

## Dr Kaare Langeland



A true icon of endodontology, Dr. Kaare Langeland, passed away last summer at his home in Connecticut, USA at the age of 91. For more than 50 years, he was actively involved in dental research, addressing key issues in pulp biology and endodontology. He will be remembered for his studies of the pulp and its response pattern to caries, operative procedures and dental restorative materials; observations carried out in a time when immunolabelling and *in situ* hybridization for identification of cellular or tissue constituents were not available. His thesis 'Tissue changes in the dental pulp – An experimental histological study', published in 1957 (also in *Odontologisk Tidskrift*, 65, no 4, 1957) became a classical piece of work. Here, he critically assessed criteria commonly in use to evaluate pulp tissue reactions to dental filling materials. He found many to be invalid and cautioned against interpreting histological artefacts as true indications of pulp tissue pathology.

Born in Norway and following the award of his Doctor of Dental Surgery degree from the Norwegian Dental School in Oslo in 1942, Kaare spent his early professional years in general practice and teaching restorative dentistry at the Norwegian State Dental School. Another giant in the history of Scandinavian endodontics, Dr. Birger Nygaard-Østby, became his mentor in research. In 1963, he was called to the United States and was appointed professor and chair of the Department of Oral Histology at the State University of New York in Buffalo. Later on, in 1969, he moved to Connecticut and assumed the chairmanship

of the Department of Endodontics at the University of Connecticut School of Dental Medicine in Farmington; a position he held until his retirement in 1987, when he was appointed Professor Emeritus.

Under his leadership, pulp biology research was brought to the limelight. A primary focus was on biological effects of dental materials including materials used in endodontics. For this he steadily received financial support from the Ministry of Health in the United States. During his many years in dental science he wrote well over 100 papers of original research in addition to books and textbook chapters. He also participated in several international scientific commissions.

Kaare was a strong advocate of the principles of science. During courses and lectures a classic remark of his was: 'In pulp biology, or in endodontology, opinions may differ, but only histology distinguishes between facts and fiction'. Another was: 'If you believe, you go to Church, but in science there is no room for beliefs'. He was also a man of strong values and invariably requested intellectual honesty. Kaare particularly disliked colleagues, who dictated by monetary interest, gave biased views on the benefit of commercial products and materials. Yet, he was a warm and generous personality, always prepared to help his students and colleagues especially those sincerely interested in biological matters. He was genuinely proud of his students and took pleasure from their progress and successes. Kaare loved sitting at dinner tables with friends, colleagues and students. Dinners with him could end very late at night.

An aspect of Kaare's early life that few know about was his involvement in the Norwegian resistance movement during the Second World War. After Nazi-Germany had invaded Norway, Kaare took part in some very dramatic events. Among them the battle at the Fossum bridge outside Oslo, when Norwegian resistance men were killed as well as civilians in the aftermath of the German invasion of the small town of Askim. At the end of the war the Norwegian Government awarded him a medal. The war experiences never left his mind. At the commemorate ceremony in Oslo of the 50th anniversary of the war end, Kaare marched alongside surviving members of the resistance movement.

Kaare Langeland is greatly missed by many throughout the world!

*Domenico Ricucci*

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