Mr. Speaker, Board of Trustees, Delegates, Alternates, Past Presidents, colleagues, guests and friends, I stand before you, honored and profoundly humbled, to serve as the next President of the American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons. I sincerely thank the House of Delegates for your support and confidence in electing me as the 103rd President of this great Association.

As you may well imagine, giving this address virtually instead of in-person in San Antonio was not my first choice. However, if Willie Nelson can have a virtual Fourth of July picnic, I guess AAOMS can have a virtual meeting of its House of Delegates! I sincerely hope and pray that this will be our first and our last such meeting.

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, this year has turned out to be like none we have ever experienced in our lifetimes. Is there anyone listening who can’t wait for the following phrases to disappear from our daily lexicon: “social distancing,” “out of an abundance of caution,” “the new normal,” “shelter in place” and “flattening the curve?” Every one of us has been touched by this pandemic in some way. Almost all of us have experienced an economic toll; some have suffered serious health concerns and, sadly, a small number of our members have succumbed to the COVID-19 virus.

To honor those members who lost their lives as a result of this pandemic, I will recommend to the Advisory Committee on Awards Nominations that the 2021 Annual Meeting in Nashville be dedicated to their memory.

We are all experiencing virtual fatigue to some degree. I think these last several months have reminded us of just how important human interaction really is. Living a mostly virtual life is not healthy for the body, mind and soul! You really can’t get to know people staring at them on a computer screen. This only happens face-to-face, whether we are sharing thoughts, ideas and experiences at a Board or Committee meeting, or if we are attending our educational programs, such as the AAOMS Annual Meeting, Dental Implant Conference or other hands-on learning experiences.

Last year in his Inaugural Address, AAOMS President Dr. Vic Nannini said, “One never knows what event or challenge will suddenly appear that can shape the course of how the year will play out.” He didn’t know how prophetic that statement would be! In early March when we launched the new OMS Institute for Education and Innovation in the AAOMS headquarters building, we had no indication that the business of our Association was about to be upended by a worldwide pandemic.

Beginning in mid-March, our capable AAOMS staff were required to work from home. This was soon followed by the cancellation of all in-person Board meetings, our Day on the Hill program, all of our educational programs and events planned to be held at AAOMS headquarters, all international meetings and most of our regional society meetings.

Then came the most disappointing cancellation of all, our 2020 Annual Meeting in San Antonio. Through it all, Dr. Vic Nannini exhibited the strong leadership skills he is known for by leading the Board of Trustees and our dedicated staff...
through one unprecedented crisis after another. He never once complained about the hand he had been dealt. Instead, he followed the advice of British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, who during the bleakest days of World War II advised, “If you’re going through hell, keep going!” I told him more than once that he was our Churchill! We all owe Vic our gratitude for the outstanding job he has done in leading AAOMS through the storm of COVID-19. Thank you, my friend.

I would be remiss if I didn’t recognize AAOMS’s steadfast, talented and dedicated staff. I’m convinced we have the best staff of any healthcare organization in the country. Since mid-March, while working from home, they have all stepped up and continued to seamlessly run the day-to-day operations of our organization. On more than one occasion, they were given new projects to develop with short deadlines. In every instance, they delivered and never once complained. On behalf of the Board of Trustees, a big thank you to our staff. You all are incredible!

In response to the crisis generated by the COVID-19 pandemic, Dr. Nannini created the Special Committee on Recovery and Response to the Pandemic (SCORRP) and the Special Committee on Virtual Meetings (SCVM). SCORRP, chaired by Dr. David Fenton, met frequently online. They issued guidelines and recommendations to help our members reopen their practices in accordance with the CDC recommendations while keeping their staff, patients and themselves safe.

Dr. Daniel Meara is Chair of SCVM. In just three months, he and his committee were able to convert the educational and scientific portions of our 2020 Annual Meeting and the 2020 Dental Implant Conference into a virtual format that I’m confident will be a success. The Committee also developed this weekend’s virtual House of Delegates meeting.

Since this year’s Annual Meeting is held in conjunction with IAOMS, Dr. Meara and his Committee faced additional challenges as they worked to accommodate the needs of oral and maxillofacial surgeons around the world and across multiple time zones.

