



Speech given by Dr. Manfred Seeberger – 2025 Gala Event (April 26)

Unforgettable memories (experiences that make life worth living)

'You're not allowed to come to work!' Mike Cahalan told me. 'You are not allowed to come to work until your wife Esther feels comfortable being alone with your three little children in your new home in Tiburon.'

Fortunately, my wife has always had a strong personality, so I was allowed to go to work very soon.

Working with Dr Michael Cahalan as a mentor and boss gave me the chance to learn more about TEE from one of its leading originators. Mike was a great teacher, both demanding and supportive.

But he was much more than a great teacher. He was a very nice person and a great role model.

Since we lived in the same village, I had the privilege of commuting to UCSF with Mike and Marianne every morning for two years and travelling home with Mike every evening. We chatted and discussed many things on the way. We talked about God and the world, Joe Montana, the meaning of life, and the price of gas. We became friends.

Mike was a great storyteller – commuting with him was stimulating and fun! But what impressed me most was his respect and sympathy for other people. No matter who I asked him about, he would always highlight their positive qualities and achievements. Only once Mike said: Ask someone else about him. He is a highly successful clinical investigator, but I had such a negative experience with him that I cannot give a fair assessment. Mike's opinion was clear, but he held back from saying more.

Mike tried to understand people, even when he disagreed with them. One day, we were discussing the behavior of a new member of the clinical team. She was an extremely beautiful young woman who used her looks to gain unfair advantages. This was not good for team spirit.

While driving, Mike managed to formulate a statement and a love story in just three sentences. He said, 'Watch how many men behave when there is a beautiful woman around. That is why it is not easy for a beautiful girl, for an attractive young woman to develop a good character. But we are two very lucky men because we both have very beautiful wives with wonderful characters!'

Before we went back to Switzerland, Mike once spoke about the importance of good time management. He said: 'There were times when I had fifteen different lectures, which took an enormous amount of time. Do it better; do it the way I am doing it now. I still have fifteen titles, but these are for five lectures.'

The five lectures that Mike gave in the '90s are no longer relevant. However, his basic attitude towards people remains relevant and is more pertinent than ever: you have to like people.

You do not become great by putting down your competitors. You are great when you support your fellows and peers; when you give positive feedback and praise; and when you offer criticism that is both honest and constructive.

You are great when you work well with other people locally, nationally and internationally.

This philosophy fits perfectly with the SCA's mission. That is why it's the perfect place here to celebrate Mike's legacy.