AZ-ACP Monthly MACP Showcase

Masters comprise a small group of highly distinguished physicians, selected from among Fellows, who have achieved recognition in medicine by exhibiting preeminence in practice or medical research, holding positions of high honor, or making significant contributions to medical science or the art of medicine. Masters must be highly accomplished individuals. Evidence of their achievements can come from many types of endeavors, such as research, education, health care initiatives, volunteerism, and administrative positions. The Master must be distinguished by the excellence and significance of his or her contributions to the field of medicine.

William F. Denny, MD MACP

William F. Denny, MD MACP, a former Governor of the ACP, Arizona Chapter, started his medical career by earning his medical degree in 1953 at the University of Oklahoma, following it up with an internship at George Washington University Hospital and a residency back at the University of Oklahoma. He served in the U.S. Air Force as the Chief of the Medical Service in Itazuki Air Force Hospital in Japan and at Elgin Air Force Base in Florida.

After serving in the Veterans Administration Hospital in Little Rock, Arkansas as a Research Clinical Investigator, Dr. Denny was appointed as an Associate Professor of Medicine and Founding Faculty in 1967 at the newly formed medical school at the University of Arizona in Tucson.

*American College of Physicians, Arizona Chapter:* I'd like to start by having you speak a little bit about your career -- how did you originally become interested in pursuing medicine?

*William F. Denny, MD, MACP:* My Father was in an allied field to medicine – pharmaceutical sales – and my brother was already a first-year medical student when I decided to apply myself. I always admired physicians in the community, and viewed them as role models, who later inspired me to emulate their practices. I, like so many young physicians, looked forward to a
career in practicing general internal medicine and also like many students, my views soon evolved into more and more specialty areas and medical education.

**ACP-AZ:** What are some of the different settings in which you’ve practiced medicine? How did you get where you are today?

**WFD:** I earned my medical degree from the University of Oklahoma and served my medical internship at George Washington University Hospital from 1953-1954. My residency was completed at the University of Oklahoma from 1954-1957. I served as Chief Medical Resident with a faculty appointment as instructor in the department of medicine. I served in the U.S. Air Force and was appointed as Chief of the Medical Service at both the Itazuki Air Force Hospital in Japan and also at Elgin Air Force Base in Florida. Later I was awarded a position as Research Clinical Investigator with the Veterans Administration Hospital in Little Rock, Arkansas. In 1967 I was appointed as the Associate Professor of Medicine and Founding Faculty member of the newly formed medical school at the University of Arizona in Tucson. I continued to work with the University of Arizona in various settings serving as the Chief of the Medical Service, Program Director of the Internal Medicine Internship/Residency Training program, Professor of Medicine, and finally as Acting Chairman of the Department of Medicine.

**ACP-AZ:** How long have you been a member of the American College of Physicians?

**WFD:** I became a Fellow of the ACP in 1965 and later was appointed a Master in 2004.

**ACP-AZ:** Why did you originally decide to join the ACP and why have you remained a member throughout the years?

**WFD:** I decided to join the ACP because I felt they were the premier organization in the practice of medicine. The ACP represented practicing physicians and demonstrated the best in clinical practice with the commitment for continued education, professional development and excellence. It was these same reasons that I have remained a member in the ACP for all of these years. As I became increasingly involved in the activities of medicine and medicinal education I felt an obligation to actively participate, particularly in the education of medical students and residents.

**ACP-AZ:** What are some of your proudest academic or professional achievements?

**WFD:** Many people who went into medicine were heavily involved with research, since that is a main avenue for academic success and financial gain. I am happy to have concentrated heavily on clinical education of young and continuing scholars. As for specific First, in 1976 the FCIM recognized that of the more than 400 graduate medical education programs in internal medicine, 75% were not represented by any type of national organization. In order to rectify this situation FCIM appointed a steering committee of many doctors, a group that I was blessed to be a representing member. Later, I served as the Governor of the ACP Arizona Chapter for an unprecedented six years (1984 – 1990), during which time I served on ACP’s Informatics Subcommittee and Associates Subcommittee.
I have also testified before Congress concerning VA affairs, have served on various Institute of Medicine committees, and subcommittees of the National Science Foundation. I am proud to have served as President of the Association of Program Directors in Internal Medicine and also served on the APDIM Council for six years.

Finally, I believe my proudest professional achievement is being one of the founding faculty members of the University of Arizona where I helped start its first Medical Residency Program. I was privileged to be the Program Director there for 24 years. I was able to head up a research studying erythropoietin activity and monitoring its synthesis and degradation in rodents. Many of my original observations were well recognized and published in prestigious journals.

ACP-AZ: How do you maintain a healthy balance between work and the rest of your life?

WFD: Those working in the field of medicine often find it difficult to effectively balance the conflicting demands of community life, family life and the active practice of medicine. Somehow most physicians manage to approach and accomplish this with more or less success. I did my best to maintain a well-rounded approach to my relationships and my personal hobbies. One of my greatest past-times was not only reading non-medical literature, but also binding these same books.

ACP-AZ: What are some of the challenges that you think the current health care system is facing, on the state or local level?

WFD: I said a while ago that internal medicine is under grave threat. A looming pressure for more and more specialized medicine continues to grow in our society. In addition, younger physicians are facing problems with the medical system itself. There are two principle problems: 1) overspecialization with medicine being centered around top-down need rather than bottom-up demand and 2) the system of fee-for-service rather than fee-for-results.

ACP-AZ: What advice would you give to our physicians in training?

WFD: If one does go into specialization, keep in mind that it needs to be more about quality of care, not quantity of care.

ACP-AZ: Thank you, Dr. Denny, for spending some time with us!