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Keynoters Bring Passion and Inspiration to ATP Innovations in Testing Conference 2005

Two keynoters, two individuals, two very different paths in life -- both shared with attendees of the sixth annual Association of Test Publishers conference one very similar trait -- passion.



Gaston Caperton, former Governor of West Virginia, and current President of the ATP Board, opened the conference with his passionate keynote address on education in America.

"Everyone in public office today should be ashamed," Caperton told the audience. "Breaking our promise for a free, quality education for every student. Today, out of 100 students in the U.S. -- 68 graduate on time. Out of every 100 ninth graders today -- 27 enroll in college and only 27 will still be there for sophomore year," he warned.

Caperton reviewed some of the great milestones in American education, tracing its path from the early 1900s when only two percent of the population attended college to the World War II where the G.I. bill made a college education available and affordable for two million students to today's educational landscape in which 16 million students are currently attending college or post graduate schools in the U.S.

But the point of Gaston's talk was not to deliver a history lesson or to quote statistics. He reminded the audience that the American educational system -- one of the finest in the world -- came about because of passion. He told the story of James Meredith, the first black student to attend college in Mississippi --

"He (Meredith) walked four miles each way to school every day...while the white bus passed him by," Caperton said. "And on the way he passed large farms with boys his own age plowing fields and tending cattle, something they would do for their entire lives, because they couldn't read or write." But rather than be deterred, Caperton intoned, Meredith was inspired even more so to learn and pursue an education against all odds.

And although he didn't mention it in his address, Caperton, revealed to audience members later, during a question and answer session, how familiar he was, as a person with dyslexia, with overcoming odds in order to learn.

But Caperton also went on to reveal his fears for education in America.

"(On the high school level) we have the highest drop out rate of all industrialized nations...with India graduating one million students less than the U.S. and China graduating twice as many as that," Caperton warned. And his most ardent concern? "I believe we have lost our passion for education in America," Caperton stated.

Caperton went on to list a number of improvements he saw as integral to restoring educational passion -- and the educational framework of America -- from making education a more appealing profession to go into, to promoting technology in public schools without patronizing or giving up on disadvantaged students.

And although he spoke in terms of passion and not necessarily about money -- Caperton praised recent philanthropic efforts by Bill and Melinda Gates in the area of education and then volleyed a shot at the nation's political leaders -- "Any politician who promises not to raise taxes is not going to do a damn thing for education," Caperton stated, to the applause of the audience.

Caperton went on to tell test publishers that they need to be passionate about their work in measurement and in technology. He stated his belief that adding a writing section to the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) will drive an improvement in writing skill among American students. "Writing," he said, "is essential for success."

Caperton concluded his speech with an anecdote about his mother-in-law who, he said, hung the diplomas -- including two -- of her children on her bedroom wall. And now, he said, it is her grandchildren who are sending her their diplomas.

"That," he said, "is passion for education...we've got to create that passion in America once again."

Wally Amos - another man, another passion



At the conclusion of the conference, attendees were treated to yet another individual with a passion and a vision to share -- Wally Amos -- multimillionaire and founder of Famous Amos cookies.

Amos opened his closing keynote address with a warm "Aloha" from his home state of Hawaii. And he tipped his signature watermelon hat to the audience and waved about his watermelon shoes -- both symbols of defiance. Just as Caperton overcame dyslexia to gain an educator's place of honor in the world, Wally Amos overcame the stereotypes of dark skin to become a successful entrepreneur and innovator.

"You see, he said, "a black man who eats watermelon is automatically assumed to be lazy and shiftless," Amos explained. "And I am here to tell you that I am neither lazy or shiftless -- I am Wally Amos -- my own person."

Amos told his listeners that he never really saw himself as an innovator, just a man with an idea. "My goal was to do something I loved," he

"And I loved everything about chocolate chip cookies." And so he decided to open a bakery with just one product. But as all innovators soon learn, there were a lot of nay sayers.

"For so much of our lives we are listening to other people telling us what we can and cannot do. I heard it all the time. My agent told me that I needed thirty types of cookies to open a bakery. But I said, if you have one product that everyone wants -- you only need the other twenty nine."

And so Wally Amos, flying in the face of conventional business wisdom opened his storefront with only one product to sell.. it did to the tune of millions of dollars.

But Wally admitted that his one good idea came sandwiched between a lot of other ideas that did not pan out so well. In his life as a Hollywood agent he was one of the first to sign on the as-yet-unknown singing duo of Simon and Garfunkle. And, I think he was among the first to lose them, because he was unable to convince his colleagues in the music business that this pair of unconventional nobodies had something worth promoting.

Later on, after selling off his famous Amos cookie business to Kelloggs, Amos once again tried to open a bakery selling more than one product. This time, however, he was not as lucky and the fledgling business quickly foundered into bankruptcy.

"But we got out of it without assistance," Amos proudly related. And they did so, he said, because of persistence and teamwork. "If you really want to innovate, get a group together on a team -- and you will find that the sky is the limit...it's all about collaboration. And once again, Amos repeated, success is about avoiding the nay sayers. "A cynic never created anything yet, shut them out of your lives," he said.

Amos went on to relate his newest venture which employs a pair of dolls - Chip and Cookie - created by his wife, for the promotion of literacy in children. Amos related how he has once again put together a "team" -- in this instance it is the Savannah College of Art and Design -- which has agreed to take on the promotion of Chip and Cookie as a social awareness project. "They will be doing animations and other promotions," he said, surrounding the concept of reading aloud to children.

But once again Amos pointed out that his Chip and Cookie idea was eighteen years in the making -- and nowhere at all until the urging of a friend, he found a "team" at Savannah College.

