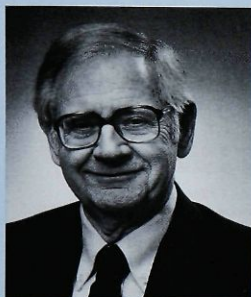


# Editorial

## **Ralph Phillips: pragmatist, philanthropist, and just plain nice guy**



*Ralph W. Phillips, 1918–1991.*

The global community of dentistry has lost a true friend with the death of Ralph W. Phillips, Research Professor Emeritus of Dental Materials at Indiana University School of Dentistry. Those who were privileged to cross the path of this elder statesman of dentistry mourn his passing.

My first “meeting” with Ralph Phillips was in dental school. “Skinner and Phillips” is the textbook familiar to all who have studied dental materials for the past few decades. When I first met this gentle man in person I was amazed at his humble, calm, nature. We are fortunate to have learned from his wisdom, his hard work, and his willingness and ability to share himself with us, over so many years.

My last meeting with Ralph was over dinner during the Academy of Operative Dentistry meeting this past February. True to his nature, Ralph had sacrificed himself to give a lecture at the Operative Academy even though he encountered transportation problems that would have been excuse enough for many to beg off the commitment. So, despite little or no sleep, and clearly suffering from a flu-like illness, he gave of himself to the 400-plus assembled. Here was a man who clearly should have been resting in bed that day, yet he would not let his friends down. This was Ralph, Mr Nice Guy.

Some years ago, Ralph agreed to participate in a student scholarship fundraising program at the University of Tennessee. He traveled and lectured without any honorarium despite a heavy schedule of commitments. Ralph’s normal honorarium went to the educational expenses of future dentists who may know him only by name, but who will benefit from his wisdom as well as his kindness. This was Ralph, the philanthropist.

Ralph Phillips’s career spanned half a century and his original philosophy of focusing on the clinical applications of laboratory findings has led to immense benefits to the profession and by extension to the public health. I will always remember one humorous comment from his lectures — a comment that typified his down-to-earth approach. “A denture has only to be strong enough to survive a fall onto the bathroom floor — who cares if the resin is capable of withstanding a truck’s driving over it!” or something to that effect. This was Ralph, the pragmatist.

The many awards and honors accorded Ralph Phillips are well known. The profession will dearly miss him, his contributions, his energy and his smile, his pragmatism, his philanthropy, and his sagacity.

Ralph — you did more than your share. You made a big difference.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard J. Simonsen". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Richard J. Simonsen  
Editor-in-Chief