The AAGFO meeting has to be a homecoming for Craig Bridgeman, since he graduated from the University of Florida School of Dentistry in 1976. He was a member of the first class and, to no surprise, Craig was the first student to place a restoration on the clinic floor. Dr Jose Medina was Dean of the Dental School and is surely with us in

spirit, as one of his prize students receives such an honor as being named a Distinguished Member of this Academy.

More than likely, everyone here is wondering why Craig picked this old geezer to help in presenting this award. My wife and I were very good friends with Craig's mother and father. Why God took his parents when they were quite young, we will never know. Tonight, as Bob and Marge look down from above, they are certainly proud of their son. Craig's children, Robbie and Casey, never had a chance to know their grandparents. They have taken Betty and me as their surrogate grandparents when Robbie took the time to call me at 10:30 p.m. one evening to tell me he had just given Rachael, his fiancé, an engagement ring.

Giving a synopsis of Craig's endeavors has been a very challenging task. Just think of the energy he has exhibited in his profession and his many contributions to his church and community.

I need not elaborate on Craig's operative skills, as most of you have witnessed him operating. That is evident, because, in 1989, he received the Clinician of the Year Award. Craig was fortunate to have Jose and his father as mentors. Many of you remember Bob as an outstanding clinician. I think that Bob was capable of waxing a direct pattern in the mouth for a full cast crown.

Craig spent his first years of college at Marshall University. He left Marshall and enrolled at West Virginia University (WVU), where he completed his

pre-dental education. It wasn't that he was not happy at Marshall. It seems that Craig had fallen in love with a lovely young lady, Rosella Louise Herrick, who was attending WVU. Craig's father and mother were both concerned that he was dating a Catholic girl. Being Catholic myself, my response was that I married a Protestant girl and we are still together and have five healthy sons.

How about Craig's professional involvement. He is a member of the American Dental Association and the North Carolina Dental Society, where he has served on six different committees. He has been president of the First District of the North Carolina Dental Society, the Western Piedmont Dental Society, the American Academy of Gold Foil Operators, the Academy of Operative Dentistry, the American Board of Operative Dentistry, the American Association of Dental Insultants, and finally, the Tar Heel Society. Wait just a minute. He is also a member of the American Academy of Restorative Dentistry, served as a deputy examiner for the North Carolina Board of Dental Examiners, holds a life membership in Delta Sigma Delta and is a member of the International and the American College of Dentistry.

Craig is currently director of the Hollenback Medina Operative Dentistry Seminar. Jose always taught that you must apply the basic principles and not deviate. He said he would work with the Hollenback Group as long as they were willing to share their knowledge. Craig is an excellent teacher and director. During the worse performance one can imagine, he helps to correct the problem but is not critical of the operator. However, he does have a problem with frustration, insisting it is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result.

Since 1976, Craig has practiced dentistry and resides on a hillside in the beautiful mountains of Boone, North Carolina. Anyone who knows Craig is aware that he has a love, or obsession as Rose might say, with the game of golf. In 1996, Boone had a blizzard that left the town in a state of emergency. Only emergency and medical personnel vehicles were allowed on the main roads. Craig was to catch a plane in Charlotte for a golf trip to Florida. He took his eight-year old daughter, Casey's, plastic sled, drilled it with holes to attach

bungee cords to secure his golf clubs and luggage, bundled up and trudged through 36-inch snow drifts for a half-mile downhill to the main highway. His friend, a medical doctor, drove to the end of their secondary road, where he picked up Craig and drove him to the airport. It is a shame that one of Craig's attributes is not determination.

Craig thinks that we have every reason to believe that the golf ball responds to the laws of physics. He says, if profanity had any effect whatsoever on the ball, the game would be better played. Craig can recite this much better with a Scottish accent.

One of Craig's community activities is the Hospitality House of Boone. Rose tries to find temporary and transitional housing for the homeless, while Craig helps with their dental care. He has done numerous procedures gratis for patients when he sees a desperate financial situation. My cousin, Rosella, told me that, recently, he wasn't busy, because he had made plans to be out of the office. It turned out that Craig called the local homeless shelter and spent the whole day doing extractions and restorations on teeth that were causing chronic pain and affecting the overall health of six people. Is this not what this award is all about?

Habitat for Humanity—Craig is a volunteer. Like his father, he just happens to be an excellent carpenter, cabinetmaker, whatever, and has a woodworking shop in his home. For God's sake, protect those hands.

Jaycees of North Carolina—Craig competed in prepared and impromptu speaking, sponsored by the Jaycees. As one might expect, in 1980, he was the winner in the novice division and, in 1982, he won in the open division. He was selected as one of the 10 national finalists in the US Jaycees Speak-up Competition held in Phoenix, Arizona. I am not sure, but I believe two other finalists were Rick Hoard and Warren Johnson.

Being an avid sports fan, Craig is probably more impressed with being dental consultant for the Department of Athletics for Appalachian State University in his hometown of Boone, North Carolina, than any other position he has held.

Craig is a convert and now a member of St Elizabeth Catholic Church. He has served on six different committees and has been director of the Adult Bible Study since 1997. I have been with him on many occasions when he is awake before anyone else and reading scripture in preparation for class. I have decided this guy is no phony.

Lectures and Presentations—my wife told me that, if I even read all the titles of his lectures and presentations, it would be boring.

Table Clinics—Craig presented his first table clinic at an early age at the AOD meeting in February 1979. The topic was "Amalgam/Composite: A Combination Approach to Successful Build-ups." The technique was for a buildup of posterior teeth. He had the idea that amalgam would offer a better seal at the margins and that composite would offer esthetic value to the restoration. His father, being proud of his son, asked either Lloyd Baum or Charlie Stebner what they thought. Even though the restoration was well done, "They were a little blunt...they thought it was silly."

Publications—"Direct Gold as a Practice Builder" was published in *Operative Dentistry* in 1988. "Compacted Gold Restorations" was published in 1991, along with Dr Medina, in *Clarks Clinical Dentistry*. What an honor to have your mentor ask you to help. "The Economics of In House Casting" was published in *Dental Economics* in 1994. Craig is not one to waste time. I've watched him waxing, investing or casting between patients or maybe all the above.

Craig gets his sense of humor from his father, who, like Craig, always had a joke to tell. Some of these jokes are a little risqué and probably not for Sunday school. Casey says her dad has an infectious love for mischief and enjoys making people laugh. She thinks he has discovered that laughter solves many problems.

Robbie said that his dad taught him and Casey that there are two kinds of people in this world: those who can and those who can't, and they are both right. His dad also taught them that experience and knowledge are worth their weight in gold to achieve success and rarely does either come easily.

Some of Robbie's thoughts concerning his dad are that he enjoys laughing, reading, good cigars, gold restoration and red meat. He detests with all his might the use of resin composite for the restoration of posterior teeth. Robbie's dad pretends to be sick when his mom tries to drag him to the ballet, and he also loathes salad, unless it is deep-fried. Regardless, this world is truly a better place because of Robbie's dad.

Craig, like his father, is special, in that he realizes that we all have God-given talents and it is up to the individual to use them to the best of one's ability.

Craig has distinguished himself, not only in dentistry, but in all facets of life. It has been an honor for me to partake in this presentation. Finally, a word to the Selection Committee: It will be hard to find anyone else more deserving of the Distinguished Member Award.

Dr Leo Fleckenstein