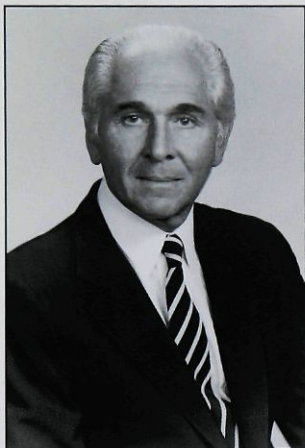


## In Memory of a Mentor



Dr. Gerald Kramer (1922–2000), Founding Coeditor of *The International Journal of Periodontics & Restorative Dentistry*.

Webster defines a mentor as a teacher, a trusted counselor, or guide. Odysseus trusted a mentor to be responsible for the education of his son, Telemachus. Gerald M. Kramer, the consummate teacher, died on May 18, 2000, but his spirit will be maintained in the lives and actions of those he touched. No one better personified the definition of mentor, so whom else would one have selected to educate a child?

He never allowed himself to be satisfied, to have the distance run, and so he sought perfection in his teaching. He explored in depth the motivations for a student's performance and was determined to upgrade his or her capability. The results were not judged by surgical competence and erudite accomplishment alone, but by behavior with patients, dealings with faculty, and relationships within the student body.

His mind was alive and on fire. The most inane conversation would suddenly blossom into articulate repartee. The remarkable career was punctuated by the need to continue the pursuit of excellence. Students were expected to think, to make decisions, to continue always with the learning process lest life pass them by. They had to make time to be aware of new developments and make up their minds about what role these developments would play in their lives.

Mel's tenure at the Boston University School of Dentistry as Professor and Chairman of Periodontology was regarded as the equivalent of King Arthur's Court in Camelot. Only the most capable applied for the residency program, and he molded their egos effectively into a team that to this day considers itself elite.

When change was inevitable, he and I walked the streets of Paris until dawn and speculated about what challenges would be tackled next: a private institution, an elite international journal, videotapes . . . There were so many opportunities to disseminate information, to help practitioners digest and assess the value of new technologies. The next few years proved exhausting, as *The International Journal of Periodontics & Restorative Dentistry* and the Institute for Advanced Dental Studies were founded. A private journal, independent of any organization and designed to publish cutting-edge manuscripts, was unheard of at the time, but fortunately Mr H. W. Haase of Quintessence Publishing understood the need for such a publication and made a commitment that allowed the journal to become the respected teaching tool it is today. Mel's thoughtful editorials graced the pages of this journal for its first 17 years, until he became Editor Emeritus.

He loved to teach, and the Institute for Advanced Dental Studies was a grand forum for his personal methods. The small classes enhanced his opportunities to get to know the students and gave countless dentists the opportunity to appreciate his insight.

His legacy has been aptly recognized by the Dr and Mrs Gerald M. Kramer Scholarship for Excellence program, which was created by the

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American Academy of Periodontology Foundation. His "boys" have made significant contributions to ensure an endowment that grants a yearly scholarship to a periodontal resident who exemplifies the traits he so dearly treasured: personal motivation for excellence in both character and academic achievement.

Dentistry recognized his unique skills by awarding him noteworthy accolades, including the prestigious Gold Medal from the American Academy of Periodontology for his contributions to the field and the Master Clinician Award for clinical excellence. He was further honored at home and abroad by many dental societies. He served two terms as a director of the American Board of Periodontology and was the chairman during his final year.

The clinical practice of periodontics provided an opportunity for him to join his clinical skills with his extraordinary people skills. He loved his patients, delighting in his relationships with them. He did not simply treat periodontal disease; he treated people who happened to be afflicted with dental problems. His office was his stage for humor, for the arts, and for reflecting on life and its vagaries. His tenure of practice spanned almost 50 years, beginning when he was Henry M. Goldman's first resident at the Beth Israel Hospital in Boston and continuing for decades with his contributions to patient care.

Mel was obstinate. His son Lloyd remembers him as being "smart, passionate, and stubborn." It was very difficult to dislocate his resolve when he thought he was right, which happened frequently. His debates never ended until one side could claim victory or until there was nothing left to deliberate. His passions included his family and friends, the field of periodontics, music, literature, film, and politics. Gerry-Mel, as his friend Ed Levinson dubbed him, was a fine man, a scholar, and a dignified gentleman who always found time to help others, but to so very many, he was a mentor.

Myron Nevins