We owe Drs. David Fenton, Daniel Meara and the members of their Special Committees our gratitude for their Herculean efforts on our behalf. Our sincere thanks to all of you.

A top priority of my Presidential agenda this year is to return AAOMS to normal operations as quickly as the course of the pandemic will allow. My goal is to achieve a seamless and complete return to face-to-face Board meetings, Committee meetings and educational programs in our new OMS Institute for Education and Innovation as soon as it is safe to do so. It is also my intent that AAOMS will continue to assist our members as they strive to safely treat their patients and return their practice and business operations to pre-pandemic levels.

One of the most important tasks we will address during my Presidential year will be the selection of a new Executive Director to replace the retiring Scott Farrell. Scott has served as our ED for the past five years, and his tenure can only be described as outstanding. He has graciously agreed to delay his retirement until his replacement is identified and onboard at Rosemont. Thank you, Scott, for your 22 years of distinguished service to AAOMS. The initial meeting of the new Executive Director search committee was held in early August, and our plans are moving forward on schedule.

Another important charge that must be addressed by the Board this year is the development of a new three-year Strategic Plan. Our current plan was created and approved by the Board in 2017 to guide AAOMS’s activities through 2018, 2019 and 2020. Initially, our plan was to develop a new three-year Strategic Plan in March at the annual offsite Board meeting in Tucson. Unfortunately, the pandemic canceled this meeting and all remaining face-to-face meetings for the rest of this year. At this point, we plan to meet at headquarters in the spring of 2021 to develop AAOMS’s new three-year plan. Until then, we will continue to be guided by our current Strategic Plan.

Two years ago in my Vice Presidential campaign speech, I stated that my first and foremost priority was to preserve our anesthesia delivery model. That hasn’t changed. Our members have been delivering safe, affordable and accessible anesthesia in an office-based setting for over 70 years. All the objective data show our delivery model is safe and effective. But we can and will do even better. During this House of Delegates meeting, we have debated several proposals that will strengthen our anesthesia team delivery model and make our safety record even better.

There are a number of factors that continue to underscore the need for OMSs to become more proactive and involved in safeguarding their ability to provide dental office-based sedation/anesthesia using the OMS anesthesia team model.
Since obtaining specialty status last year, the American Society of Dentist Anesthesiologists (ASDA) has become even more emboldened in its efforts to convince the ADA, state dental boards, CRNAs, pediatricians and medical anesthesiologists that dentist anesthesiologists are the sedation/anesthesia experts in dentistry. Approximately 350 dentist anesthesiologists in the United States provide a miniscule number of the dental office-based sedation/anesthesia across the country. By comparison, our nation’s 7,500 actively practicing oral and maxillofacial surgeons perform millions each year.

The ASDA has recently drafted a document on Proposed State Sedation/General Anesthesia Rules for distribution to state dental boards. As expected, it is critical of our anesthesia delivery model. Moreover, the American Society of Anesthesiologists (ASA) was not allowed to review and comment on the document.

Rest assured, AAOMS will work tirelessly to counter the points made in this document and other attempts to discredit the OMS model. We will continue to strongly advocate the success of our anesthesia team model, our office anesthesia evaluation (OAE) program and our outstanding safety record to state legislatures and state dental boards. But if this effort is to succeed, it is imperative that individual OMSs step forward and support our efforts.

I believe that we must commit to the following three-pronged plan:

- **We need every member to participate in AAOMS’s OMS Quality Outcomes Registry (OMSQOR).** Voluntary and consistent reporting by every AAOMS member is critical if we are to compile the verifiable scientific data that will allow us to effectively advocate for our delivery model before state dental boards, legislatures, third-party carriers and competing specialties. It is essential that we communicate to our membership the critical relationship between the registry and the future of the specialty.

- **We need increased participation in the Dental Anesthesia Assistant National Certification Examination (DAANCE) and National Simulation programs.** We can further enhance our safety record if our surgical assistants become DAANCE-certified and our anesthesia teams participate in AAOMS’s state-of-the-art simulation programs. Participation and completion of these programs will demonstrate to our regulatory and legislative bodies, our allied specialties and our patients that we are the dental specialists most qualified to provide safe, comfortable and effective office-based anesthesia.

