

**Distinguished Contribution Award Speech**

by David S. Prescott, LICSW

Dear colleagues:

It was the honor of a lifetime to receive ATSA's Distinguished Contribution award at this year's conference in San Diego. The marvelous irony is that, although my name was attached to this year's award, my best work has largely been in collaboration with others.

My point about collaboration is not just a nicety or a nod to others. Like ATSA, I have been blessed with some of the finest collaborators in the world. Robin Wilson, Jill Levenson, Gwenda Willis, Tony Ward, Rob Longo, Steve Bengis, Joan Tabachnick, Maia Christopher, and countless others. I am particularly grateful to Ray Knight and Keith Kaufman for their encouragement to get involved with ATSA's board of directors many years ago. I am eternally grateful to Robin McGinnis for our work together in the ATSA office in 2007, a time of great vulnerability for the organization. These people prove an old saying: Alone, I go faster; together we go further.

ATSA's very history is steeped in collaboration. Without it, the first grants by the National Institute for Mental Health would not have led to the first ATSA conferences and newsletters. Likewise, professionals coming together over brown-bag lunches in Salem, Oregon, to discuss concerns about the use and misuse of assessment and treatment methods eventually led to the establishment of ATSA as a professional organization. Clearly, we are all better in the company of others with similar goals and aspirations.

Of course, we don't all have enough opportunities to collaborate. All too often, we practice in isolation or arouse disrespect from others. Most of us have to be careful about how we describe our work to strangers. Still, real collaboration is precious. It must be built, maintained, and nurtured along the way.

The notion of collaboration leads to inevitable questions: How to get started, and how to build collaborations that will spawn further partnerships. To that end, I am very grateful to two long-time friends and mentors: Joann Schladale and Lloyd Sinclair. Throughout nearly two decades, I have watched, worked with, and learned from their examples. They embody something I hope we will all become: mentors who help others – professionals and clients alike – grow into their full potential. For those of us whose hair is as gray as mine, please be a good mentor. For those who may be entering the field, please stick around. We need all the new faces and fresh ideas we can get. You may notice that newcomers sometimes try to make a splash or a name for themselves. My hope is that you will get past that and make a real contribution.

Again, a big thanks to Robin Wilson and Shoshanna Must for initiating this award, and to ATSA and its board of directors for making it happen. ATSA rocks, and its members are the best!

David Prescott

