

## In memory of Cecil Steiner

Cecil Steiner, one of Edward H. Angle's first students in California, and a pioneer in the field of orthodontics, died February 11, 1989 in Longview, Washington. Steiner, 92, had moved to Longview from Los Angeles in 1981 to be near his son and his family.



Steiner's parents came to California separately during the Gold Rush years. Together, they moved to the Imperial Valley where they worked a homestead. "I started school in that area," Steiner recalled in some notes he made before his death, "when there were 12 pupils and one teacher. I was valedictorian of my class for the simple reason that they wanted a boy for the purpose, and I was the only one."

One hot summer day, young Steiner left his farm duties for a few hours to visit the local dentist. Three small pit fillings of amalgam cost \$3.00, as much as a good farmhand made in three days. "What really appealed to me," Steiner recalled, "was that he had on a clean white shirt, worked in a clean office and was doing fine mechanical work. That experience made me resolve to be a dentist."

Steiner studied dentistry at the University of California Dental School in San Francisco. He financed his education by raising bees and selling honey. His three-year course required no pre-dentistry, allowing him to graduate at 19 — too young to apply for a license to practice!

After graduation, Steiner found little available in the way of graduate orthodontic education. Angle had closed his school in St. Louis, and a course offered by Forsythe did not transpire. Steiner began working with a Los Angeles orthodontist, Dr. Ray Robinson, and soon took over a full-grown practice when another local practitioner died. "Orthodontic training in

the dental schools of that time consisted of learning to re-cement molar bands. The bands generally came loose during the week and were recemented every Saturday morning. In the interim they were pried loose with the E arches which were very efficient for the purpose. Even in my ignorance I soon saw that I knew so little about orthodontics that my full practice of orthodontic patients, and I, were in trouble."

Steiner went to Pasadena with a suitcase full of study models to seek the help of Dr. Angle. "I spread them out on a table and attempted to ask him questions. After an awkward silence he just swept them aside and said, 'Steiner, what are the native trees of California?' The first one I mentioned was the eucalyptus, which is, of course, a native of Australia. His next question was, 'What did Darwin write?' I'd never even heard of Darwin. I knew far more about pitching hay. It wasn't long before he said, 'Steiner, you're too ignorant for me to talk to, why don't you go home!' So as quickly as possible I gathered up my models, and with my chin hanging on my chest, started to leave. As I did so, Mother Angle, bless her heart, handed me a list of about twenty books. Darwin was included, and other equivalent authors. She said, 'Read these and then come back to see him. Don't be afraid of him.'"

Steiner took Dr. Anna Angle's advice, and returned later to become Dr. Edward Angle's second student in Pasadena. He received his diploma from the Angle School in 1921, and continued to study with Angle and helped carry on the activities of the school. He used the ribbon arch, as taught by Angle, for many years, and he helped Angle file out some of the first edgewise brackets.

Steiner will perhaps be remembered most for his work in cephalometrics. The Steiner analysis is still widely used and his articles "Cephalometrics for You and Me" (*American Journal of Orthodontics*, January 1953), "Cephalometrics in Clinical Practice" (*The Angle Orthodontist*, January 1959), and "The Use of Cephalometrics as an Aid to Planning and Assessing Orthodontic

Treatment" (*American Journal of Orthodontics*, October 1960) are classics.

Although Steiner published widely, he remained modest regarding his accomplishments: "The list (of papers I have written) would be boresome and the value of most of them, nil." One paper he was quite proud of was "The Evolution of the Mechanics of Treatment of Class II Malocclusions." He read the paper before the Angle Society, in opposition to Dr. Angle's teachings, arguing against jumping the bite and pleading for keeping the teeth in harmony with what is now called the terminal hinge axis. The principles Steiner presented are equivalent to what later became known as the Angle Group concept of the treatment of Class II malocclusions.

Steiner will also be remembered as an educator. He taught at the Angle School, has given short courses at a number of universities in the U.S., South America and South Africa and was on the faculty at the University of Southern

California Department of Orthodontics.

His affiliations were numerous, and included the American Association of Orthodontists, the Charles H. Tweed Society of Orthodontists, the Edward H. Angle Society, and the Pacific Coast Society of Orthodontists. He was an honorary member of orthodontic groups in Argentina, Brazil, Cuba, Peru, Venezuela and Hawaii.

Steiner was preceded in death by his wife, Hazelle, in 1985, and a daughter, Jean, in 1975. He is survived by his son and daughter-in-law, Donald and Maxine Steiner of Kalama, Washington, 11 grandchildren, 12 great-children and 3 great-great-grandchildren.

Cecil Steiner was an orthodontist before most people knew what an orthodontist was. His contributions to the specialty will be remembered for many years to come, as will his kindness and generosity to the people whose life he touched.