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Mike Valente: Universal Respect

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When Marshall Chasin asked me (and all of the other authors in this issue) to write a short article about Mike Valente's amazing career, I immediately responded yes without any reservation, as did all the other invitees. Pretty unusual to get a 100% agreement on any issue these days, but apparently Mike has earned universal respect.

Mike's body of published literature as well as his verbal presentations on so many aspects of amplification and fitting procedures have been candid and straightforward. Dr. Valente has always maintained his integrity and independence and, as such, his findings are indeed universally respected. His research is well designed and provocative. His reputation for being an "honest" researcher renders him among the most sought out investigator in the field by manufacturers. Because he continues to personally treat patients, he is able to formulate projects that are clinically relevant, as evidenced by his abundant studies on a wide variety of topics including diagnostic protocols, loudness discomfort levels, and directional microphone technology.

His personal training of students has produced some of the best qualified young audiologists I have had the pleasure of supervising. Those interns have been unanimous in reporting that Dr. Valente is a fair, but tough, supervisor who demands the best from his students.

On a personal note, Mike and I have long talked about the parallels in our careers. We started as clinicians at about the same time and took our first jobs as university professors at around the same time. We both laughed about the fact that our respective Universities, his Washington University and mine, UCSF, both were anxious to hire us but didn't want to offer us tenure. We both (independently) decided to accept the offers nevertheless, recognizing that if our "bosses" didn't like our work, we wouldn't want to be there anyway. Needless to say, it worked out well for both of us. One major difference, however, is that Mike continues to work while I chose the easier route of retirement. Mike tells me still that he wakes up before 5 AM everyday (I sleep until 9 or 10) and loves getting down to his office before sunrise to plan research projects, see patients, and work with his students.

Of course, while I continue to have the highest respect for Dr. Valente's audiology knowledge, I contend that, despite Mike's unbridled love for his beloved St. Louis Cardinals, my knowledge of baseball must surpass his, as evidenced by the year I beat him in a San Francisco Giants vs Cardinals wager. To this day I can remember eating way too many of the fried ravioli (an apparent St. Louis delicacy) that he had to send me (he could have won Ghirardelli chocolates and fresh dungeness crab). Perhaps I will use the indigestion that winning the bet caused me as my rationale for retiring early.

Mike's willingness to share his knowledge, his humility and devotion to our field are truly remarkable. It is my fervent hope that, for the good of our profession, he continues his incredible productivity. To this end, I am including the following photo showing that even when he is on

“vacation” (with me and Dave Fabry in Switzerland, a long time ago- picture taken by David Fabry’s wife Liz), Dr. Valente maintains his concern about the “foes” of amplification, such as acoustic feedback.



Robert Sweetow, Dave Fabry, and Mike Valente. Photo courtesy of Liz Fabry.