

## Presentation of the 2015 Founders' Medal Award

*David M. Guidot, MD*

Mr. President, colleagues and guests.

I am honored and proud to present this year's Southern Society of Clinical Investigation (SSCI) Founders' Medal to my longtime colleague and friend Monica Farley (Figure 1). For those in the audience who are having a feeling of déjà vu, I can reassure you that the feeling is correct in that I stood here last year and presented the Founders' Medal to Dr. Jesse Roman. However, I wish to disabuse the audience of any assumption that I am again at this podium because of my oratorical skills but rather because I have been fortunate to have spent 20 years of my professional career collaborating and interacting with 2 such wonderful academic colleagues. Monica Farley is the consummate physician-scientist and academic leader, and she has devoted an amazing amount of her time and energy to the SSCI and its many missions.

Monica was born in St. Louis, Missouri, on July 25, 1956, and grew up in America's heartland. As she herself will attest, team sports were her greatest passions as a child and every season led to a seamless transition from softball to volleyball to soccer to swimming and so on. She thrived on the competition and the satisfaction of working with teammates toward a common goal. It is hard to find a childhood picture of Monica without a softball glove in her hand or a volleyball nearby. Her love for athletics and her ability to thrive under pressure formed a foundation for her academic career and successes later in life but also just as clearly taught her lessons in teamwork, collegiality and resilience.

Monica was by all accounts a brilliant student and was accepted into the highly competitive 6-year combined undergraduate and medical school program at the University of Missouri campus in Kansas City, Missouri. This rigorous program blends (and significantly accelerates) undergraduate and medical school education. Despite the obvious academic load in such a program, Monica excelled as a collegiate volleyball player and graduated with distinction with her Bachelor of Arts in 1978 and her Doctor of Medicine just 2 years later in 1980. In fact, after her official intercollegiate athletic career ended, she anchored her medical school softball team. At the tender age of 24, Monica began her academic medical career by leaving Missouri and moving to Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia, for internship and residency in Internal Medicine under the legendary Dr. Willis Hurst, the longtime Chairman of Medicine and known internationally as a clinician, educator and scholar in cardiovascular medicine. This was an era with no restrictions on work hours for trainees, and the experiences at Grady Memorial Hospital, Emory University Hospital and the Atlanta VA could be grueling. However, Monica's life experiences and intrinsic skills had prepared her well. Her hospital badges from those years may show pictures of someone who looked young enough to be a teenager in a local high school but she was in fact a mature, smart, proficient and highly respected resident. Not surprisingly, Monica was never

one to retire her athletic gear, and she participated in team sports throughout her residency, including being a star member of its soccer team.

During her residency, Monica engaged actively in research and as a senior resident was among a select group of her peers who received awards at the annual Department of Medicine Research Day in 1982. A picture of that event shows the inimitable Willis Hurst with 12 men and Monica Farley. As Monica has pointed out over the years, academic medicine was not very diverse at that time, and she has dedicated an enormous part of her career to mentoring young women in science and advocating for diversity in academic medicine, with a particular emphasis on changing the culture and making it possible for women to achieve the same successes and leadership opportunities that their male counterparts enjoyed.

Monica brought her energy, intellectual curiosity and work ethic to her fellowship training in Infectious Diseases at Emory University, where she dedicated an additional year as a research fellow with the support of a Public Health Services Training Grant under the mentorship of Dr. John Spitznagel in the Department of Microbiology. Her research focused on the basic mechanisms of bacterial virulence including the surface epitopes in gram-negative bacteria that facilitated binding to host cells. She was a productive and prolific investigator from the beginning and joined the faculty as an assistant professor of medicine at Emory University in 1986 with a primary appointment at the Atlanta VA under the mentorship of Dr. David Stephens, who at that time was the new Division Director of Infectious Diseases and is now our Chairman of Medicine. This was an opportune pairing on several levels as Monica and David forged a remarkably productive collaborations while Monica began a professional relationship with the VA that continues today. Monica frequently cites the support of the VA Career Development Award Program as absolutely invaluable in her early progress as a biomedical investigator and academic physician. This incredibly productive early phase of her career was the foundation for even greater successes at the next level, and Monica has published more than 140 original scientific manuscripts along with numerous reviews, book chapters and other scholarly writings. In parallel, she has a long history of independent extramural support from the VA, the NIH, the CDC and other funding agencies.

