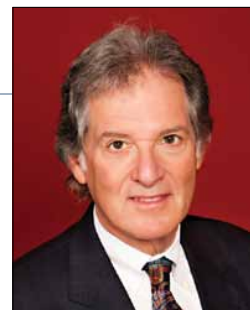


LETTER FROM THE EDITOR



Last night I was watching Jon Stewart's *The Daily Show*, with guest "celebrity" Al Gore. The inter-change focused on issues such as climate change, sustainable fuel, and the recent sale of his Current television network to Al Jazeera, which Mr. Stewart considered "an odd move." The discussion was intermittently heated (get it?!). What they didn't mention was how Al changed the world by inventing the internet (remember that one??). Anyhow, I guess I have Al to thank for enabling my remote teaching event yesterday afternoon, which couldn't have been accomplished without his invention. Last year, a friend asked me if I would be so kind as to Skype in to his son's high school class and spend an hour discussing what it is like to be a researcher. I accepted readily, and apparently I wasn't a total failure as an encore of my electronic presence was requested for yesterday. At the appropriate time I hit the appropriate button to log in to the classroom, and the fun began.

The students wanted to know how I got into my chosen field. So, I traced my days from the University, where I was certain that I was going to be a clinical psychologist, to medical school instead (parental pressure) to be a psychiatrist (I can hear the readers of this letter guffawing right about now), where my experience on a psychiatry elective was less than inspiring. My first clinical rotation was on the Hematology service, where I fell in love with this specialty: and the rest is history. I was asked what makes a good researcher. First and foremost, I said, was a bit of luck. Then I talked about the "fire in the belly," the passion you need to feel; imagination; diligence; the ability to see beyond tradition; a sense of humor; and outside interests to keep you focused (at which point I digressed about my medical school nights playing in bars with *Rick and the Legends*). But, most importantly, I told them, was to find a mentor who supports you through the rough times, and understands your triumphs when they eventually occur. I mentioned how special it was when Bob Schwartz, who had been mine, came to hear my recent presentation at Tufts (see my prior letter in CAHO about that event), and reliving that event made me well up a bit. The students wanted to know how you persevere when experiments are boring or don't give you the results you

were looking for, and I told them that they needed to want to get to the answer at the end of that bump that got them interested in the quest to begin with, to recognize that as the reward at the end of the journey. I repeatedly reinforced that the most important thing they could strive for was to make a difference in whatever was their passion—art, music, science. Then I was asked what I found rewarding in my career. At that point I realized how fortunate I have been. I have had the opportunity to make that difference, in the lives of patients treated, the drugs I helped develop that have improved the quality and quantity of patient lives, in the students and physicians whom I have taught whose increased knowledge has made them better at what they do, in research funded by the money raised from the Lymphoma Research Ride, and in my relationships with family and friends.

Towards the end of the session, they wanted to know a bit more about me as a person—what were my outside interests? What is the human side of a scientist? They were somewhat curious about my collection of fountain pens, my dog Annie, and my cycling; but, what really caught their interest was my rock-and-roll past. We all were doing a bit of boppin' when I played the track *Old Time Rock and Roll* from my days with the Oncotones (see previous letters), and the session ended as the chorus of my recording of *Like a Rolling Stone* faded out.

I hope the session was as fun and rewarding for them as it was for me. It provided me a chance to reflect on my past, which I seem to be doing more and more lately. But, mostly, I hope that they take advantage of all the opportunities afforded them such that, sometime in their lives, they can make that difference.

Thanks, Al.

Until next month . . .

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Bruce D. Cheson". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Bruce D. Cheson