



Speech given by Dr. Chuck Whitten – 2025 Gala Event (April 26)

Good evening

It is humbling to have the opportunity to speak at this historical event. I would like to thank everyone involved in the planning of the events this weekend. In addition, I would also like to provide a special shout out to Drs Russell and Brodt.

It is simply impossible for me to provide reflections on Mike without mention of his extraordinary partner-Marianne. Marianne-Cheri and I love you and what I say tonight, will be a reflection of your unconditional love and support of Mike as he pursued his life's passions- academic medicine, medical practice advocacy, cardiac anesthesiology, perioperative TEE, swimming, fly fishing, golf, and cooking—including the best Bolognese, I have ever tasted! The Wizard of Oz said it best- "A heart is not judged by how much you love but by how much you are loved by others." The energy in this room tonight is a reflection of how much you and Mike is loved.

I was aware of Mike's prominence in our specialty as I began my career in anesthesiology in the mid-80s, due to our mutual interest in cardiac anesthesiology. I met Mike in 1992 when he was functioning as a site reviewer for the Anesthesiology RRC at UT Southwestern. I was practicing a talk in the Giesecke Conference Room. I was unaware of his presence.

When I had finished, I heard someone blurt out "15th hole at Cypress Point-" an image of which had been displayed in my presentation. Somewhat startled, I turned around and had an introduction that would alter the course of my personal and professional life.

In 1994, when I was a first-year junior examiner at the ABA, Cheri and I had the pleasure of meeting Mike's better half-Marianne. A 25-year journey ensued as we shared multiple commonalities personally, professionally and as couples. We shared adventures at medical meetings and the boards, which included couples golf if at all possible and lots of good food!! Mike and Marianne were a force of nature as a couple. You wanted to stand close to them in the hope that some of their magic rubbed off on you. Cheri and I took every opportunity to stand close.

Marianne, Cheri, and I can never adequately thank you for your and Mike's presence in our lives. Watching the two of you was truly magical-and watching you keep Mike in his place was priceless. I can confirm that they could both deliver the "needle" to each other!! It was a sight to behold!

Mike was an All-American swimmer at Harvard. When I attempt to describe him to those that did not know him, I have utilized "Everybody's All-American." He was incredibly kind, quick witted, quick to flash a smile, but at the same time never afraid to tell you what you needed to hear. His advice was often provided via storytelling on a seemingly unrelated topic and then tying it all together to make his point.

Mike was empathetic but knew when to say a line had been crossed. He was a product of elite environments-- but he was not an elitist. He was truly a man of the people. It was one of his most endearing characteristics. It was a reflection of the environment in which he was raised, and the values instilled in him by his parents.

I have been blessed to have great mentorship and father figures in life. Mike was one of the most impactful behind only my biological father and my surrogate father-Dr Don Jackson. Mike was a gift from God. He was able to provide career advice due to our 9-year age difference that was invaluable as I navigated my career journey.

One of the most valuable nuggets of wisdom he ever shared was, "Never run from something. Run to something." I use that phrase frequently when I advise people. I also learned a great deal about leadership from Mike. His philosophy greatly impacted my own - "Leadership is not about being in charge but about taking care of those in your charge." Mike was the only individual in my life that occupied all the following niches Role model-Webster's defines a role model as a person looked to by others as an example to be [imitated](#). I identified Mike as someone who had characteristics that I wanted to emulate.

Mentor-Homer stated that a mentor is a **wise and trusted counselor**. Mike was both trusted and wise. He always made himself available and after discussing challenging scenarios that did not have easy solutions would end our conversations with...."keep your chin up."

Sponsor/advocate/supporter-someone that supports you or is willing to vouch for you as you strive to fulfill your dreams. Older brother-he was the older brother figure I never had in life.

When Mike departed this world, no one other than Marianne had a larger hole in their heart than me-seldom do you lose a mentor, role model, advocate, friend, brother figure, trusted adviser, sponsor, and favorite golfing partner all at once. I miss Mike every day!

While at UCSF Mike was a member of the Parnassus Street Poetry Club. In closing I thought it would be appropriate to share a portion of a poem by Michael Josephson-"What will matter"

So, what will matter? How will the value of your days be measured?

What will matter is not what you bought but what you built; not what you got but what you gave.

What will matter is not your success but your significance.

What will matter is not what you learned but what you taught.

What will matter is every act of integrity, compassion, courage, or sacrifice that enriched, empowered, or encouraged others to emulate your example.

What will matter is not your competence but your character.

What will matter is not how many people you knew but how many will feel a lasting loss when you're gone.

What will matter is not your memories but the memories of those who loved you.

What will matter is how long you will be remembered, by whom, and for what.

Living a life that matters doesn't happen by accident.

It's not a matter of circumstance but of choice.

Choose to live a life that matters.

Dr Michael K Cahalan led a truly remarkable life. Mike's life mattered. His impact on the subspecialty practice of cardiac anesthesiology and perioperative TEE will continue in perpetuity. Mike's life mattered to Chuck Whitten. Mike and Marianne's life as a couple altered Chuck and Cheri Whitten's married life.

As each of you reflect on tonight's events, consider what you can do going forward to assure that, like Mike and Marianne, you live a life that matters.