Early in her academic career, Monica joined the American Federation of Clinical Research or AFCR, which later became the American Federation for Medical Research or AFMR. As we know, the Southern Section of the AFMR (S-AFMR) is one of the societies that come together every February for this Southern Regional Meeting in New Orleans. Monica served the AFMR in many capacities including as Co-Chair of the Public Policy Committee and President and used these national leadership roles to promote medical research and public spending for the career development of young physician-scientists. She also demonstrated a remarkable commitment to the S-AFMR and served in every conceivable capacity including Councilor and Chair of the section. Not surprisingly, Monica was also elected into the SSCI very early in her academic career and brought the same passion and commitment to service to our society. She has served 2

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FIGURE 1. David Guidot presenting the Founders' Medal to Monica Farley at the 2015 SSCI Meeting in New Orleans

separate terms as a Councilor and since 2010 has ably served us as Secretary-Treasurer. In fact, one of the most common scenes at an AFMR or SSCI Meeting is Monica Farley at the podium reviewing the financial performance of these academic societies. I have a personal connection with Monica and the S-AFMR and SSCI in that I had been a member of the Western Section of the AFMR as a fellow and junior faculty member at the University of Colorado. When I was recruited to Emory University in 1995, a more senior colleague at Colorado who was actively engaged in AFMR leadership contacted Monica to let her know that I would be joining the faculty in Atlanta. Almost immediately after I arrived, Monica invited me to her office at the Atlanta VA to welcome me to the Emory faculty. She told me all about the Southern Regional Meeting in New Orleans, and when I attended for the first time in February of 1996, she went out of her way to introduce me to members of the S-AFMR and the SSCI. I have been proud to serve the S-AFMR as a Councilor and Chair as Monica had done, although I know I did it only half as well. I am also proud to have followed her into the SSCI and have benefitted from serving with her on its Council. Monica has always been a great role model in that she did not leave the S-AFMR or its national parent organization behind when she was elected into the SSCI and later became engaged in its leadership. Her strong support and advocacy for the S-AFMR and its mission of supporting trainees and junior investigators has been an enduring aspect of these New Orleans Meetings for 2 decades.

Every chapter in Monica's career has been marked by success and leadership. After an incredibly productive phase of basic laboratory research in microbial pathogenesis, she translated her knowledge and clinical experience to epidemiologic investigations of emerging infections in community settings. As the leader of the Emerging Infections Program in Georgia, Monica has led a dynamic and large team of "disease detectives" in Georgia and, with the support of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, they are always on high alert and investigate new

and/or emerging infectious disease outbreaks across the state. This ability to excel across the spectrum of biomedical research from the bench to the bedside (or the countryside) and to lead diverse teams reflects the fact that talented people like Monica can apply their skills to any task and in any context.

Monica's academic leadership has always been impressive to everyone who has ever worked with her. She was recognized by Emory leadership and selected for the Woodruff Leadership Academy at our institution in 2009; this is a highly competitive program in which rising and future leaders from every possible discipline (medicine, nursing, administration, engineering, etc.) across the entire institution dedicate an incredible amount of time and energy over a 6-month period to polishing and elevating their leadership skills. Not surprisingly, there is a strong element of teamwork, and Monica's "Team Bull Dozer" was a spirited group. A team picture from 2009 shows Monica and her 5 teammates wearing construction gear and hard hats (Figure 2). When I look at that picture, it reminds me of the pictures of Monica from her childhood and during her college, medical school and training years; always smiling and clearly in her element as a teammate among high achievers. Monica has been the consummate "teammate" her entire career, and her competitive spirit always strengthens everyone around her. I use the term "competitive" carefully and purposefully. I really like competitive people. Competitive does not mean that an individual wishes to vanquish an opponent or gain glory for themselves. Monica has always demonstrated that her competitive drive to excel at everything she does is accompanied by grace under pressure, respect for colleagues and a genuine desire for the team to perform to the best of its ability. Monica represents the very best aspects of academic medicine as a "team sport."

