

# Academy Connection

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**26TH** Annual AACD Scientific Session

What's the      

# BIG IDEA!



AMERICAN ACADEMY OF COSMETIC DENTISTRY  
TUESDAY, APRIL 27 THRU SATURDAY, MAY 1, 2010  
   GRAPEVINE, TEXAS  WWW.AACD.COM



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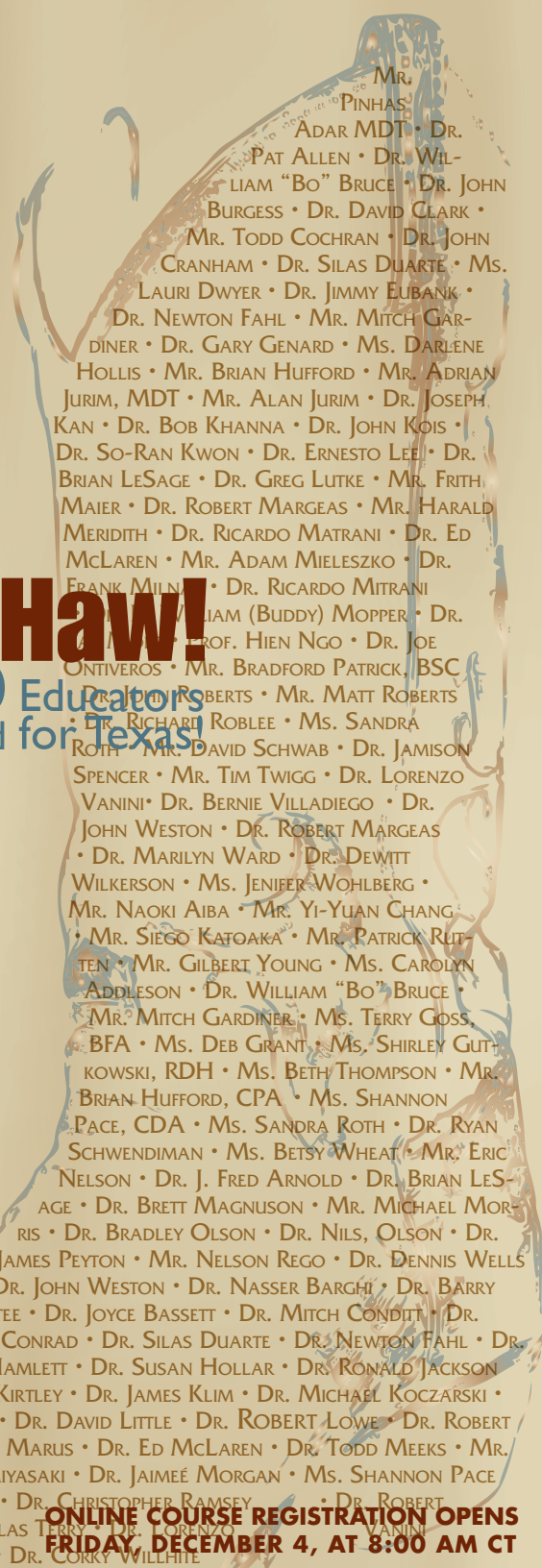
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ONLINE COURSE REGISTRATION OPENS  
FRIDAY, DECEMBER 4, AT 8:00 AM CT

# President's Message



## It's Better to Wear Out than Rust Out

by Michael R. Sesemann, DDS, AACD President

The current economic environment has made everyone more introspective and discerning about his or her business, and the practices we implement to make it successful. And, because of the difficult nature of the times, it becomes evident that there are moments when we need a little inspiration.

When people find out that I am from Omaha, Nebraska, I frequently am asked whether I have ever seen the "Oracle of Omaha," Mr. Warren Buffett. The fact is that I knew Mr. Buffett long before any of you! He and his wife purchased produce in the 60s and 70s from the vegetable stand my folks ran. Oh, how different life would have been if my parents had taken young Warren up on his invitation to take a \$10,000 stake in his new holding company—the one that would eventually become Berkshire Hathaway. Oh, the dreams I have had!

Although Warren Buffett is respected worldwide, our city lost its most saintly person last year when the Reverend Livingston Wills passed away. I first saw Rev. Wills when I was young. He would be walking down the sidewalk with six to eight brooms over his shoulder, going house-to-house offering them for sale. Six days a week he would sell his brooms, always dressed in a suit and tie.

I really learned how much ground the Reverend covered after I got my driver's license. While delivering vegetables for our gardening business during the day, I would see the Reverend carting those brooms from one side of the city to the other.

One day I came home from a delivery to see the Reverend at my house, selling brooms to my mother. Up close, I was struck by the aura and magnificence of Rev. Wills. That was the day I learned he had been blind since the age of five. He could tell day from night, but that was the extent of his vision.

Over time, his story became legendary in Omaha. He learned how to make brooms as a trade in high school. Then he learned that he could make more money selling the brooms that other people made. He had such a knack for featuring his wares that he put himself through college by selling brooms door-to-door in the evenings after class. "Ya need one?" He would ask everyone he'd meet. If you said "No," as most people did, Rev. Wills' reply was as certain and as timeless as his navy slacks, his red-striped dress

shirt, and his frayed suspenders: "Need a whisk broom then? They come in real handy."

In an average 10-hour workday, Rev. Wills estimated that he would call on 100 homes or 25 to 30 businesses. He would set off for a designated part of the town by bus, afterwards using his feet to find the sidewalks. "I made eyes out of my feet and hands," he would say. During the course of business, the Reverend was hit twice by cars, bitten by dogs, and he fell into many a difficult-to-detect manhole. He had countless doors slammed in his face, one woman shouting, "Can't you read the sign? No peddlers!" Even against those odds he was always likely to say, "You've got to have rain to appreciate the sunshine."

There were good weeks—sometimes as many as 12 dozen brooms in sales—and lean weeks when he only sold three or four dozen. Through it all, the Reverend knew his business: "Snow and ice is better. Christmas is good. You meet a few people not so good, but you're out to win the people, so a lot depends upon your attitude."

The Reverend Wills died at the age of 91. A Catholic priest, Ken Vavrina, who knew Rev. Wills and worked with Mother Theresa in Calcutta, testified at Rev. Wills' funeral that both she and Wills "were the real deal." Chicagoan Kathleen McGahey wrote that she was once at an Omaha restaurant when the door opened and diners whispered, "There's the Broom Man."

"For a minute," she said, "the room hushed with awe and respect... It wasn't just the brooms that he brought us. He gave us a profile of courage, perseverance, faith, and trust and, most importantly, raised our consciousness—allowing all who met him to change our hearts and our minds."

At a time when we are experiencing various levels of economic discomfort, I think of the "Reverend" Livingston Wills. For the life of me, I can not find a reason to complain when I have seen someone live his life without the benefit of sight, selling brooms door-to-door on his own, working the city from one end to the other, all with the dignity of a saint. When I think of him, I am humbled, and I am inspired to work a little harder than I thought possible. After all, as he used to say, "It's better to wear out than rust out."

Michael