

Darrel Darby Accepts the DSC in Honor of His Father

Editor's note: APMA Past President H. Darrel Darby, DPM, was the posthumous recipient of the APMA's highest honor, the Distinguished Service Citation, at this year's House of Delegates session. What follows are the remarks of his son, H. Darrel Darby, II, in accepting the award for his father.

My father left Greenbrier County, West Virginia, with his wife and an infant son in the summer of 1949. He drove an old Pontiac, which pulled the 20-foot camper-trailer that was to be their home for the next four years. He was going to Anderson College, in Indiana, on the GI Bill, to become a football coach. As a youth blessed with little in the way of athletic talent, I spent many a night on my knees thanking God that he became a podiatrist instead.

The two most important decisions my father made in his life were made before he started out on that first adventure: where he would place his faith and where he would place his wedding ring. His sense of purpose throughout his life came from his firm faith in God and his love for his wife and family. In one of our last conversations together, we talked about this and how, in comparison, his choice of profession seemed relatively unimportant. He would have excelled at whatever he set his mind to, but as he reminded me then, podiatry was the work he was given to do.



Darrel Darby delivered a succinct and beautiful acceptance speech before the House of Delegates for the posthumous Distinguished Service Citation given to his dad, Past President H. Darrel Darby, DPM.

He worked hard at podiatry in his private practice and at the state, regional, and national level. During his 40 years as a practicing podiatrist, he held more positions than I can list, including the presidency of the APMA in 1976. He loved the political side of podiatry. He loved seeing his profession gain in respectability. He fought hard to win surgery rights in our hometown after being frustrated again and again by hospital administrations dominated by orthopedic surgeons. He refused to give in and finally won privileges only after suing several area hospitals and one of the largest orthopedic practices in the state.

Winning lawsuits is easier than winning hearts and minds, and for many years there were doctors

who would not shake his hand or would walk past him in the hall without making eye contact. In winter, the OR nurses would joke with him as he left the hospital, "You be careful of the ice when you cross that parking lot, Dr. Darby. I would so hate for one of those orthopedic surgeons to get their hands on you." Through it all, he persevered and focused on doing his work—and doing it well—until most of his critics came to accept him as a peer, not because he won a lawsuit, but because he deserved to be there. Since that time, many podiatrists have walked through the door that he forced open. It is interesting to

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note that a podiatrist is now on staff at the orthopedic group named in the original suit, and even more noteworthy is the fact that the founder of that group, Dr. Tom Scott, now sits on the Board of Directors of Darco International.

and every competitor in the market has copied the product in one form or another. Of all the companies competing in that market today, Darco is the only one that donates a percentage of its sales back to podiatry in the form of donations to the Fund for Podiatric Medical Education in the United States and the sponsorship of foot sur-

her mother's things when a scrap of paper fell out of a book. On the paper was written a single sentence: "I saw Dr. Darby today and now my feet feel so good." He smiled again and never said anything else to me about it, but I always remembered that look of happy amazement on his face, as though he just couldn't quite believe



APMA Past President H. Darrel Darby, DPM

For me, his greatest professional achievement is that every day he did his best to ease the suffering of those who walked through his door. As long as the profession of podiatry is peopled with like-minded folk who are just as committed to doing good as they are to doing well, it will prosper now and in the future.

Podiatry opened many doors for my father as well and provided him with opportunities to exercise the entrepreneurial side of his character, often in areas most unrelated to the profession. For example, when he was unable to find a hotel room on his weekly visits to his satellite office in Beckley, West Virginia, he formed Laurel Lodge Enterprises and built a hotel of his own. The company now manages five in the state of West Virginia.

He is probably best known as the man who built a better post-op shoe: The Darco Med-Surg Shoe was a real head turner when it appeared on the market in 1985. Over the years, it has become the standard in post-op care,

gery seminars abroad. The lecture series started by Darco in Europe in 1993 is the only one in the world in which it is the rule rather than the exception for podiatrists and orthopedic surgeons to share the same stage.

That said, the single moment that most stands out in my mind as representative of my father's career in podiatry is a very private one. I dropped by his office one day after school and found him sitting behind his desk, staring off into space with a half-smile on his face. After a few moments, he told me that the daughter of one of his patients just called to let him know that her mother passed away a few weeks before. She was going through

he was worthy of such an honor. During the 20-plus years that now separate me from that moment in time, I have seen him accept numerous awards, but never with the pleasure of hearing those simple words.

It is in that spirit that I accept this Distinguished Service Citation on behalf of my father, Dr. H. Darrel Darby. For me, his greatest professional achievement is that every day he did his best to ease the suffering of those who walked through his door. As long as the profession of podiatry is peopled with like-minded folk who are just as committed to doing good as they are to doing well, it will prosper now and in the future. ■