- **We also must maintain our long-standing relationship with the ASA.** Last year, a task force was created comprised of members from both organizations to foster an open dialogue and collaborate on those issues we hold in common. Regrettably after only one meeting, the pandemic put these deliberations on hold. However, I am committed to resuming regular meetings of this group as soon as possible.

In 2017, the Board of Trustees created the Special Committee on Patient Safety. The goals of the Committee were to:

- Ensure patient safety through education, research and the use of AAOMS products and services.

- Reduce the risk of adverse events for OMS patients through increased education that focuses on patient assessment and selection.

- Identify factors that may result in a potential risk during OMS procedures.

- Conduct meaningful research to develop clinical practice guidelines.

I am pleased to report that Past President Dr. Lou Rafetto has accepted reappointment as Chair of the Special Committee for the coming year. I look forward to working with Lou to achieve the goals of this important Committee and further promoting a culture of patient safety in AAOMS.

As a further indication of our commitment to patient safety, AAOMS will hold its third biennial Anesthesia Patient Safety Conference in our new OMS Institute for Education and Innovation in August 2021. The conference will be offered live onsite and simulcast online in order to accommodate those members who may be unable to travel to AAOMS headquarters for the program.

The theme for our 2021 Annual Meeting in Nashville is Ensuring Our Future through Wellness and Diversity. In keeping with this theme, I hope to encourage more women to pursue a career in oral and maxillofacial surgery. Currently, only 18 percent of our residents are women. Our specialty has always prided ourselves in attracting the best and the brightest dental students into OMS training. But when you
consider that 50-55 percent of most dental school classes are female, it is clear that we are losing many of the most qualified dental students to other dental specialties.

I am pleased to report that ROAAOMS has begun a visionary mentoring program through which our current women residents will identify, recruit and encourage qualified female dental students to consider a career in OMS. Our residents also will serve as mentors who will help the new recruits navigate the unique requirements of the specialty. I fully support expansion of this program with a goal of having our resident pool comprised of 25 percent women within three years.

Last year, the House of Delegates approved a three-year extension of the special assessment to fund our Informational Campaign. By all available metrics, this campaign has been a success in building and promoting the OMS brand. Many components of our award-winning campaign focus on direct patient marketing, largely in the areas of digital marketing.

In addition, MyOMS.org, our patient-centered website, has recently been redesigned with increased search engine optimization and mobile device responsiveness. Seven new patient videos and 18 infographics have been developed and added to the website for members to download and use for their patient education efforts. Our four public service announcements (PSAs) have been viewed or heard by millions of potential patients on TV, radio and airport signage in five major airports across the country. I will continue to strongly support this successful program, and I encourage you to promote the MyOMS.org website to your patients.

These are just the highlights of the many goals and priorities the Board of Trustees and I will focus on during what I anticipate will be a very productive year.

As I look back on what has been a remarkable professional journey for me, I realize that every lesson learned, every problem solved and every achievement earned – including my installation as AAOMS President – has been made possible through the support, advice, encouragement and guidance of mentors, friends, colleagues and family. With your indulgence, I would like to take a few minutes to thank some of these individuals.

Without the United States Navy, I might not be standing here today. In 1973, when I enrolled in dental school at the University of Tennessee, our country was in a recession and student loan availability was nowhere near what it is today. There was no way my middle-class parents could afford my tuition. I applied for the Health Professions Scholarship Program and was lucky enough to be selected by the Navy. I spent the next 25 years in service to our country and retired in 2000. Former President John F. Kennedy once said, “I can imagine a no more rewarding career. And any man who may be asked in this century what he did to make his life worthwhile, I think I can respond with a good deal of pride and satisfaction: ‘I served in the United States Navy.’” I agree and am proud to be a retired Navy Captain.

In the pre-match era of resident selection in 1980, the late Dr. Hugh Tilson (then Chairman at UT San Antonio and former AAOMS District V Trustee) selected me for training. He was partial to candidates with prior military experience and University of Tennessee graduates. Therefore, I had two tickets punched when I interviewed with him! At that time, the San Antonio OMS program was unique among our residency programs. All residents completed a one-year internship in anesthesia followed by three years of oral and maxillofacial surgery. After completing residency, you had the option to enter the sophomore class of medical school with his recommendation to the UT Medical School Dean of Admissions. In case you are counting, that was a seven-year program!

