ACCEPTANCE OF THE CLARK P. READ MENTOR AWARD: STUDENTS, OPPORTUNITY, SERENDIPITY, AND W.B. YEATS: “EDUCATION IS NOT THE FILLING OF A PAIL; IT IS THE LIGHTING OF A FIRE”

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Thank you for being here this afternoon; I am truly humbled but, alas, not speechless. Thank you, Janice and Steve, for beginning this process and seeing it to conclusion. Thank you to my other graduate students and to old friends and colleagues who wrote letters of support, and lied convincingly. Thank you to Kelli Sapp and the members of the Awards Committee for opening and reading the file, even after seeing my name on it. And thank you to this wonderful society, the American Society of Parasitologists (ASP), for providing me with an environment and a home in which my students and I could always feel welcome and thrive.

Three words are the centerpiece of my talk: students, opportunity, and serendipity. Students, obviously, are central to all mentors. Opportunity, because several of my students said at different times that I had given them a chance by admitting them into graduate school and my laboratory, an opportunity no one else offered them. Serendipity, to make discoveries of things which one is not in quest of and/or the effect by which one accidentally discovers something fortunate, especially while looking for something else entirely; in other words, even a blind hog gets an acorn every now and then.

When I read the acceptance talks of the 8 colleagues I’ll join as ASP Mentors, I had a sense that they knew what they were doing, what they wanted to be when they grew up, and how to get there. Today, I become the exception to this group. I was going to be a high school biology and math teacher and coach football and swimming.

As I thought about my own journey prior to this talk, I became convinced there is no such thing as a “self-made” person. All of us are influenced by people around us during every moment of our lives. We all can identify people who have, in some way, large or small, altered the trajectory of our life. Thus,