I am deeply honored to have received this award because I consider mentorship the core of my professional life. I thank the Society, the Awards Committee, and especially Todd Huspeni, who organized and shepherded the documentation through the nomination process. Here I will briefly review how I see that this came to be, and then discuss some of the principles of mentorship that may broadly apply to others and some that are probably just my idiosyncratic quirks.

John Wooden, arguably the greatest basketball coach of all time, died recently, and there has been much discussion of his clearly defined principles, his Pyramid of Success, that he used to coach his teams (Wooden and Jamison 2005). At first glance, and especially when I was younger, they seem awfully corny, but if age has granted me any wisdom, I now see that they encapsulate the ingredients needed to reach the highest levels of achievement as a scientist and a teacher. Science is a highly collaborative process, and developing a great lab is not much different from building a great team. However, when I was young I understood none of these things.

I grew up in the South and West Bronx in very blue-collar neighborhoods. Only a few parents had been to college (including my father), and the options for a great career were limited to becoming a physician or an engineer (nobody spoke much of lawyers). From my parents I learned how to think, to debate, and to have no fear to take a rebel stand. They always stood in my support. But I was a poor student, graduating near the bottom of my high school class (ranking 645 of 750 seniors). I certainly did not know how to work, nor did I have a defined intellectual interest. I did like fishes and herps and fossils, and I was very quantitative—to this day I will count anything—but none of these things seemed career-worthy from my limited cultural perspective. However, by this time my family’s fortunes had improved, and in 1959 I was able to take advantage of geographic affirmative action (the farther from home you apply, the easier it is to be admitted to private schools) and went down to New Orleans to attend Tulane University. This proved to be my great good fortune. I grew up in NOLA at Tulane, learned a lot, watched the South begin its transformation from Jim Crow to a better place, parted hard, went from academic probation to excellence, and met a much greater diversity of people than I had known in the Bronx. It took me a couple of years to understand what a university was; what the differences were between a teaching assistant, a lecturer, and a professor; and what a professor did. I realized that they had a good life. A professor earned a decent living (I envisioned an ultimate annual income of, say, $20,000), and they were granted some respect in society. So, after wandering through physics (disastrous) and economics (much better), I became a zoology major in the second semester of my junior year and crammed the entire major into 1.5 years. I embraced zoology because I realized that one could investigate something that I was interested in. I had a keen interest in the ideas of undergraduates and they were granted some respect in society. Most importantly, Frank Sogandares introduced me to the world of parasites and led his students to begin to work independently. During that last year and a half at Tulane I studied morning, noon, and night, working hard for the first time in my life (and this being New Orleans, I could still go down to the Quarter after midnight for the rest of the night). Fortunately, I have never needed much sleep.

I encountered some very important mentors at Tulane. John Hubbard of the English Department taught me how to write effectively and how to justly grade students who got the message and changed their ways. Forrest LaViolette inspired me; his lecture on the sociology of Mardi Gras informs me to this day. He offered a keen interest in the ideas of undergraduates and stimulated my life-long concern for the importance of the details of ethnicity in the lives of my students and colleagues. Most importantly, Frank Sogandares introduced me to the world of parasites and led his students to begin to work independently. In the second lab session he brought in a tank of Cyprinodon variegatus, said they were infected with a species of Gyrodactylus on the skin, and told the class to “work them up.” After killing more than a dozen of the fish, finding a few of the parasites and smushing most of them, we noticed that the gills were loaded with Gyrodactylus. From the last 2 fish I collected about 50 Gyrodactylus, and one survived all the way through the staining process. It is still used as a demonstration in the monogene lab of

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