



### **Julie Wei, MD**

I could never have imagined when attending my first SENTAC meeting in December 2001, as a first year pediatric otolaryngology fellow, how this incredible society and its members could have impacted my professional career over the next 2 decades. I was somewhat nervous as I gave my first podium presentation at that meeting, but any nerves were escalated at the dinner when I had the chance to meet the society's founder Dr. Bob Ruben, and Dr. Sylvan Stool. As a young trainee who only recognized names from textbooks that I read frequently, talk about celebrity sighting! This was also the meeting where I met many amazing mentors and pediatric otolaryngologists, some who have already served as officers and president, while others would become future presidents. My own mentor, Dr. Marie Brown Wagner, without who I would never have had the courage to pursue otolaryngology residency application and training, she was there as well as her classmates who were all trained by Dr. Ruben: Dr. Nina Yoshpe our current Historian and the late Dr. Linda Brodsky. I was amongst these fierce and incredible role models and trailblazers, and many giants, in both otolaryngology and pediatric otolaryngology.

I will never forget the warmth with which I was greeted and made to feel like I was "seen", and perhaps most impactful was the feeling that I belonged and that I mattered. For the next 22 years, I would be a proud SENTAC member!

I have had the honor to serve as SENTAC Historian for several years, then as Secretary, and humbled to serve as SENTAC President in 2015. 2016 was an extremely difficult year, with the retirement of Sheila Seid our long time administrator and "mother" of our society. With the help of Cindy, her daughter, and Brandon Steele our then webmaster, along with colleagues at UCF COM who helped us secure CME for the meeting, they and the SENTAC Board and officers helped me navigate a challenging year leading up to our 2016 meeting in Orlando. I still have files of work from when we updated membership information, revamped the website, along with herculean effort to plan a great meeting. I will forever be proud to have arranged for a musical performance by my daughter's incredible piano and vocal teachers for the banquet. We were so proud to welcome IAPO attendees and Dr. Tania Sih that December.

Over the past 20 years, SENTAC gifted me countless friendships, annual excitement as I attend the welcome reception and enjoy enthusiastic hugs and smiles. The ability to meet so many non-otolaryngology professionals in audiology, speech language pathology, occupational therapists, pediatric subspecialists and pediatricians is afforded by no other societies to this degree. SENTAC has profoundly influenced my professional development because of its unique multidisciplinary membership that reflects **HOW** we actually care for children and their holistic development. Today, as society, health care, industry, academia, and educational experts all claim their commitment to increasing equity, diversity, and inclusion, it was SENTAC that showed us how to respect and value one another. We as SENTAC members model how to leverage our clinical expertise for patients and families, regardless of our credentials, professions, and roles. When we are SENTAC members, we are **equal, diverse, and inclusive**.

As Historian, I remember looking through hundreds of correspondences, professional and courteous, all typed using a typewriter. I would enjoy some silent alone time with a cup of coffee, carefully perusing the annual meeting programs and admire the evolution from simpler pamphlets to entire booklets, for over 5 decades. There were two, 3-ring binder books with 8x10 headshot of every past president, and a typed document of their reflection essay on what SENTAC meant to each of them. While the photos were typically black and white, before I handed over my duties as Historian, some colored photos started to sprinkle the binder.

As the Historian, one of my favorite activities were to use my small camera (not an iPhone then) and take photos throughout the meeting, especially during the poster receptions. No matter how hard I tried, I could never quite capture the depth of the positive energy and authentic joy in human connection shown by wide smiles one can only experience when physically present. The social program was always unique, the cities were fabulous, and I always went home with a full heart and too many ideas for clinical research from the great presentations and posters!

As I looked through my computer today and found countless SENTAC minutes, program planning documents, excel spreadsheets, membership database, and other efforts to connect incredible members and advance our annual meeting program and beyond, I remain grateful and humbled by the many skills I learned through participation and leadership roles. When I joined Nemours Children's Health in Orlando in 2013, I already enjoyed psychological safety and camaraderie from Dr. Udayan Shah, Dr. Yell Inverso, Dr. Jim Reilly, who were all leaders of SENTAC and yet now they were my colleagues in the same organization. SENTAC inspired me as a new division chief of otolaryngology and audiology to proudly recruited Speech language pathologists, audiologists, advanced practice providers, pediatric colleagues, my own partners and fellow surgeons, to attend our meeting and also become members. My contributions and legacy through our amazing team has and will continue to impact thousands of Floridian children beyond measure, despite my departure this year from the team and Nemours Children's Health.

To see and experience the incredible growth and transformation of SENTAC in the past few years has been inspiring and humbling. I am honored this year to serve as the current ASPO president, and I know that all positive contributions I am making for ASPO are in large part due to SENTAC and what this society has given to me. Here is to the next 50 years!