



## The Evolution of Endodontics Built on the Shoulders of Giants



*"Historia vero testis temporum, lux veritatis, vita memoriae, magistra vitae nuntia vetustatis."*

(Translation: "History is the witness of the times, the light of truth, the life of memory, the messenger of antiquity.")

Adapted from Cicero's *Oratore*. II. 9. 39

Almost two years ago, the editor of ENDO, Prof Edgar Schäfer inquired if I would be interested in being Guest Editor of an issue to be published in 2017 focussing on the Pioneers of Endodontics. Initially I had my doubts and would not commit; but after some mental gymnastics, serious pondering and some editorial (editor) nudging, I agreed to accept this challenge, knowing the amount of library investigation that would be necessary and personal contacts that would have to be made, to say nothing about the creative and succinct writing that would be required, and editing on my part.

As can be seen in the table of contents, the focus will be on the Pioneers of Endodontics, the stalwarts upon which this speciality emerged using the building blocks of science, research, education and clinical practice. Needless to say this challenge was quite daunting, as I and the other authors chose to identify key individuals globally who could provide insight into who exactly were the Pioneers and what was their contribution. Furthermore, all of these authors had to be able to write succinctly, be knowledgeable of the past and the important personalities who impacted on the evolution of Endodontics, and had to be able to obtain the necessary information on each individual that would support their specific contributions. I gave them free rein to address these challenges, with some subtle editing, and was not disappointed. I extend my personal and heartfelt thanks to each of these authors and their contribu-

tors for their priceless contributions, which proved to be most daunting at times.

The emphasis for this issue was to be on historical and not contemporary personalities. Therefore, for many readers, once each paper is read, there will be an affirmation of the chosen individuals identified as "Pioneers". For some readers there will be consternation, as they will wonder why certain "favourite" or "popular" personalities, or countries were not included. Firstly, I had to set the parameters for choosing the Pioneers. Secondly, each personality highlighted needed an identifiable contribution to this speciality. Thirdly, I chose to limit the choices to individuals who contributed significantly up until 1970, but with a few, well-deserving individuals, this could be stretched to 1980. Also, many of my requests for information and data globally were not fulfilled and this will be reflected in voids that may be identified by the reader. Additionally this publication was designed to inform new generations of our past achievements and the individuals who were the driving forces behind the evolution of Endodontics as a true speciality. This information is especially important as I am fully aware of how little the history of dentistry and, in particular, Endodontics is taught in the predoctoral and postdoctoral dental school/college setting. As is typically found in most contemporary educational settings, new and sensational technological advances are inserted, gurus are exalted, current literature is thought to be the gospel for all concepts and all ages, economic and practice management issues take precedence and the first two areas to suffer exclusion from the dental curriculum are the history of dentistry and the use of the library and its resources; although there may be a resurgence in the use of the latter in some venues.

As can be seen, subsequent to reading the articles in this issue, the speciality of Endodontics has



**James L. Gutmann DDS, Cert Endo, PhD (honoris causa),**  
FICD, FACD, FADI, FAAHD  
Diplomate, American Board of Endodontics,  
President, American Academy of the History of Dentistry,  
Editor, *Journal of the History of Dentistry*,  
Professor Emeritus, Texas A&M University College of Dentistry,  
Dallas, Texas, USA.

had a rich and challenging historical development that was promulgated and exalted by many amazing individuals over a 100-plus year history. There were also tumultuous times that threatened its very existence. However, due to the vision, persistence and determination of but a few, with an occasional smattering of input from many others, the speciality has survived and grown globally with a focus on tooth retention... a concept that in 1910 was determined to be the barometer for the credibility of dentistry as a whole.

“Tooth Saving Should be the Dentist’s Aim – It is not the greatest achievement of science or the highest development of art to produce things available to only favoured individuals, but rather those things which lie within the reach of the majority, and which produce the greatest good for the greatest number. In the practice of dentistry every encouragement should be given to those who are striving for better methods of combating disease, or the production of

better materials with which to replace lost tissue, but enthusiasm in our work and admiration for unusual attainment should not lead us to lose sight of the fact that a service which will save the most teeth for the greatest number of people is, after all, the true standard by which the attainments of our profession should be measured.” – Editorial, *The Pacific Dental Gazette*, October, 1910.<sup>1\*</sup>

## ■ Reference

1. Gutmann JL. Retention or extraction? Defining our profession. *J Hist Dent* 2016;64:2.

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\*To the readers of this special publication, I ask for your indulgence if I have failed to register or interpret history correctly; or have neglected key personalities. For this I apologise and for those with greater insight and depth than mine I ask for your valued input, as collectively we can highlight what has gone before, what is truly meaningful and what serves as the basis for our present-day concepts.