



In Memoriam Ralph W. Phillips

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The worldwide dental profession has lost a distinguished teacher, dedicated colleague, and loyal friend. After a half century of service to dentistry and materials science, Ralph Phillips has left the mortal community to join the ranks of immortality. His exemplary career began humbly in Farmland, Indiana, and saw him progress through the ranks of academe to become Indiana University School of Dentistry Associate Dean for Dental Research and the Director of IU's Oral Health Research Institute. During and after obtaining Bachelor and Master of Science degrees from Indiana University and the Doctor of Science degree from the University of Alabama, Ralph devoted his entire life to teaching students committed to careers in science and dentistry throughout the world.

His record of achievement has been chronicled elsewhere and need not be detailed here. However, it is pertinent to note that while his roots were in the laboratory, the fruits of his labor were always harvested and distributed for use by the dental practitioner in treating the needs of patients with oral distress. He was a master at bridging the gap between the isolation of laboratory investigation and the dynamic practice of dentistry at whatever level. He excelled because he had the unique ability to communicate in a way that seemed to put him alone with you in the office, or at the bench with a cup of coffee, discussing the ramifications of a material modulus or of fluoride in a luting agent.

The vast ability of Ralph Phillips to communicate brought him into contact with students and professionals in a variety of settings and through various media. As a devoted researcher, his investigations of adhesive dental materials stimulated thought in the laboratory, brought together the minds of materials scientists in workshop, and precipitated publications for the profession and manufacturers to reap benefits that ultimately percolated to the lay public in need.

On the platform or at the podium, Ralph was a master at grabbing hold of audiences and holding them in his palm until he had completed the story he had to tell. With humor, humility, and expertise he would unravel a message to inform the listener of not only the scientific details of why, but how the pertinent facts could be put to practical use or where the most advantageous material could be obtained and applied effectively. No egocentric this man, but rather a humble purveyor of what he knew to be factual, truthful, and useful information.

Dr Phillips served the profession and his country through participation in the activities of the National Institute of Dental Research, Food and Drug Administration, US Public Health Service, and the National Academy of Sciences.

In recent years he developed an interest in the implant field and was involved as a panelist for the 1988 NIH Implant Consensus Development Conference and later as a member of the Dental Products Panel developing FDA guidelines for the premarket approval of endosseous implants for prosthetic attachments.

In his ninth edition of *The Science of Dental Materials*, which was published in March 1991, editor Phillips included a new section on dental implants. Recognizing the growing importance of implants in dental practice and the complexity of the field generally, he became particularly concerned with the marketing of new systems without histologic documentation as to the biocompatibility of the product. He championed the cause for better in vitro tests with which to screen material formulations for dental implants, especially if such tests could be correlated with the in vivo situations. His interest in dental implants led to affiliation with *JOMI* as an editor for biomaterials and biomechanics. As a member of the journal's original editorial staff, Ralph was an effective contributor to policy decisions and consultation involving the manuscript review process. With calm and unassuming presence, his experience and wisdom influenced many editorial problem solutions.

But his journal colleagues have not been the only ones to recognize his expertise and excellence. Ralph received the accolades of the Pierre Fauchard Academy, the American College of Dentists, the International Association for Dental Research, and the American Dental Association. More recognition undoubtedly will come his way posthumously, because his absence from the scene has left a void that calls even more attention to what he has been and has done for the profession.

The human side of Ralph Phillips deserves more mention. Those who knew him were impressed with his warmth and marvelous sense of humor. The twinkle in his eye and his subtle deep-toned asides precipitated many smiles and laughs. He was known to appear dressed in the worst of garment, displaying his loyal support for the Indiana Hoosiers or Chicago Cubs. Characteristic of his communicative skills were the ongoing insultingly humorous dialogues or pranks that he carried on with colleagues via mail, telephone, or gift. Even today in perusing my correspondence with Ralph from over the years, I cannot help but smile or laugh aloud reading his quips, gestures, or intonations on events of the day. Conversely, I am sorrowed by the fact that these notes will no longer be coming, for not only have the Chicago Cubs lost their number one fan . . .

all who have ever heard him speak have lost an informed and respected teacher .

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all who have worked with him in the laboratory have known and appreciated a dedicated investigator . . .

all who have been associated with him in organizational endeavors have known him to be a fair, unbiased, and cooperative member . . .

the *JOMI* editorial staff has lost a loyal, dedicated friend and colleague whose wisdom was boundless . . .

the profession of dentistry has lost an articulate, knowledgeable, and concerned friend . . .

Good-bye, Ralph, and thanks evermore for your friendship and a career we would all do well to emulate.

