



## Noting a Most Notable Retirement

The transition from a lifelong period of professional academic preparation, academic pursuits, and/or clinical practice to a more tranquil, moderated life with fewer commitments is welcomed by most of us at the appropriate time. From time to time, individuals who have significantly affected our professional and personal lives reach the pinnacle of their careers and are deserving of special recognition as they realize retirement. Such a colorful figure and articulate player on the prosthodontic stage of the past 4 decades has been Dr George Albert Zarb.

Migrating from his native Malta in 1960 to pursue graduate education on a coveted Fulbright scholarship at the University of Michigan, George embarked on a professional career that has become the envy of many a scholar. The likes of Kingery, Applegate, Boucher, and Steffel nurtured his early prosthodontic learning at the University of Michigan and Ohio State University and provided the impetus that fueled the Zarb drive to contribute and achieve. As a new Canadian citizen in 1966, the now professionally credentialed Dr Zarb became affiliated with the University of Toronto, which has served as his home base since 1963. After settling into the academic environment of the prosthodontic department of the Faculty of Dentistry, he moved rapidly and assuredly through the ranks of assistant and associate, becoming discipline chair in 1971 and a full professor in 1972.

What followed in his illustrious career was a succession of scholarships, fellowships, and visiting professorial appointments at universities around the world, attesting to the Zarb knack for stimulating students, practitioners, and scholars wherever he went. Not only did his Toronto students and faculty colleagues realize and come to deeply appreciate his knowledge and skills, but colleagues throughout North America and the world came to know the Zarb mystique, which attracted audiences with anticipation whenever he appeared and participated.

Between 1987 and 1995, George received an honorary doctorate of science from the University of Göteborg, Sweden, an honorary doctorate of law from Dalhousie University in Nova Scotia, and an honorary doctor of medicine and surgery degree from the University of Malta in his native country. This recognition undoubtedly evolved from his early involvement in, and collaboration with, the ongoing

investigations of Professor P-I Brånemark and colleagues in Sweden as they conceived and promulgated the concept of osseointegration. Always attuned to new and possibly productive advances in clinical dentistry wherever they might be developing, Dr Zarb was keenly aware of the needs of struggling edentulous patients in their pursuit of a more satisfying functional and esthetic restoration than the complete denture. His conviction and enthusiasm for the potential of osseointegrated implant support for prosthetic restorations prompted his organization of the landmark 1982 Toronto Conference on Osseointegration in Clinical Dentistry, at which this remarkable concept was first introduced in North America. The rest is history.

Dr Zarb's early clinical interests in the edentulous patient and temporomandibular joint dysfunction were reflected in his writings and lectures. From 1973 to 1977, he coedited a series of volumes published by Munksgaard that highlighted the scientific basis for reconstructive dentistry with Dr A. H. Melcher at the University of Toronto. The 1975 edition (the 7th edition) of the textbook *Prosthodontic Treatment for Edentulous Patients* which evolved from the classic Swenson *Complete Denture* text, was edited by Drs Carl Boucher, Judson Hickey, and, for the first time, George Zarb. Today that textbook is in its 12th edition, and the senior editor is none other than George A. Zarb. He was also a contributor to the benchmark publication *Tissue-Integrated Prostheses: Osseointegration in Clinical Dentistry*, which he coedited with P-I Brånemark and Tomas Albrektsson in 1985. He has authored or coauthored some 130 publications, among which are the proceedings of 11 conferences and symposia, many of which he organized. Not only has he published extensively, he has served on the editorial boards of 8 periodicals and is currently the editor-in-chief of the *International Journal of Prosthodontics*.

Dr Zarb has been "Mr Prosthodontics" in Canada. The recognition of prosthodontics as a specialty in Canada was the result of his dedicated efforts. Two Canadian organizations in this field have progressed because of his counsel and involvement. These and his other organizational achievements have been widely acclaimed throughout the world. The Academy of Osseointegration bestowed an honorary fellowship on George in 1999, making



him the latest to join the illustrious company of Drs P-I Brånemark, Andre Schroeder, and Willi Schulte.

At a May 1, 2004 celebration of Dr Zarb’s remarkable career and service in Toronto, he was honored by his University of Toronto colleagues, former students, family, and allied colleagues in a celebration conference and dinner. His friends at Nobel Biocare announced the establishment of an endowment fund in his name for the creation of a professorial position at the University of Toronto. The outpouring of affection and appreciation for what he has contributed to his profession and the betterment of humankind was indeed inspiring. Knowing George as we do, he will not completely divorce himself from the scholarly work he so loves. His retirement will be a work in progress, paced as he and his family wish and as health permits. He can take great pride in what he has achieved and bask in the limelight of admiration from his peers everywhere. Godspeed, George, and know that your life’s work has been exceedingly well done.

*William R. Laney*

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At the celebration conference, one of Dr Zarb’s surgical colleagues, Dr Philip Worthington, created some levity when he recited an original tongue-in-cheek poem directed to his friends and colleagues in periodontics:

**Ode to a Papilla**

Oh! My Papilla!  
I miss you so much!  
My tongue used to tingle  
And thrill at your touch.

Oh! My Papilla!  
Where are you now?  
I’d reconstruct you  
But I don’t know how.

Here comes Il Dottore  
He’ll know what to do.  
He’ll lift up the palate  
And fold it in two.

Let it hang like a curtain  
Obscuring the scene.  
You can’t even see  
Where the papilla has been.

He’ll fold it and mold it  
And shape it just so,  
I’ll have a papilla  
Wherever I go.

O Papilla mia!  
You’re beautiful there!  
The only thing is—  
My palate is bare!

“No matter” says Doctor  
“Your palate’s a wreck—  
But we can repair it  
With skin from your neck.”

What will he do now?  
I can’t even guess.  
Whatever he does  
It will still look a mess.

The papilla’s important  
On that we’ll agree.  
But how to rebuild it?  
That still puzzles me.

If my papilla  
Goes flatter and flatter  
My fixture is firm—  
So then—does it matter?

My fixture is firm  
I’m happy with that  
I shan’t lie awake  
‘Cos my papilla is flat.

However there’s something  
I would like to know:  
When papillae are lost  
Just where do they go?