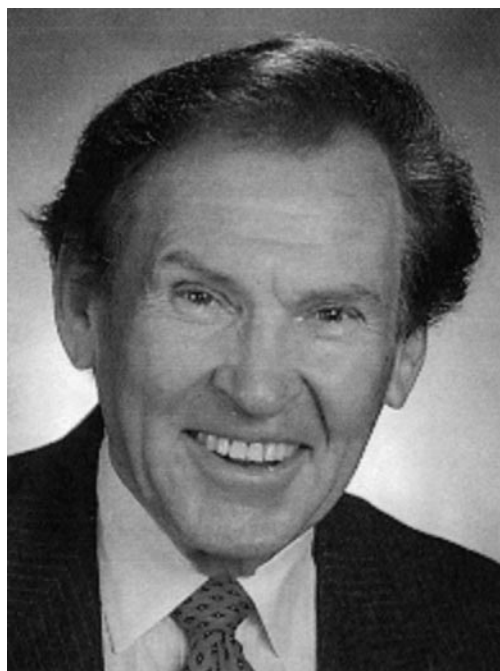


## In Memoriam

# In Memoriam: Robert M. Ricketts<sup>a</sup> 1920–2003



### Metaphor

Their conversation was animated, powerful, and had lasted longer than either of them would have expected. Hours, days, weeks . . . it made no difference. He wasn't aware of the time and she, very obviously, was never one to watch the clock. Actually, only a few seconds had passed. The bantering discussion was marvelous and he felt vibrant. "Luminous" wouldn't be an exaggeration. Insightful questions were followed by perceptive answers and it was his kind of repartee. She understood completely because this was hardly her first discussion. Yet, she was taken with his inimitable style and inquisitive nature. "Quite a unique character," she thought.

He understood why she'd arrived and acknowledged that the time had come. She stood, smiled, and extended her right hand while asking, "Shall we walk together?" In a twinkle, the old gentleman was on his feet. "No," he said wryly. Then, he smiled and swiftly held her hand while

gracefully looping his arm around her waist. "We'll dance. Of course . . . I'll lead." And with a final grand gesture, he was gone.

### Legacy of influence

Dr. Ricketts was one of the most original, productive, and influential orthodontists of all time. He was a giant who merits a place in the orthodontic pantheon. We orthodontists are fortunate that he focused his enormous talents and energy on orthodontics.

—Anthony A. Gianelly, Boston, Mass

Bob Ricketts was a true giant in the field of orthodontics. Whether you agreed with him or not, he stimulated thought and discussion and research. To quote his favorite song, he really did do it his way! When the dust cleared, however, the specialty always was the winner.

—Lysle E. Johnston, Jr., Ann Arbor, Mich

Research, education, and professionalism are words descriptive of the fifty-six years Robert Ricketts dedicated to orthodontics. He was an exceptionally brilliant star in an era and galaxy of greats. Rick's intellectual curiosity and thought-provoking presentations were a beacon of stimulus to students as well as clinicians.

—H. T. Perry, Florence, Ore

Well, Rick is gone, and I wish he were not. No one ever brought more passion, pleasure, or power to this profession than he. His mind had the acuity of a savant, the fertility of an artist, and the curiosity of a pioneer. He was all of these and much more. No one is as interesting as a man who gives his soul to a great enterprise. . . . The incurable intellectual life Rick lived leaves us greatly in his debt. Life may have left Rick, but Rick hasn't left life. Yes, we are his great debtors, even for the quality of pain that we now feel at his death.

—Larry W. White, Dallas, Tex

It is a sad day when we lose an icon in our beloved specialty of orthodontics! How many are there out there like Robert M. Ricketts? Who can communicate better? . . . He made us think, he stimulated us! His landmark TMJ studies serve as a basis for many advances in the field, and his Bioprogressive Philosophy has many adherents. His emphasis on diagnosis countered the mechanotherapy overkill

<sup>a</sup> Excerpted from the *Pacific Coast Society of Orthodontics Bulletin* courtesy of Dr. Gerry Nelson, Editor.

that afflicts so many today. Rick was a valuable member of our orthodontic department at Illinois . . . and the residents could not wait for his return. We shall miss him greatly. A great man for all seasons, for all reasons!

—Tom Graber, *Chicago, Ill*

Dr. Robert M. Ricketts' contribution to the development of the orthodontic field all over the world was immeasurable. He was a great source of inspiration and motivation for me and will be greatly missed.

—Hiroshi Nezu, *Kawasaki, Japan*

He was fun, friendly, and multitalented. Had he taken an alternate road, he could have easily distinguished himself in the arts, politics, or religion. My most touching memory of Bob was in the late 1990s in Rostock, Germany, when he closed the German Orthodontic Society meeting with an a cappella rendition of "Young at Heart"—it brought goose bumps and tears.

—Lawrence F. Andrews, *San Diego, Calif*

Bob Ricketts was an absolute joy. . . . Every day was like a new day at school. Rick just had teaching in his blood. It was impossible for him to let a day go by without sharing his profound knowledge and wisdom. I wish every young orthodontist could have spent just a few moments with this incredible man.

