

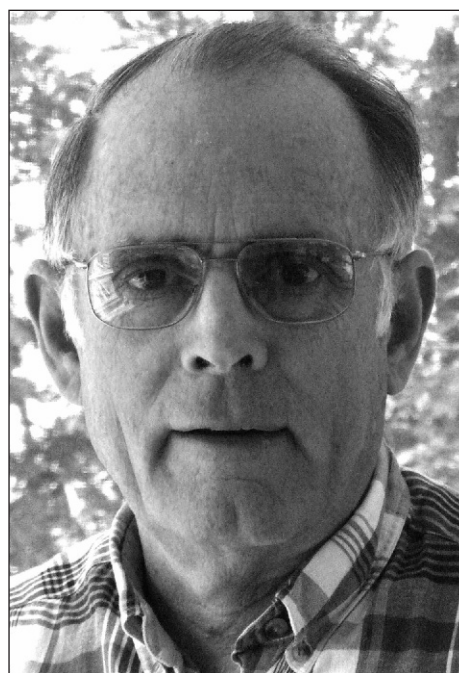
The American Academy of Gold Foil Operators and Dental School Education

This is the time of year that I most enjoy serving as Secretary of the American Academy of Gold Foil Operators (AAGFO). Why? Because I have the opportunity to speak with dental school staffs and dental educators regarding their selection of a student who will receive the American Academy of Gold Operators Student Achievement Award.

You might say that I am a bit daft, since more schools no longer qualify to offer this award than in the past. This is because there are fewer schools that do not teach either direct or indirect gold. This year, 13 schools are presenting this award to students. That is less than 50% of the schools that did so 5 years ago. So why is this “good news?” It is good news because the glass is still half full!

The AAGFO reaches out to support those educators who continue to provide a complete dental education—one that includes a full spectrum of the materials available for restoring the dentition of our patients. Yes, the numbers are falling, but through the renewed effort and commitment of the AAGFO, our members are working to support those schools that have lost their teaching staff. The loss of a qualified teaching staff is, perhaps, the most prevalent cause for the decline in use of direct gold as a teaching tool. Our 250 member dentists worldwide mean that there are at least that many dentists who have skillfully performed long-lasting direct gold fillings and that there are some who are in a position to step in and help those dental schools that no longer teach these skills and use of any form of gold.

Dental students who are given help, training and support in the use of gold foil, find that their skill and



Robert C Keene

attention to detail reach a higher level of acumen. The skill, talent and basic “hand/eye” training directly carry over into the use of all other dental materials. The discipline of direct gold, preservation of tooth structure, adaptability of foil to enamel, longevity of the material and esthetics, when used appropriately, serve as THE standard of care.

In dental schools, foil was frequently the “make or break” material for both the student and patient. The

so-called “pounding” of gold, “beating” pulps to death or any of the “talked about” outcomes from using gold foil of the past are still heard today in the backrooms of dental schools and at meetings. It only serves to reveal the ignorance of the speaker.

If you were a dental student struggling through your dental education and paying rather large sums in tuition, wouldn't you feel cheated if you knew that you were being denied training in the most durable and longest used of dental materials? Wouldn't you feel cheated if you did not get the opportunity to learn all the clinical skills that equip you with being a better clinician across the full spectrum of dental materials? Wouldn't you feel cheated if you did not have a complete set of tools in your dental repertoire to provide your patients with a full spectrum of choices in their restorative care?

I suspect we all know the answer.

We know that, when push comes to shove, we, as dentists, would choose the finest of all dental materials—gold, either direct or cast.

Why not allow our patients the same choice?

Dr Robert C Keene

Dr Keene is the Secretary/Treasurer of the American Academy of Gold Foil Operators. He is retired after 40 years of private practice but continues mentoring the NH Dental Study Group and consults in a second opinion practice. Dr Keene also works with medical students in oral health projects and serves as advisor to pre-dental students at Dartmouth College in Hanover, NH.

Notation:

Last year, we announced that we would be changing the reference format in *Operative Dentistry* to a more traditional numbering system both to save space and make submissions more convenient to authors. You will notice in this issue that references in some of the papers are in our original style, while others are in our

new format. The two formats may continue for the next issue as well, and it merely reflects the transition we are undergoing. Please accept our apologies for the inconsistency during this changeover.

Michael A Cochran, Editor