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## In Memoriam *The Teacher*

Leonard Abrams died unexpectedly on July 6, 2004, and with his passing, dentistry lost a beloved colleague, dear friend, and true renaissance man. Both figuratively and literally, Leonard made a wide imprint on the landscape of dentistry.

Leonard had a tremendous capacity to absorb information from a variety of different sources, many outside the health professions. One of his many universal talents was to bring this information to dental medicine, frequently opening the eyes and changing the thinking of his colleagues. He was raised and educated in Philadelphia, and after graduating from Temple University School of Dentistry in 1955, he served in the Army in Europe, returning to enter the University of Pennsylvania–Boston's Beth Israel Hospital postdoctoral program in 1957. After completing his second year in Boston, Leonard returned to Philadelphia and associated in practice with Dr Morton Amsterdam from 1959 to 1965. He and Morris Feder collaborated to initiate a program to teach the principles of occlusion to graduate students. He met Bert Kraus in 1960 at the Alpha Omega Convention, and from that relationship came Leonard's contribution to the textbook by Kraus, Jordan, and Abrams, which became a classic in the field.

Leonard spent a great deal of time teaching in several different countries and frequently participated in the teaching programs at the Hebrew University Dental School in Jerusalem and at the Tel Aviv Dental School. An avid skier and bike rider, Leonard always found time to enjoy his hobbies; occasionally, he was able to combine them with his teaching obligations.

Leonard willingly accepted the novice as a student, and his enthusiasm propelled students to open their minds and be curious. He was less interested in receiving praise than in being an instigator to achieve evidence and develop the rationale to answer the question. He found time to discuss issues in much greater depth than one expected and always appeared to be available. His own natural inquisitiveness translated into an unparalleled capacity to transfer information in an understandable fashion. Leonard was a role model for those who aspired to be teachers.

Leonard was a perpetual student and the consummate teacher. He was a keen observer, an authority on dental anthropology, morphology, and esthetics. He electrified audiences worldwide with his patented and distinctive style of teaching. Information just seemed to flow out of him, and he was able to simplify so many complex ideas. An early focus was the subject of occlusion. The history of this subject is a long and honorable one, albeit, at times, it has been a mixture of truth and fable. Leonard made it understandable and rational for the student. At a young age, he challenged conventional ideas and ultimately played a pivotal role in the teaching of occlusion at both the pre- and postdoctoral levels. Knowing him as we did, this was not really unusual, as he seemed to spend his career ignoring stop signs.

It was really in the area of dental esthetics where his talents became so apparent. He brought to this subject his background in anthropology and morphology and wedded this to his unique artistic flair. Success in esthetics relies in large measure on one's ability to peer into the future and envision what the final restoration will look like; it is based on rational observations of what one sees and what is anticipated. He was a truly outstanding teacher of esthetics, and his observations and ideas elevated this aptitude to an art form.

Leonard was sentimental, a gentle and sensitive human being. Leonard cherished his country, his religion, his teachers, and his students; he was a firm believer that one should never forget where he came from. His was a record of integrity of purpose and a constant pursuit of excellence. Dentistry was his medium, but his stage amounted to his personal philosophy of life. He did more than teach us dentistry; he also shared with us his devotion to his beloved profession.

His countless contributions demand that we evoke his memory and remember his monumental professional sacrifices on behalf of our profession. We also owe it to ourselves and to future generations to dedicate our being to expanding and enhancing what he generously gave to us.

Leonard was one of the few clinicians who had an insight into all of the specialties of dentistry, and he was able to blend many of the aspects of different parts of the profession into a holistic approach. He had a prehensile and incisive mind that immediately recognized the benefits of things he learned. Ever in demand as a speaker, he was nevertheless able to continue an active practice and a teaching program at the University of Pennsylvania.

Success exacts sacrifice, and for sharing Leonard with all of us, we thank and offer our condolences to his wife, Ethel, two sons, Joseph and Jonathon, grandchildren, and daughter-in-law.

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Arnold Weisgold, DDS  
Louis F. Rose, DDS, MD  
Myron Nevins, DDS