

Academy of Operative Dentistry Award of Excellence

Dr. Thomas J. Hilton



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The Award of Excellence of the Academy of Operative Dentistry is given to an individual who has made great contributions to the field of operative dentistry and has achieved a high level of technical skill in its practice. The recipient of the award this year, Dr. Thomas J. Hilton, exemplifies those characteristics.

Tom grew up in Pennsylvania and attended Bucknell University, graduating *Cum Laude* in chemistry in 1974. He then attended the University Of Pennsylvania School Of Dental Medicine and received his DMD degree in 1978.

Following graduation, Tom entered the U.S. Air Force and was stationed at Hahn Air Base in Germany. While at Hahn, Tom sustained a serious injury during a climbing accident and was sent to the regional medical center in Wiesbaden for treatment. It was there that I met Tom, and we began a friendship that has lasted these 37 years. We are fortunate indeed if we can have one friend in a lifetime who can serve as a role model and example of personal integrity and professional accomplishment. I have been blessed with two: Tom, and Dr. Jim Summitt. Jim was the Director of the two-year AEGD program at USAF Medical Center Wilford Hall in those years, and he instilled in both of us the scientific curiosity and drive for clinical excellence that would shape our careers. Tom did manage to mix a little fun into his academic pursuits. While at Wilford Hall, he completed a research project on the effects of flying-induced stress on TMD. Of course, someone had to take multiple rides in the backseat of an F-4 Phantom jet to make the measurements –

Tom, of course. Recognizing his aptitude for research, Tom was awarded an Air Force fellowship to study biomaterials at the Oregon Health and Science University School of Dentistry, where he received his MS degree. During his Air Force career, Tom held a number of positions of responsibility in the Air Force, including the directorship of the highly respected USAF Dental Investigative Service. However, I think he would agree that the most meaningful assignment for him was being asked to return to Wilford Hall as Training Officer in the AEGD-2 residency. After 20 years of exemplary service Tom was awarded the Air Force Legion of Merit at his retirement in 1999, an honor extended only to those officers whose achievements over the course of a career have had major impact on the dental service itself.

Teaching and research would become Tom's passion during the next phase of his career. He chose to return to OHSU to join his colleague and friend Dr. Jack Ferracane. His commitment to clinical teaching, research, service and practice was recognized in 2003 by his appointment as Alumni Centennial Professor in Operative Dentistry.

Tom's research interests have been primarily in laboratory and clinical evaluation of dental adhesive systems and resin composite polymerization. In recent years he has been active in practice-based clinical research, establishing the Practice-based Research in Oral Health (PROH) at OHSU along with Jack Ferracane, and co-investigator of the NIH-funded Practice-Based REsearch Consortium in Evidence-based DENTistry (PRECEDENT). He has also worked extensively with the National Dental Practice-Based Research Network. His research on cracked teeth, with an emphasis on developing cracked tooth risk assessment techniques, was presented at the 2015 meeting of this academy. Tom's research output has been remarkable. He has published more than 60 articles in peer-reviewed journals, 79 abstracts, and has presented almost 200

presentations at state, national, and international venues. He reviews for many journals, and currently serves on the editorial board of our own journal and others, including the Journal of Dental Research. In addition, Tom was named lead cover author of the fourth edition of *Fundamentals of Operative Dentistry: A Contemporary Approach*. He had authored chapters of the widely-used textbook since the first edition in 1996.

Over the years, Tom has devoted much time (wife Dea Dea would say too much) to professional leadership and committee work. He is the sort of individual that everyone wants on their working group. His work ethic is unsurpassed, his eye for detail acute, and his observance of deadlines inflexible. It's even better if you can get him to chair your committee and many have recognized this. The section for "service" in his *curriculum vitae* goes on for pages. Those of you who have served with Tom on

the Executive Committee of our own academy can attest to his dedication.

Tom has been the recipient of many honors. He has been awarded Fellowship in both the International College of Dentists and the American College of Dentists. He was named Civilian National Consultant for Dental Materials to the Air Force Surgeon General. In 2015, the International Association for Dental Research presented him with the Ryge-Mahler Award for Clinical Research in Dental Materials. However, after so many years as part of this organization, after braving Chicago weather for so many Februarys, after making so many lifetime friends – I am certain that nothing will mean more to him than this award. He richly deserves to be honored by our Academy with the Award of Excellence.

James C. Broome, DDS, MS