—Jim Hilgers, *Mission Viejo, Calif*

It is not often . . . that we have the opportunity to learn and be mentored from the best, much less the originator. He had the unique ability to . . . encourage us to think about how it could be better, while at the same time instilling in us the need to honor the past and . . . the challenge to be disciplined in the pursuit of knowledge. This influence will go on forever. You know, when you think about it, he's not that far away!

—Joseph M. Caruso, *Loma Linda, Calif*

How do you define a legend in his time? . . . It comes down to a few words with manifold impact: bright, colorful, questioning, assertive, controversial, innovative, and a Personality with a capital "P."

—Lee W. Graber, *Kenilworth, Ill*

Bob Ricketts was one of the true giants of our profession. His interests were global, his innovations were many, and his influence will be felt by generations to come. Rick had a profound effect on the way I approach and practice orthodontics and dentofacial orthopedics.

—James A. McNamara, *Ann Arbor, Mich*

I practiced side by side with Dr. Ricketts for 10 years, days full of unbelievable patients "from far and wide" . . . Rick inspired me, by example, to give 100%, and his spirit and message is with us forever. First, love your patient, he would say . . .

—Richard L. Jacobson, *Pacific Palisades, Calif*

Rick will be remembered most for teaching us to love our patients, our work, and our profession. He challenged us to think out of the box, to challenge old dogmas, yet remain steadfast to truths that guide our thinking. He was an innovator whose thinking was often generations ahead of the profession . . .

—Terry A. Sellke, *Grayslake, Ill*

Robert Murray Ricketts was a true original. He inspired colleagues from various disciplines around the world with his indefatigable originality. His artistry and charm helped too. How lucky we were to have Rick in our specialty.

—Sheldon Peck, *Newton, Mass*

As student, entertainer, clinician, author, and master mentor, Robert Ricketts led orthodontics into the future with the Foundation for Orthodontic Research (FOR), which spread his genius worldwide and we prosper because of it. Rick was . . . often frank and presented material with the confidence of an accomplished orthodontist. . . . He earned orthodontic immortality. . . .

—Wayne G. Watson, *La Jolla, Calif*

Quite simply, Dr. Ricketts was a superb innovator and a polished motivator!

—John E. Grubb, *Chula Vista, Calif*

The 200 members of the Israel Orthodontic Society wish to express their deep sadness at the loss of one of our profession's great leaders, Robert Murray Ricketts. Dr. Ricketts will long be remembered as a dedicated researcher, teacher, and clinician par excellence. Truly, an orthodontic icon has passed on.

—Nir Shpack, *Tel-Aviv, Israel*

Through his convictions, this visionary single-handedly provided inspiration for several generations of orthodontists around the world. Orthodontics would not be as we know it today without his existence . . . he loved everybody he knew and was, in turn, loved by everybody who knew him.

—Michael G. Woods, *Melbourne, Australia*

I have always said that Dr. Robert Ricketts had forgotten more orthodontics than I would ever know. Dr. Ricketts had a profound affect on me in the utilization of the Herbst Appliance. In 1984, he suggested modifications in both mechanics and analysis of the device. Those changes are still in use today.

—Terry Dischinger, *Lake Oswego, Ore*

Robert Ricketts has contributed much to orthodontics by his creative and innovative approach to our field. He was a true orthodontic philosopher.

—Charles J. Burstone, *Farmington, Conn*

Personally and professionally, Ricketts went beyond the "walk and talk of orthodontics." He sang, he danced, and he inspired others to delight in the passion of being alive. That was Ricketts. That's his legacy.

—G. S. Samson, *Atlanta, Ga*

### Epilogue

Dr. Robert M. Ricketts was born and raised on a farm in Kokomo, Indiana. He attended dental school at Indiana and was a determined scholar in orthodontics at the University of Illinois under the direction of Dr. Allan G. Brodie. He also served as Lt JG in the United States Navy Dental Corps. Dr. Ricketts was the recipient of countless national and international awards and was an expert and an authority in the science of human craniofacial development. He served an active role and influenced the orthodontic educational process at multiple US and international universities. The University of Illinois and Loma Linda University have set aside research libraries to recognize his contributions. He was the founder of the American Institute of Bioprogressive Education, and was instrumental in establishing

the Foundation for Orthodontic Research (FOR). He was the cofounder of the orthodontic Bioprogressive Therapy and Philosophy and a major force in the development of computer-aided diagnostics. Dr. Ricketts developed a variety of innovative orthodontic products that are used throughout the world. He published innumerable articles, including the reference text "Provocations and Perceptions in Cranio-Facial Orthopedics," and inspired the thought processes of all contemporary orthodontists. His influence pervaded the profession. More details of Rick's brilliant and colorful life are present in his autobiography, *The Reappearing American*.

Dr. Ricketts is survived by four children: Robin Machette, Piedmont, Calif; Gale Ricketts, New York, NY; Craig Ricketts, Scottsdale, Ariz; Anastarr Ricketts, Telluride, Colo; and five grandchildren.