Brainerd F. Swain, 1911-1999

Dr Brainerd “Barney” Swain of Morristown, NJ, who developed the Siamese Twin bracket and influenced thousands of orthodontists through his teaching and textbooks, died December 18, 1999, of lymphoma. He was 88.

Dr Swain studied dentistry at the University of Maryland and obtained his orthodontic certification from Columbia University. In 1937, he began practicing orthodontics in Morristown.

His influence on his colleagues began with his teaching career. He worked as an assistant clinical instructor at Columbia University from 1939 to 1943 and also taught at Fairleigh Dickinson University and the Medical College of Georgia. In 1968, he began teaching at the University of Pennsylvania. He was appointed Professor in 1974 and retained this post until his death.

On Sunday, Jan. 9, 2000, the Department of Orthodontics at the University of Pennsylvania School of Dental Medicine held a memorial service, reception, and luncheon in honor of Dr Swain in Philadelphia. The service was attended by 150 people.

Dr Jim Kerrigan of Bethesda, Md, spoke at the service and noted that Dr Swain was a “giver and not a taker. He gave and gave and gave.” To him, Dr Swain will always be known as “Mr Orthodontics.” He was a friend to both Dr Kerrigan and Dr Norm Cetlin of Chestnut Hill, Mass, for more than 50 years. Dr Kerrigan said, “He was a gentleman and always a gentle man.”

Dr Swain presented more than 200 clinical papers at national and international orthodontic conferences and lectured on 5 continents. He coauthored several textbooks, including Orthodontics: Current Principles and Techniques. During the memorial service, his daughter, Judith Shrader, and his son, Andrew Swain, recalled that he wrote orthodontic textbooks “to deepen the students’ understanding of orthodontics rather than dazzle them.” Dr T. M. Graber, who coauthored textbooks with Dr Swain, wrote the following for the right course — how fortunate we have been to have him as a colleague, confidant, coauthor, an inspiration, and, above all, as a true friend. Barney was the Abraham Lincoln of Orthodontics.”

Since his death, the University of Pennsylvania Department of Orthodontics has received letters from 16 countries and from throughout the United States.

One former student wrote that Dr Swain truly epitomized the orthodontic motto, “Service Before Self,” reported Dr Robert Vanarsdall, chair and program director of the Department of Orthodontics at the University of Pennsylvania.

Throughout his career, Dr Swain earned many honors. In 1987, he received the Albert H. Ketcham Memorial Award from The American Board of Orthodontics (ABO), one of the highest honors in the specialty. He also served as director of the ABO and was appointed as an orthodontic consultant to the U.S. Military Academy in West Point, NY, the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia, and the Morristown Memorial Hospital. During World War II, he served as a dental officer in the U.S. Navy.

In 1986, the Department of Orthodontics at the University of Pennsylvania honored him for 50 years in orthodontics. Football coach Dick Vermeil was the keynote speaker for this celebration. Vermeil was so impressed with Dr Swain and his contributions that he refused to accept an honorarium.

Dr Swain is survived by his daughter, son, his dear friend Judith Boyd, and 4 grandchildren.

Jessica Kassell
American Association of Orthodontists