

## EDITORIAL

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# View from the Pyramids: Pay It Forward

They are calling this summer the summer of “revenge travel,” as so many who cancelled vacations in 2020-21 are back to finding their travel bliss. COVID has exacted a heavy toll, emotionally and physically, on our human psyche. It brought to light what was important for many: focusing passions, helping to start or finish an educational goal, or just recognizing that retirement didn’t need to wait. It showed us what a social bunch we are as humans, and that by isolating ourselves from our tribe, our psyches took a huge toll. I am happy to see so many out there attending to their bucket list trips, visiting relatives, and generally trying to catch up on a year of lost travel.

While this summer has helped to refocus priorities for many, COVID itself seems to have taken a toll on the culture of service and the “pay it forward” idealism that A.T. Still, MD, DO instilled in his early faculty. Still often directed his faculty to find their passions: research, teach, or find a new technique, for example. Many of his early faculty went on to start colleges of osteopathic medicine, pioneer research, or pioneer a territory. Still is quoted as saying “I gave her a Gray’s Anatomy and Quiz Compend and told her to do the best she could, and she did well.”<sup>1</sup> This quote refers to Nettie Bolles, DO, the first woman graduate of ASO. He told her that she needed to have a passion for teaching anatomy, and she did.

The COVID psyche has many in the profession frozen in the fear that there just isn’t enough time to fulfill the bucket list, and mentorship takes a back seat, if present at all. The barometer of the health care industry has not settled since COVID, and burnout is rampant. As a result, we are losing mentors in the profession to early retirement, doing career pivots, or just deciding that medicine has taken too heavy a toll to continue.

While a pause is a natural and healthy thing for all of us to have once in a while, the pause from COVID has lasted far longer than I ever expected. We seem to have forgotten who we are and what we support as a profession. Our students and residents need mentors, and many have “left the building.”



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So, while it is natural and healthy in times of stress to refocus your priorities, I would encourage you to not forget those mentors who came before you, who inspired you, and went the extra mile for you. Be that person to a student or resident. Teach and inspire, find your passion again in a residency or COM. I have said it before: there is only one of you, and we need you to be there, to teach, to mentor, and to inspire. Take the trip to Italy, or that cruise you have always wanted, but don’t forget to come back and be a part of the profession again, to inspire and to teach. Mentorship has been an integral part of the profession since the times of Still, and I personally would not be where I am if others had not stepped up to mentor me. Remember who we are as a profession, and there is still work to be done, and remember to “pay it forward” for the next generation. Please.

## References

1. Walter GW. *Women and Osteopathic Medicine: Historical Perspectives*. Kirksville, MO: National Center of Osteopathic History, A.T. Still Memorial Library, Kirksville College of Osteopathic Medicine; 1994.