

In Support of the Association

Dear Mr. DuBois:

Thank you very much for the luncheon invitation allowing me to share my recent experiences as the command dental surgeon for the Iraqi Theater of Operations with the Executive Committee of the California Dental Association.

Your very kind invitation for me to attend the semi-annual Scientific Session in San Francisco was very unexpected and much appreciated. To be honest with you, I accepted your invitation with some trepidation not knowing exactly what to expect from the Executive Committee from a non-member of the association (overwhelming feelings of dread of being told to see the principal at Lowell High School are a close approximation). I was prepared to be greeted politely but coldly by the members of the committee. Instead of a bunch of stuffed shirts who were full of themselves, I was very pleasantly surprised how genuine the committee members were and how very warmly I was received. You and the members of the Executive Committee certainly changed my preconceived concepts of organized dentistry and the doctors who are members of the California Dental Association.

There are many citizen-soldiers currently on active duty with the armed forces of the United States in southwest Asia with experiences that are as interesting, or even more interesting, as mine. It just so happened I had the unique opportunity and resources to win the hearts and minds of the Iraqi medical-dental community by restoring the operations of the University of Baghdad College of Dentistry and Medicine with the purchase of thousands of dollars' worth of medical and dental equipment, student furniture, computers, and expand-

able supplies. With the assistance of the University of California School of Dentistry, the University of the Pacific Arthur A. Dugoni School of Dentistry, and members of the San Francisco Dental Society, more than 4,000 pounds of surplus dental and medical textbooks were flown from Travis Air Force Base to the University of Baghdad last April. Furthermore, when I was ordered to assist the Iraqi dentists in the formation of a dental society in Iraq, I specifically used the model of the California Dental Association leadership system, even though I am not currently a member, as a valid model when I briefed the Iraqi minister of health, the minister of higher education and the dean and faculty of the University of Baghdad College of Dentistry.

We are ordinary citizens, placed into a unique situation and asked to do very extraordinary things, often under very austere and dangerous conditions. We all share a common bond of devotion to duty and a love for, and selfless service to, our country.

Again, thank you very much for your invitation to lunch. My CDA membership application will be forwarded to the local component in the next few weeks, along with a check that comes out of my own pocket and not the local government health department.

Your unqualified support for deployed reservists, even nonmembers such as myself, and your demonstrated interest in my dental activities in Iraq, has changed my feeling about "organized" dentistry, the California Dental Association, and has convinced me that it is high time for me to begin supporting the association!

Cordially,
Franklin Woo, DDS
Chief of Dental Services

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