From Stan Bergman, President Henry Schein. 4th July 2020

To the Wits Dental School Class of 1970, I want to extend warm wishes in my capacity as Board Chair of the University of the Witwatersrand Fund on this celebration of your Golden Anniversary. I also want to specifically thank Colin Richman who offered me this opportunity to share a few words.

As a fellow Wits graduate, I appreciate how – over the past half century – so many life decisions, beliefs, talents, and personalities were informed, developed, and illuminated by our common history and educational grounding at Wits, along with the values we learned and experiences gained through our relationships with professors and classmates. These influences collectively form who we are today, and this reunion serves as your individual and collectively acknowledgement of and honor to the impact our time at Wits had upon our lives.

I feel equally privileged to share a deeper connection with this group given my involvement with Henry Schein and oral care over the last the past 40+ years, which experiences afforded me the opportunity to partner with the dental profession and the amazing professionals working daily to improve oral health care. There is still a lot to be done in South Africa and every country around the world, and although we alone cannot solve these challenges, “change always starts with an individual.”

As Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote: “To leave the world a bit better whether by a healthy child, a garden patch or a redeemed social condition, to know that even one life has breathed easier because you have lived: This is to have succeeded!” Our time to create impact is uncertain, as evidenced by the fact that 10 members of this Reunion Class are no longer with us. But while we are still able, let’s continue rising to the opportunities – not barriers – presented to us.

This philosophy undergirds what I’ve tried to do in my professional career through our work at Henry Schein, and in my personal life, along with my wife, Marion, who herself is a fellow Witsie.

As graduates from this generation, we uniquely link how things were in the (not-too-distant) non-digital past, and how they are now. This special vintage enables (nay, obligates) us to share with younger generations the knowledge and wisdom we’ve accumulated during the past 50 years navigating this generational bridge to ensure these important life lessons are not lost.

In Nelson Mandela’s indelible words, “it always seems impossible until it’s done”, and we can continue to share these precious gifts of knowledge with those will tackle tomorrow’s greatest challenges. In fact, our accumulated wisdom may be just what somebody needs to achieve transformational progress, understand a confusing situation, or simply to relate to the world today!

While not occurring in person, your convening during these unprecedented times is a testament to your collective bond. Assuredly our time at Wits was and is special, and I congratulate you on coming together to honor and celebrate the importance of your schools years upon your lives.

Warmest wishes,

Stan