I also would like to thank my surgeon mentors who helped mold me into the surgeon I am today. This list would include Drs. Frank Dolwick, Jon Tom McAnear, the late Don Steed, Gil Triplett and especially Joe Van Sickels.

After an eight-year academic career at UT San Antonio, I walked across the street and joined the private practice of Drs. Bob Johnson and Steve Buckley. Dr. Johnson was a retired Air Force Colonel and the former Chief of OMS at San Antonio’s Wilford Hall Medical Center. He founded what would later become Alamo Maxillofacial Surgical Associates. Over the next 20 years, we did hundreds of orthognathic surgeries together. I have had the privilege to operate with numerous surgeons over my career, and I can say without a doubt he is the best assistant surgeon that I have ever operated with. Thank you, Bob, we changed a lot of lives together!
Dr. Buckley was my junior resident in our training program. Nobody works harder than Steve, and he has taught me what it takes to provide consistent excellent patient care.

Two years after joining Bob and Steve, we merged our practice with the practice of two of my former residents, Drs. Jimmy Franco and Whit Rominger, and became Alamo Maxillofacial Surgical Associates. In 2006, Dr. Wendell Edgin joined our practice following a five-year academic career at UT San Antonio. Wendell is also a retired Air Force Colonel and a former Chief of OMS at Wilford Hall Medical Center in San Antonio. Wedge brought much-needed administrative skills to the practice and rapidly became involved in OMS at the state, regional and national levels. He just completed a term as President of the San Antonio District Dental Society. After Dr. Johnson’s retirement, Drs. Adam Verrett and Andrew Hanna joined the practice – bringing us to our current seven-surgeon practice. I would like to sincerely thank all my partners for their unwavering support while serving first ABOMS and now AAOMS. I couldn’t ask for a better group of guys to work with.

With the merger of our two practices in 1998 to form Alamo Maxillofacial Surgical Associates, we hired Kelly Ann Shy to be our practice administrator. It was the very best decision we ever made. She brought knowledge, experience and exemplary people skills that helped develop our practice into what it has now become. Alamo would not have survived without her. She was the glue that kept it all together! Thank you, Kelly. You will always be the face of Alamo Maxillofacial Surgical Associates.

Lisa Aguilar and I have worked together since December 1996. She was my first surgical assistant in private practice. Two years after the merger in 1998, she was promoted to Assistant Administrator and became Kelly’s main lieutenant for the next several years. Thank you, Lisa, for handling all the administrative tasks and employee complaints while freeing me up to do surgery and take care of patients.

For the last 16 years, Chris Meyer has served as my primary surgical assistant. She knows me better than I know myself! To say she is my “right hand” would be an understatement. Her skills and experience make surgery fun, and she keeps my stress levels down. Thank you, Chris.

I would also like to thank many of the Past Presidents of ABOMS and AAOMS for their mentoring, advice and encouragement on the journey that has brought me here today. I have learned from you by observing your leadership styles and your political skills. When we meet in Nashville next year, I hope you will say I didn’t disappoint you.

Now for my most important supporters. Both of my adult children work in the healthcare arena. After 15 years with Merck Pharmaceuticals, Lauren moved to Biogen earlier this year, and Colby is a Senior Policy Analyst with the American Heart Association in Washington, D.C. Colby also serves as the director of the Texas state political action committee, TOMSPAC. I am so proud of your accomplishments and the solid citizens you have become. Thank you for your unwavering support.

I met the love of my life while we were attending high school in Pocahontas, Ark. Brenda was my date to the junior-senior prom when I was a junior. We celebrated our 48th wedding anniversary last month. Brenda has been by my side throughout this journey, offering counsel, support, encouragement and unrelenting love. She has never once complained or asked why I’m doing this. Two lines from songs by Merle Haggard and George Strait best describe my love for you: “I’m sure you’re the reason I was born” and “You will always be the miracle that makes my life complete!”

So please come aboard and join our Board of Trustees and me as this ship prepares to sail into our new year with hope and optimism that we will experience calm seas during the coming journey. We have much to accomplish, and I am confident that together we will get it done.

Thank you, and may God bless AAOMS!