

Citation for Prof. Vicente Patricio Gutierrez

by Carlos A. Pellegrini, MD, FACS, FRCSI(Hon)

Mr. President, it is a great pleasure to introduce Prof. Vicente Patricio Gutierrez of Buenos Aires, Argentina, for Honorary Fellowship in the American College of Surgeons.

Born in Buenos Aires in January of 1932, Professor Gutierrez's roots were very influential in his life. Indeed, his mother came from a family of Irish immigrants, who had come to Argentina seeking the rich soil of the pampas to feed and raise their cattle. They instilled in our honoree a sense of hard work, adventure, the pursuit of new horizons, and love for the farm. He developed admiration, understanding, and respect for those who work the land.

His father, whose own family had roots in Spain, was an academic surgeon of great reputation. He became Professor Gutierrez's closest teacher and mentor in his professional

life, and someone he always tried to emulate.

Professor Gutierrez graduated with honors from the University of Buenos Aires and specialized in surgery of the gastrointestinal tract. His interest in research took him to Sheffield, England, where he joined Sir Andrew Kay's physiology laboratory. He worked side by side with Leslie Blumgart, MD, with whom he became lifelong friends.

Upon return to his alma mater in Buenos Aires, he joined the faculty, and through intense research, education, and clinical practice, he rose through the ranks to become the chair of the prestigious department of surgery in 1982.

Anyone who has ever met Professor Gutierrez would describe him as the ultimate gentleman. He is a generous man, someone who always places the needs of others before his own. Those character traits were best ex-



Professor Gutierrez

emplified in his development of a model residency program in surgery at the University of Buenos Aires.

At the time, developing and running such a residency program meant overcoming the fear that residents would detract

from the faculty members' opportunity to grow. It also meant that the leader had to walk the fine line of balancing the safety of patients with the training needs of residents, in a world where direction from regulatory institutions was not available. He expanded the traditional training in surgery by integrating the values of trust and ethics and the power of an attitude of lifelong learning among his trainees. He wrote many beautiful and insightful papers dealing with the responsibility that physicians in general, and leaders in particular, must bear.

At the end of his tenure at the university, two elements of his personality had left a distinct legacy for the institution and a "branding" mark in every one of his graduates: a profound respect for patients and colleagues, and a unique ability to embrace change when change means opening opportunities, enhancing education, and improving patient care. His inspirational leadership and

his intense dedication to being a role model made him the natural leader of a young generation of surgeons.

Professor Gutierrez brought Advanced Trauma Life Support® (ATLS®) training to Argentina in 1989. The ATLS program expanded rapidly through the provinces and through many other countries in South America, helping save many lives. He served the American College of Surgeons in many other capacities, including his role as Governor for the Argentine Chapter, and as a member of the International Relations Committee.

Because of his many contributions, the major societies in surgery and gastroenterology in Argentina recruited him for leadership positions. He considered those positions, as he once wrote, as "challenges" rather than "honors." And, true to his word, he used those positions to fuel changes that led to improvements in the quality of care, and to the integration of pro-

fessionalism and ethics among practicing gastroenterologists and surgeons.

He has received some of his country's top awards in many fields of endeavor and has been recognized with Honorary Fellowship in several surgical and medical societies, including, most recently, the American Surgical Association. Perhaps closest to his heart was his election to the presidency of the National Academy of Medicine in Argentina, which was created in 1822, and stands as the oldest and most prestigious such academy in Latin America.

Mr. President, it is said that "a teacher affects eternity because one can never tell where his influence stops." I am honored to present to you a teacher of teachers, a role model for generations of surgeons in his country and around the world, Prof. Vicente Patricio Gutierrez Maxwell, to receive Honorary Fellowship in the American College of Surgeons.