Amos concluded his speech with a children's book about a box of crayons who decide to put aside their differences and cooperate on the creation of a rainbow. He used it as an example to remind the audience that no matter what arena in life they are in - they must hold true to their ideas, avoid the nay sayers, and seek out teamwork.

"I don't know if I'm an innovator or just plain stubborn," Amos admitted. "But I do know that attitude is the most important thing in life. Your belief in yourself is everything."

ATP FOCUS ON -- The Lighter Side of Testing

The famous poet EE Cummings once said, "the most wasted of all days is one without laughter." And no one knows that better than former ATP Chair, John Fremer who freely admits that when it comes to collecting cartoons on testing he's "an obsessive compulsive."



Fremer, a founder and senior director of security services, Cave Security, recently showcased his cartoon expertise in a Poster at ATP's Innovations in Testing Conference, has been collecting cartoons for more than 30 years -- and has amassed a collection more than a thousand pieces, which he keeps carefully indexed at home.

It all began, he said, in the 1970s when he enrolled in a continuing education program to improve his presentation skills. He learned the value of using cartoons to entertain an audience. "I learned voice range wasn't very good (for engaging an audience), but cartoons worked well." Shortly after that he was "hooked."

Fremer found most of his cartoons just reading the daily newspaper on a regular basis, as well as a few periodicals such as The New Yorker. Several years into collecting he "hit it big" when he ran into a fellow collector who was willing to share his collection of several hundred cartoons.

Two of Fremer's favorite cartoons include a vintage World War I cartoon poking fun at test items on a survey given to recruits, which included the question "How many legs does a Zulu have?" -- and another favorite is a cartoon drawn especially for his collection by a visiting cartoonist from Czechoslovakia.

Fremer noted that cartoons about testing "come in waves whenever there is a major new trend or initiative such as teacher certification or No Child Left Behind." And, he added, there are seasonal waves brought on by the start of school each year and college admissions testing in the spring.

Fremer admitted that some of the cartoons are unfair, but overall he prefers to laugh it off -- and use the majority of his cartoons to promote learning about testing. He has used his cartoons in presentations given in many countries and has always found that a sense of humor is universal.

ATP's Innovations in Testing Conference 2005 breaks attendance records



ATP's 2005 Innovations in Testing Conference held at the Westin Kierland and Spa in Scottsdale, Arizona February 28-March 2, was attended by over 1,000 individuals representing more than 14 countries.

"It was by far our most successful Conference yet, not just in numbers but in the quality of the programs that were presented and the involvement of so many areas of the testing industry," reported ATP Executive Director, Dr. William Harris. He added that the Conference exceeded expectations in attendance, sponsorship and membership support.

Conference Scrapbook
Innovations in Testing/ Conference 2005
Westin Kierland Resort, Scottsdale, AZ

2005 Conference Pictures



Quinn Sutton, of TestOut Corp., gets some pointers before engaging in an old fashioned "shoot out" at a "Wild West" party sponsored by Pearson VUE.



ATP Division Chairs each held a meeting at the conference. (From l to r) Waldschmidt (I/O), Phil Young (Education), Gerald FitzGerald (Clinical) Leahy (Certification).

Dr. Plake Receives ATP Career Achievement Award



Barbara Plake, Ph.D., Director of the Oscar and Luella Buros Center for Testin presented with the 2005 Career Achievement Award at the ATP Conference.

Plake, a distinguished professor at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, has aut more than 100 publications and serves in an advisory capacity to numeous edu agencies and professional associations.

Legislative Updates

Legislative Win for ATP... ATP was instrumental in securing a veto of HB 42 in Utah which, would have allowed parents to i copies of mental health tests prior to their administration in school settings. This would have inhibited the proper use of the crippled the meaningfulness of test results and compromised the security and future usefulness of the assessments being ATP wrote to the Governor of Utah urging him not to sign this bill and energized local school psychologists to lobby for a ve bill as well.

In other government related news...

- ATP has sent a letter to the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development ("NICHD") expressing concern ab project. The project being contemplated by the federal government calls for the building of products that clearly are intende compete with test products that are already available in the commercial marketplace ATP will continue to monitor this initia
- Senator Hinojosa (R-TX)... sent a letter of thanks to ATP for assistance with the National Reporting System for Head Sta wrote: "I would like to personally thank... the Association of Test Publishers for providing me and my colleagues with an ex technical analysis of the responses from the Secretary of Health and Human Services to our questions about the assessme for the National

Reporting System for Head Start. It is absolutely essential that the assessments administered to our neediest children mee highest professional standards for quality. Your analysis has provided us with invaluable, objective guidance on this critical hope that I can continue to call on the Association of Test Publishers for expert analysis and guidance on this important top

• At the ATP Conference, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs held a meeting with selected ATP members. The topic was a recently enacted federal law enabling veterans to use their GI Bill benefits to pay for national admissions exams and national exams. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs met with ATP members to develop criteria for identifying these exams.



Association Notebook

ATP Welcomes its newest member... Cito, headquartered in the Netherlands

Next ATP Conference... The 2006 ATP Conference will be held February 6-8, at the Gaylord Palms Resort in Kissimmee, I

Electronic copies of the Guidelines for Computer-Based Testing are available free of charge to members on line at the ATF (www.testpublishers.org). Go to the Members Only Section and scroll down to Computer-Based Testing Guidelines.

Hard copies of the publication are also available for \$5.00 for Members and \$15.00 for Non-members. Go to the Publication section and scroll down to In Print. Want to order by phone using a credit card? Call toll free 866-240-7909

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