

**Paul F. Parker Award**  
**Remarks by Ann B. Amerson**  
**December 7, 1999**

What an honor!! I am still overwhelmed by the magnitude of this recognition. As I prepared my comments it continues to awe me as to the company in which I have been placed. I would like to thank several people including the selection committee, my husband Russ who has provided great support for my growth and development, my daughter Stephanie who put up with her mother being gone a lot, individuals who have mentored me over the years, Glaxo-Wellcome for sponsoring the award and luncheon and in particular, Ray Wolf for his continuing efforts. And, finally, Paul and Addie Catherine Parker. Even though Paul is no longer with us, he still provides great inspiration to all of us and I am sure he is watching us today. I visited with Addie Catherine this past week. She is able to function independently and sends her regards to everyone. She would appreciate hearing from you.

I thought I would trace a little history of how I knew Paul and our earliest interaction. I went to high school with Kathleen, Paul and Addie Catherine's daughter, and we were in a group that hung around together. I had no thoughts of pharmacy or anything close at that time. I went to College as an economics major and in a year or so decided that was not for me. I began looking at sciences, particularly microbiology, and stumbled across pharmacy in the catalog. In reviewing the pre-pharmacy course requirements and those required in pharmacy, I was concerned about whether "I could do it". I decided maybe I needed to get some experience and I believe the only pharmacist I knew at the time was Paul Parker. I went to visit Paul and told him of my interest and was able to start a job as a technician in the spring of 1966. Little did I know what impact this would have and where it would lead.

I worked as a technician through school with the likes of Jerry Johnson, Bob Rapp, Ed Dropp, Gary Edwards, Wayne Conrad, Bill Miller and others. I know you won't recognize all of those names but everyone should recognize enough to wonder how I survived! One memory that particularly stands out during that period and a few of you will probably remember as well is Paul coming in one day and deciding to totally reorganize the pharmacy. He had been thinking about it and just decided that it was time to do it, so we did it. This was reflective of his operating style.

Paul Parker was a man of many wonderful qualities. I would like to discuss several of his qualities that have been particularly important in my career. Vision, positive attitude, and mentoring.

Vision is a key attribute where I benefited. Paul had great vision and was always "thinking out of the box". He helped me infinitely in a lot of areas to broaden the concept of drug information. For example, while the formulary was important, he helped me learn to think in the broader context of drug policy for the institution. We had many conversations about development and management of drug policy. Vision is the power of perceiving by imagination or by clear thinking. For his vision we all owe him a great deal and we should continue in our daily lives to "think out of the box" because that is how we make progress, innovate and solve problems.

Positive attitude – rarely did any of us see Paul with anything but a positive attitude. We would probably be awed by the range of issues that he dealt with that we had no real knowledge of at the time. I try my best to keep a positive attitude and move forward to deal with the issues to solve problems and not fly off the handle. I can remember one time that I was not so cool – I was pretty intimately involved in the operation of the DIC and it was going to be moved “again”. I felt that I had not been appropriately involved in the decision. Most of you are probably not aware that I have a temper – well it got a little out of hand that day. I stormed into Paul’s office and was ranting and raving about the situation almost to the point of tears. Of course expecting some action, the response I got was “Ann, I don’t know what to do with you when you are like this”. It was a learning experience that I have reflected on many times because I was obviously out of control and it made me recognize there was nothing productive that could happen at the moment.

A mentor is a wise and trusted advisor. The word comes from a Greek legend – Mentor was a faithful friend of Odysseus. When Odysseus left to fight the Trojans, he left his son with Mentor, to be taught and advised. As each of us looks back, we can identify people who have mentored us in our careers and personal life. I have been extremely fortunate to have a number of valued mentors in my life including Paul Parker and Charlie Walton, one the namesake of this award and the other the second recipient. Mentoring takes many different forms and can occur in many different settings. I feel that it is my responsibility to try to give to others what I have learned and help them think through the continued development of practice. I have done this better at some times than others. I believe that drug information practice has benefited from my efforts. Some of the people that I have been fortunate enough to influence, have gone on to create and improve practice and education. That is my reward for the efforts I put forth and, in turn, it is a way to reward my mentors for their efforts on my behalf.

Mentoring is not something that we are always conscious of – we don’t say that I am going to mentor somebody today. It occurs because of a personal interest that we take in an individual and a willingness to commit time to teaching and advising that person. The 1999 ASHP National Residency Preceptor Conference was on “Mentoring for Excellence”. In the report of the meeting, a mentor is described as one who is committed to the success of the person. A mentor’s role is to teach, coach, counsel, sponsor, and encourage. It comes more naturally for some than others but it is something we all have a responsibility to do. This recognition has caused me to reflect on this characteristic and renew my commitment to do this when I can. I hope you will do the same.

I would like to close with some comments about appreciation. It is hard to appreciate what is going on around you when you are there. Only now can I fully appreciate the magnitude of the opportunity that I was given in my education and training and the environment that I was placed in. We struggle every day with our students or those that we work with to make them try to understand the opportunities available and how far we have truly come in some areas. Some days we each get bogged down in the routine and just try to survive. But, there is still a lot of work to be done. I would ask you each to recommit to the characteristics of Paul Parker that I have discussed – vision, positive attitude and mentoring and most of all to appreciate where you are. This award is a most cherished honor for me and I thank you.