

T R I B U T E

A TRIBUTE TO ALAN SHALITA, MD



Alan R. Shalita, MD
(Photo courtesy of AARS)

Alan R. Shalita, MD, Chairman and Distinguished Teaching Professor of Dermatology, SUNY Downstate Medical Center, Brooklyn, NY, passed away on February 2, 2014. On Friday evening, March 21, 2014, the American Acne & Rosacea Society held a tribute in honor of the late Dr. Shalita, one of the most recognized leaders in dermatology on the subject of acne. Several individuals spoke about how they knew Dr. Shalita both professionally and personally. He was responsible for training many dermatology residents over more than four decades and has contributed to furthering the careers of many who demonstrated their interest in both clinical dermatology and research. He participated in the activities of many dermatology societies in the United States and around the world. The following are letters that were written by two of Dr. Shalita's closest friends and colleagues, James J. Leyden, MD, and John S. Strauss, MD. These letters were presented at the AARS in honor of Dr. Shalita. All are saddened by his passing, but at the AARS tribute, everyone took part in celebrating his life as a great dermatologist, excellent educator, and simply a very generous and great human being.

James Q. Del Rosso, DO, FAOCD

Alan Shalita and I Met in 1967 . . .

by James J. Leyden, MD

Alan Shalita and I met in 1967 when, as only he could put it, we were residents together at Penn and NYU. Alan had been stimulated to pursue dermatology when he was a student of the great biologist Bill Montagna at Brown University while I was swept into the magical world of Albert Kligman at Penn. Since Kligman and Montagna were best of friends, we naturally followed in the footsteps of the maestros and became best of friends for more than 40 years. Because of our mutual interest in acne, we found ourselves together many times a year at various advisory boards and meetings, often with our wives Claudette and Simone. I also made yearly visits to Alan's department at Downstate University in Brooklyn (often referred to by Alan as one of the largest countries in the world). As a result, I consider myself an expert when it comes to Alan Shalita. Alan had many endearing qualities. He loved to tell jokes and since I can't remember jokes, we were a perfect team. According to Claudette and Simone, he has told me the same jokes over and over, even on the same day, and I laughed as if they were new each time. Alan was incredibly generous and would extend a hand at a moment's notice. On many trips, he had to buy an extra suitcase to carry the staggering number of gifts he bought for relatives, members of his department, and who knows who. Usually, I had to check the additional bag because the Shalitas travelled with so many bags, it looked like they were moving away permanently. Alan was an optimist's optimist. No matter how bad things were, and God knows he and Simone had more family tragedies than seems possible for one

family, he was always cheerful and grateful for everything. Alan loved children and treated his residents as if they were his own children. I particularly remember a dinner the four of us had with a famous dermatologist and his wife at one of Alan's reunions of former residents. Alan knew the names of all the young children and they clearly knew him. The wife of the other dermatologist who was Chair of another program commented on Alan's interaction with the youngsters and how sad it was that her husband barely knew the names of his current residents and surely could not identify, let alone know, the names of children of former residents.

The best remembrance I have of Alan, that summarizes the wonderful person he was, happened on a trip in China. After a meeting, a group of about 10 of us toured several cities. We were required to have a "national tour guide" with us for the entire trip. He was Chinese, but, interestingly, his name was Norman. Early on the tour, Alan took a little nap on a garden bench (another endearing habit) with his arms crossed over his chest. Norman said, "Alan is Buddha!" and for the rest of the trip, we called him Buddha. On the last day while we were in our van, Norman, with tears in his eyes because of the gift Alan had surprised him with, leaned over and said to me, "Jim, I love Buddha," and I replied, "Everyone loves Buddha." I was lucky to have a friend like Alan. I still can't believe that I will not see him again. Whenever we talked or were together, we always ended with me saying, "Keep the Faith," and Alan saying, "a bientôt." A bientôt mon ami!

Celebrating Alan Shalita's Life

by John S. Strauss, MD

I have known Alan longer than anyone else at the AARS meeting. We met in 1952 in Providence at one of the first Biology of the Skin meetings run by the late Bill Montagna. In those days, it was a very small meeting of the giants in dermatological research. I was a second year resident, and the only one at the meeting, having been brought there by my mentor, the late Al Klingman. Alan, a beginning Brown University student, was the projectionist. I think that meeting, which was related to the sebaceous glands, had a profound effect on the later clinical and research interests of both of us. To be truthful, while Alan remembered our interaction at that event, my recollection does not go back that long, but starts when Alan became an NIH training fellow at NYU. That is almost 50 years ago, and during that time, our professional relationship, as well as Susan and my social relationship with both Simone and Alan, has been extensive and very close. On a professional level, Alan always viewed me as a mentor, but I can assure you that as time went on, he was equally a mentor for me. I think the most important part I played in his life was that I recommended him to Joy Bollet, the Chairman of Medicine at SUNY Downstate. From 1975, when Alan went to SUNY Downstate, the Section and then the Department grew from a very small unit to one of the largest Departments of Dermatology in the United States. Alan was an extremely successful teacher, researcher, and internationally well-known member of the dermatological profession. As a faculty member, Alan's teaching skills were recognized by SUNY Downstate by his designation as a Distinguished Teaching Professor.

Alan was appointed to many administrative positions at SUNY Downstate. For four years, he was my on-site Deputy Secretary of the 18th World Congress in New York. He was on numerous task forces and councils, and was the Vice President of the Academy. He was also President of the American Dermatological Association, the Association of Professors of Dermatology, as well as local dermatological organizations in greater New York. I could go on and on in discussing his professional life, but what I want to end with is our social relationship. We were close friends. I talked to Alan at least two to three times a week over the years, and we met as often as possible, given the distance between our locations. I substituted for him, giving his talk at the World Congress in Sydney, and the EADV in Rhodes.

I could say much more, but suffice it to say that we all have lost a leading educator, researcher, and clinician, and more importantly, a close and dear colleague. He will be missed. ●

Alan R. Shalita, MD

- **President**
American Dermatological Association (Honorary Member)
- **President**
Association of Professors of Dermatology
- **Vice President**
American Academy of Dermatology (1995)
- **Chair**
AAD Council on Scientific Assembly and Council on Communications
- **Deputy Secretary General**
World Congress of Dermatology for four years
- Nominated for Honorary AAD Membership

and much more....



Alan Shalita, MD, and John Strauss, MD (Photo courtesy of AARS)