I mentioned earlier that Monica was always keenly aware that women were a distinct minority in academic medicine when she began her career and that she has dedicated a great deal of her energy and voice to advocating for women in medicine and research. She has spoken to me on several occasions of the "glass ceiling" for women in academic medicine and the need to help qualified candidates move into leadership positions as division directors, chairs and deans. In parallel, Monica valued her family life and was absolutely devoted to her husband Doug and their 2 remarkable children, Clara and Henry. As important as her academic career and achievements appeared to her peers, they always took a back seat to family time and, as you would predict, coaching her children in a range of youth sports including volleyball and soccer. Therefore, the first time when Monica had the opportunity to become division director, she reluctantly declined. Although she wanted to help break the glass ceiling, she knew that this chance would come again but that her children's teenage years would not. However, as in every great story, her time did indeed come around again soon afterward, and Monica is now the division director of Infectious Diseases at Emory University. This is a large and incredibly productive academic division that has at least a dozen senior faculty members who could easily become a division director or a chair of medicine at great institutions throughout the country. In fact, our relatively new chair of medicine, David Stephens, rose to his current position after a distinguished and remarkably successful tenure as its director. In this context, it speaks volumes about Monica's leadership skills and the respect that her "teammates" have for her, and she was selected from all of these peers to lead her division.

It is impossible for me to think of the SSCI over the past 20 years since I moved to Emory University without Monica Farley. She has served every public and private role one could imagine, and her tireless and enthusiastic commitment to our

## Woodruff Leadership Academy 2009



### Team Bull Dozier

FIGURE 2. Monica Farley (center) with her team during the Woodruff Leadership Academy at Emory University in 2009. This is an annual training program for the up and coming leaders and draws from all schools and departments across the Woodruff Health Sciences Center at Emory University.

many missions has been invaluable to our successes. Whether she is encouraging trainees at the poster session, organizing concurrent sessions, chairing meetings or bringing young scientists to the New Orleans, Monica is in all ways the epitome of the SSCI and our values. I have personally attended the Southern Regional Meeting for 20 consecutive years since I joined the faculty at Emory University and 1st met my close friend and colleague Monica Farley. I have sat in awe for 20 consecutive Friday Morning Plenary Sessions of the SSCI and the S-AFMR and listened to colleagues present the Founders' Medal to wonderful members of our society. Last year, I was privileged to present the Medal and this year the pleasure and pride is just as great as I am presenting it to Monica. As I look over the list of the recipients of the Founders' Medal since it was first awarded in 1973, I cannot help but note that Monica is only the 2nd woman to be recognized with this award and the first since Suzanne Oparil in 1995. Although this may be regarded as a great achievement for Suzanne and Monica (and it most decidedly is), I know that Monica would be the first to say that we should not have to wait another 20 years for the next woman recipient of the Founders' Medal. In light of Monica's leadership and mentorship and her unselfish dedication to being a role model in academic medicine, I am very confident that our wait will

be short. Furthermore, as I see the diversity of the leadership within the S-AFMR and the SSCI, which in no small way can be attributed to Monica's many roles in both societies, I know that we will never again see a picture of "Resident Research Day" with only one "Monica" in the group.

I wish to close by again emphasizing Monica's love and dedication to her family. Doug, her husband of 35 years, has been her lifelong partner and has always been both supportive and proud of Monica's many professional achievements. However, pictures of them from their wonderful family vacations reflect their clear understanding that public victories in one's professional lives are always secondary to the private victories of a life well spent with loved ones. In parallel, their 2 amazing children are now adults; Clara is a surgery resident at Emory University and Henry is working at an accounting firm in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. They have been given a great foundation by Doug and Monica and will undoubtedly succeed in life and carry the values and lessons they learned from their parents with them. I hope you see why I am so proud and privileged to once again be at this podium presenting this award to a close friend and colleague who has been an inspiration and a role model for me. Ladies and gentlemen, it is my distinct pleasure to present this year's Southern Society of Clinical Investigation Founders' Medal to Monica Farley.