TRIBUTE

J. Daniel Subtelny: Orthodontics Pioneer

We all realized just how highly regarded J. Daniel Subtelny was on September 27, when hundreds of alumni, faculty, administrators, and friends arrived in Pittsford, New York, to celebrate his life. People came from Hong Kong, Iceland, Mexico, Korea, Canada, and all points in the United States to honor a man who dedicated his life to the profession of orthodontics as a practitioner, researcher, and educator.

It was standing room only during the memorial service. Sub, as he was known to most of his colleagues, was eulogized by several friends and family members. Everyone recalled his love for his wife, Joanne, with whom he wrote his early books on cleft palate treatment, as well as his zest for life, for learning, and for the Department of Orthodontics—which he chaired for 55-plus years. While Sub was the only individual to have received all four of the highest honors in the profession of orthodontics, he will be remembered for his devotion to helping us be better orthodontists and people. His legacy lives on in the hundreds of former residents he educated, supervised, and guided the research of—resulting in the publication of scores of important contributions to our literature.

His memorial celebration was punctuated by reminders of his Socratic method of teaching, his famous “Hot Seat,” and how it forced you to think about the questions you would face as a practitioner and your answers to them. Sub would always ask, “And what else?” until you were mentally pushed off balance and had to consider other options.

Active at the age of 92 when he died September 17, he was a vibrant educator until the end.

He will be remembered through the J. Daniel Subtelny Endowed Chair and Professorship, established by the Eastman Orthodontic Alumni Association and the University, which has been created to preserve his educational legacy in orthodontics, and, we hope, to capture the same verve and spirit that he showed in his remarkable career.

—MICHAEL SPOON ’91D

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