

## CHARACTER-BUILDING BY ANECDOTE

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**S**HORTLY after the Chicago Chapter of AMWA was founded, Loyal Davis, the then young Chief of Surgery at Northwestern University Medical School gave a talk at a chapter meeting. A few days later he and I sat next to each other at a meeting of the Chicago Surgical Society. Loyal was my chief and my mentor. One of Loyal Davis' extracurricular activities at that time was to serve as the editor of *Surgery Gynecology & Obstetrics*, subsequently to be known as the *Journal of the American College of Surgeons*. He had succeeded Allen Kanavel, founder of the journal and its editor until his death in the late 1930s.

As we sat listening to a young surgeon from another medical school read a paper on a subject on which I had published several articles, I began to get restless as I heard my own previously published words and phrases being read as though they were original with the presenter. Because I had always worked so hard on every sentence I had ever written, I remembered and recognized my sentences all too well.

Loyal Davis leaned toward me and asked, "Is something wrong?" I quickly replied, "Yes. This man is plagiarizing sentence after sentence of mine without acknowledging their source."

He put his hand on my arm and said, "Relax. Remind me to tell you a story after the meeting."

As we walked out of the meeting hall, he began, "Many years ago when I was Allen Kanavel's assistant, it was one of my regular duties to edit his papers, including his book on surgery of the hand. At a meeting in New York, which we both attended, an Eastern surgeon read a paper on infections of the hand, and proceeded to read word-for-word quotes from Kanavel, but did not credit the source. Since I had edited those sentences, I remembered them well, and became restless, just as you did tonight. I turned to Dr. Kanavel and said with some anxiety, 'He's reading your words as if they were his own!' To which Dr. Kanavel replied with a wry smile, 'Yes. Good, aren't they?'"

The lesson took. It was an example of Loyal Davis' method of teaching by anecdote, transmitting a character-building example from his own experience. Many years later, as Loyal Davis and I sat together at another surgical association dinner, he asked, "Remember the chapter on surgical judgment you wrote when I edited Christopher's *Textbook of Surgery*?" Of course I remembered, I thought it was among my better pieces. He continued, "I have agreed to write a chapter on 'The Surgeon' for the new editor, and I would like to adapt some of the statements you made about surgery as an art and a science."

I was never so flattered in my life. I said, "Of course. Help yourself. Good, aren't they?"

Loyal Davis had not forgotten what he had said many years before. He laughed and said, "Allen Kanavel would have liked that."

