AWARD ACCEPTANCE SPEECH

FOR

MAMDOUH BAKHOS, MD

Ladies and gentlemen, friends and family, esteemed colleagues and distinguished guests, it is a great pleasure to be here and a tremendous privilege to receive the Stritch School of Medicine Medal for 2015. I have dedicated my life to medicine and throughout my history with Stritch I have been fortunate to have the opportunity to be a part of such a vital and respected entity. I have experienced the gamut of vantage points afforded to me thanks to the various responsibilities I have had and each one of those opportunities has allowed me to hone my skills as a teacher, guide, doctor, and of course, a perpetual student of medicine. You know, we never stop learning. We never stop observing. There are always new ways and means to contribute to the quality of life of our students, patients and fellow faculty, administration, and doctors.

(**If you want to make a joke you can say**) I am here because I love my work. I love medicine, and I truly respect the mandate that we all face, and that is to keep up with, and stay ahead of, the times, especially with regard to enhancing and prolonging a person’s quality of life. I am here because I believe in my purpose on this planet and in doing the best that I can, and that is why when I was told by \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ that I was the recipient of this year’s Stritch Medal, I have to admit, even after all of these years, my heart **really did skip a beat.** I did have an adrenaline rush…. Of course in my line of work, that might be cause for suspicion but I remembered to breathe and thankfully didn’t need to call for (**Name one of your cardiologist colleagues**) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. to check my vitals. After all these years… it’s good to know the thrill of acknowledgement is still very present and appreciated! (**Wait for the laugh**). Can you imagine? Being acknowledged by you, my peers, in such a significant way? I will do my best to express my profound gratitude for being recognized for the work that I do… that I love.

There is no way that I could possibly have dedicated myself to my medical career without the support, love, and encouragement from my family. To my wonderful wife Wafa, who, let’s be honest, **REALLY** is the heart of the Bakhos “operation,” thank you for all that you’ve done and given to me and to our family. In spite of significant challenges you’ve faced personally you always manage to be there and place all of your energy and thought into raising three incredible children. Your patience, spirit and devotion are unparalleled. To our children Joe, Lara, and Alan, if children are the mirrors of their parents, then I am humbled and proud to see myself in your reflection. Someone once said that success is having raised happy, healthy caring children. Joe, Lara, and Alan, I would have to say you are my most precious achievement. Along with your spouses, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and our beautiful grandchildren, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ I have more than a lifetime’s worth of blessings. I am so happy to have my brother, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ here with us today. If anyone knows what I went through as a child, if anyone has witnessed my development in the world of medicine, and if there is anyone who was there from the beginning to encourage me, it was \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. (**Turn to your brother and say**) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, your presence brings this whole process full circle. Thank you for being there…. and **HERE**… for me.

Partnership is essential in every phase of life and it’s especially essential in medical practice. To align oneself with spirits in sync professionally, academically and intellectually is rare and treasured. I am so fortunate to have had some incredible partners in my career. To all of my muses, assistants, OR team members, great cardiac nurses and anesthesiologists, and cardiologists with whom I have worked so closely, your knowledge and skills have inspired me every step of the way. You’ve all kept me on my toes and I have to say I am a better man and doctor for the lessons I’ve learned from you. To the administration teams that keep everything in order, I truly appreciate all that you do as well. To Larry Goldberg, CEO of Loyola Hospital, (**is this the correct full name?**) thank you for your support and encouragement. And to Linda Brubaker, It’s a real honor to have you introduce me and present this award to me. You know how much it means to me that I have the privilege to teach and work with our astounding group of medical students. To witness their growth through discovery and treatment of our patients brings me back, time and again, to the reason why I chose to study medicine. It’s so wonderful to guide them as they search for solutions to problems and issues facing the medical community and it’s my privilege to guide them in achieving their goals. Their enthusiasm is pure and genuine and through the work of the medical school, we are building future generations who will build on our legacy while reaching even more impressive milestones.

From my earliest youth I knew I wanted to be a doctor and in particular a heart surgeon. I have worked hard to find my place and make my contribution in medicine and in particular at Loyola and at Stritch. The real motivator for me is to be able to care for patients that really need skills, compassion and attention. Lives hang in the balance based on what we can or cannot do for each unique case, and to see a patient survive and thrive is an incredible blessing. I marvel when they give us gifts and wonder if they realize that watching them progress and heal is the greatest gift we can receive. Such gifts of appreciation can only be compounded by having an equally loyal, supportive and deserving staff.

Although there are so many people and partners to thank, I would like to mention one man in particular. There is one special partner, Brian Foy. We formed a medical group called CSA, Cardiac Surgery Associates, and the work we do in the communities where we are really needed gives us the opportunity to offer care to patients who might otherwise lack for quality medical attention. Brian, you’re like a brother to me and I am proud to serve others with you.

While awards are wonderful (**If you want to make a joke you can say**) … and I am definitely keeping this one in a very **PROMINENT** place, I want you all to know that my TRUE reward comes at the end of the day when I go home, and can acknowledge that I am blessed to be one of those people who can appreciate the difference they’ve made in peoples’ lives.

A couple of months ago, Ben Carson may have boasted of his medical achievements. He said at The Republican debate that he was the first one in the group to remove half a human brain….. He’s got NOTHING on us!! Here at Loyola and Strich we’ve removed entire hearts and the patients have lived…. now if there were some pundits left in that arena with hearts… we’d have some competition!! (**Is this too harsh? Let me know**). We are committed to treating the WHOLE patient regardless of connections, financial status, or even political affiliation!! Good health means that we don’t just perform surgery, we take care of **people**… we treat the whole person.

Albert Scweitzer said, “At times our own light goes out and is rekindled by the spark from another person, Each of us has cause to think with deep gratitude of those who have lighted the flame with us.” I thank all of you for keeping the flame within me sparked and ready to give back to those around me. It is with deep humility and appreciation that I accept this most incredible recognition. I will cherish it always. Thank you.