

## Guest Editorial

### **J. Daniel Subtelny: A man of Thought, Action and Vision**

**Bruce S. Haskell and Michael E. Spoon**

*"I cannot teach anybody anything, I can only make them think."*

On September 27<sup>th</sup>, 2014, hundreds of alumni, faculty, administrators, and fellow Edward H. Angle Society of Orthodontists (EHASO) members came to Pittsford, NY to celebrate the life of Dr. J. Daniel Subtelny. They came from Hong Kong, Iceland, Mexico, Korea, Canada, and all points in the United States to honor and pay tribute to a man who has dedicated his life to our profession of orthodontics as a practitioner, researcher and educator. One alumnus drove from Illinois when she discovered she couldn't get a flight because of a fire at the Chicago air traffic control center.

It was standing room only during the memorial service in which Dr. Subtelny was eulogized by several colleagues and family members. In between strident organ refrains, everyone recalled his zest of life, learning, Joanne (his first wife—with whom he wrote the early books on cleft palate treatment), and the department he chaired for 55+ years. We were all reminded of how he made us better orthodontists and people. The current residents will perhaps most keenly feel this poignant grief because they will not have the benefit of his counsel for as long as the rest of us. His legacy lives on in the hundreds of former orthodontic residents he clinically educated, supervised and guided the research of —resulting in the publication of scores of important contributions to our literature.

Rest assured that, even though he was 92 when his body failed to wake up on September 17<sup>th</sup>, he still had a lot to offer. He remained vibrant and active until the end. At the spring meeting of the North Atlantic Component of EHASO, in Rome, Dr. Subtelny kept up with the rest of the group as we walked 3.7 miles (a member of the group had a pedometer) up and down steps of the Vatican and the Coliseum.

Immediately following the memorial service, a New Orleans style band led a procession, followed by the family and then the rest of the congregation, to Dr.



Subtelny's home for a celebration of his life. And what a rich life it was.

After serving in both the US Army and the US Public Health Service, Dr. Subtelny began his career in dental education. Subtelny graduated from the University of Pennsylvania School of Dentistry, earning a Doctor of Dental Surgery degree. He received his orthodontic certificate and Master of Science degree from the University of Illinois, perhaps the most rigorous program and the world leader in orthodontic thought at the time, operating under the tutelage of Dr. Allan Brodie.

In 1915, George Eastman donated the funds to build the Rochester Dental Dispensary—which later morphed into the Eastman Dental Center (EDC). In 1955, the second director, Dr. Basil Bibby, asked Dr. Dan Subtelny to organize the first accredited Department of Orthodontics. The fifth director of EDC, Dr. Cyril Meyerowitz, consolidated all branches of dental education and research at the University of Rochester under the umbrella that is now known as the Eastman Institute for Oral Health. Dr. Meyerowitz has said of Dan,

*"Dr. Subtelny is an excellent educator who has contributed significantly ... He is revered by his*



students and has as much enthusiasm today as he did ... years ago."

Over nearly six decades as the chief of orthodontics, Dr. Subtelny's dedication has enabled both more efficient and less invasive treatment of cleft palate patients as well as made many contributions in the timing of positive early treatment methods. Dan published over 70 peer reviewed scientific papers and several book chapters. He wrote a textbook titled *Early Orthodontic Treatment*, published in 2000, and his memoirs—entitled *Hot Seat*—were published in 2013.

Dan was one of the early members of the internationally recognized multi-disciplinary cleft palate teams. He was a pioneer in the field of craniofacial orthodontics, even before that term was coined. He founded the Cleft Palate Team at the Eastman Dental Dispensary and incorporated the diagnosis and treatment of patients with craniofacial anomalies into his orthodontic curriculum. Many other orthodontic programs around the world have since followed suit. As a result, orthodontists trained by Dan are unusually prominent in treating cleft palate patients in their own locales. Dr. Subtelny has lectured on six continents discussing this very topic. In 1980, Dan was recognized by the American Cleft Palate Association for his distinguished service, and the University of Pennsylvania School of Dentistry honored him with a distinguished Alumni Award in 1997.

Dr. Subtelny has served as president of the American Cleft Palate Association (1964), president of the International Society of Craniofacial Biology (1965), and president and director of the American Board of Orthodontics (1969–1976). He is also a Diplomate of the American Board of Orthodontics (1964), a Fellow of the International College of Dentists (1980), a Fellow of the American College of Dentists (1986), and a founding member of the North-Atlantic component of the Edward H. Angle Society of

Orthodontists. He has served on many editorial review boards including the *American Journal of Orthodontics and Dentofacial Orthopedics*, *The Angle Orthodontist*, and the *American Cleft Palate Craniofacial Journal*.

Remarkably, Dr. Subtelny is the only individual to date to have received all four of the following highest honors in the orthodontic profession:

- AAO research honor, the Milo Hellman Award (1959)
- AAO Foundation's honor for teaching, the Louise Ada Jarabak Memorial International Orthodontic Teachers and Research Award (1993)
- American Board of Orthodontics - Albert H. Ketcham Memorial Award (1996)
- AAO's James E. Brophy Distinguished Service Award (2006).

In further recognition of his dedication to teaching, the AAO named its 2006 education conference in Dr. Subtelny's honor and hosted the *J. Daniel Subtelny Education Leadership Conference* during the 106<sup>th</sup> Annual Session. Dan has graduated many successful orthodontists, a number of whom have distinguished themselves in the specialty and in academics. Some have become deans at universities in the U.S and around the world.

Dan is also appreciated outside of orthodontic circles. He was recently presented the New York State Dental Association's highest honor, the Jarvie-Burkhart Award, in recognition of the great service rendered to mankind in dentistry. The NYS Dental Association is a constituent of the American Dental Association and represents more than 13,000 dentists practicing in New York State. Named after dental pioneers William Jarvie and Harvey Burkhart, the award was presented to Subtelny, age 89, lauded as one... "*of the world's foremost educators in orthodontics.*"

In 1997, the Orthodontic Clinic at the Eastman Dental Center was renovated and named in his honor.

That same day, the Mayor of Rochester, New York, and the Monroe County Executive presented him with a Joint Proclamation stating that June 20, 1997, be named the “*J. Daniel Subtelny Day*.” This was in recognition for his years of treatment of children with craniofacial needs.

In 1999, he received a well-deserved honorary doctorate degree from the University of Athens. To additionally honor Dan, The Eastman Orthodontic Alumni Association and the University of Rochester have established The J. Daniel Subtelny Endowed Chair and Professorship to preserve his educational legacy and continue orthodontic education with the same verve and spirit shown in his remarkable career.

This sums up the reverence and depth of admiration many have for this gentleman, mentor, friend and inspiration. He was truly *a man of thought, action and vision!*

The conviviality of Dr. Subtelny’s Memorial gathering and celebration was punctuated by remembrances of how his Socratic method of teaching forced you to think about a question and your answers. Dan (or simply ‘Sub’ to most of us) would always ask you, “And what else?” until you were mentally pushed off balance and had to consider other options. The quote at the beginning of this memorial could have easily come

from Dr. J. Daniel Subtelny, but it is attributed to Socrates. In order to protect his legacy and keep the Eastman Orthodontic department strong, Sub’s protégé’s continue to ask, “And what else?”

The family requests that donations in honor of Dr. Subtelny be made to the:

J. Daniel Subtelny Fund  
1700 Revere Blvd  
Brigantine, New Jersey 08203  
or

Cleft Palate Foundation (<https://www.givedirect.org/give/givefrm.asp?CID=685>)

1504 East Franklin St. Suite 102  
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