

## Introduction

The tradition of class gifts, also known as class plaques, was initiated in 1953, when the inaugural class of '51 presented the Director of Epidemiology, Alexander D. Langmuir, two well worn leather shoes that had come to symbolize the shoe-leather epidemiology practiced by Epidemic Intelligence Service (EIS) Officers. Alex put the plaque on the wall in his office and a tradition was begun. Each subsequent class presented Alex a plaque that symbolized its 2-year experience and he put them on the wall for everyone to see. The presentation was made at another traditional activity, the EIS Skit, performed for Alex, staff in the Epidemiology Branch, as well as current and incoming EIS Officers. So each class was challenged early to produce a funnier skit (some years more successful than others) and better plaques.

Over the years, the organizational home for epidemiology changed, with new names as CDC grew, but EIS and its traditions remained. There has been a skit each year to the present, except in 1955 when the EIS conference was cancelled so that an investigation of contaminated polio vaccine could be conducted. Later known as the Cutter incident, this investigation put CDC and EIS in the national spotlight for the first time.

The gifts, on the other hand, did not share a similar fate. In the 1980s, the Director ran out of wall space, and the gifts were housed in Philip Brachman's attic. Starting in 1989, when for several months there was no permanent Director of Epidemiology, the gifts were not presented. In 2003, the class of 2001 renewed the tradition, however, and gave its plaque to the EIS Chief. In 2004, the gifts were donated to the Global Health Odyssey Museum, located at CDC Headquarters.

The EIS Class Gift exhibit provides pictures and background stories from the donor class. The gifts and stories provide something of the lighter side of the EIS experience, an experience that benefits from humor and bonds these officers not only within each class but across decades.

The exhibit will continue to grow as we learn more about the history of each EIS class. Any graduates who wish to update, correct, or supplement this site are asked to please contact Judy Gantt at [jgantt@cdc.gov](mailto:jgantt@cdc.gov).

Please see [www.cdc.gov/eis](http://www.cdc.gov/eis) for more about the EIS program.