

## Archives

### Steven P. Geiermann D.D.S.

#### Obituaries

**Dr. Kenneth R. Elwell, DDS, MPH**, retired U.S. Air Force (USAF) Colonel and public health dentist, died March 3, 2008. He was 96 years old. A native of East Liverpool, Ohio, he was a longtime resident of Fort Belvoir, Virginia and had lived in Hendersonville, North Carolina for the last 18 months of his life.

Dr. Elwell was a 1937 DDS graduate of Northwestern University Dental School. He later received his MPH degree from the University of Michigan. He retired from the Air Force with over 27 years of distinguished service. He served as a Professor of Public Health Dentistry and chaired the Department of Community Dentistry at Case Western University Dental School.

From the roots of a broken home, poverty, and having spent many years being raised in a State Soldier's Home, he was determined to become a dentist, which he accomplished despite the hardships of the nation's economic depression and the deprivations of his background. In 1940, he joined the Air Force, where he was decorated for out-

standing service during World War II. He received numerous medals including the *Medaille de la Reconnaissance Francaise* and the Bronze Star with an oak leaf cluster. These awards were bestowed upon Dr. Elwell for building a clinic in the southern French staging areas to address the dental needs of troops slated for deployment to the Pacific theatre following Victory in Europe Day on May 8, 1945. He accomplished this unprecedented construction and processing of 120,000 troops in an amazing 45 days.

Dr. Elwell became the architect of the USAF Preventive Dentistry Program, which was the first of its kind among the military branches and remains in use today. In the process, he built research labs to study the effects of fluoridation on dental health, produced two motion pictures on Air Force dental practices, and contributed to numerous publications, including a book entitled, "Classification and Appraisal of Objections to Fluoridation," which had a worldwide impact. He was the first Air Force dental officer to be board certified as a specialist in dental public health.

During his fourteen years as a professor at Case Western, Dr. Elwell brought innovative energy and enthusiasm to the dental classes he taught in statistics and community dentistry. He served as president of the American Association of Public Health Dentistry from 1978 to 1979. He was a lifetime member of the American Dental Association.

**Thomas Francis Drury, PhD**, a former senior health statistician at the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research (NIDCR), died of complications of diabetes on February 13, 2008 at his Silver Spring, Maryland home. He was 66 years of age. Dr. Drury worked in the division of population and health promotion

sciences at NIDCR, part of the National Institutes of Health, until his retirement in 2002.

Dr. Drury was born in the Bronx, New York, and graduated from St. Alphonsus College in Suffield, Connecticut. He received a master's degree in 1970 and a doctorate in 1979, both in medical sociology, from Catholic University. He did postdoctoral work in cardiovascular fitness at the University of Maryland and graduate work at Washington Theological Union. He worked for the Social Security Administration, the Bureau of Social Science Research, and the National Center for Health Statistics until he joined the National Institutes of Health in 1987. Dr. Drury published a number of studies on poverty, chronic pain, diabetes, and oral cancer prevention and detection.

Tom was not only an expert in his field; he was an enthusiastic and perpetual seeker of knowledge. He sought out emerging science in a multitude of fields and had the capacity to capture, modify, and apply the theories and models to questions that were being posed in



oral health. As such, his approach allowed new perspectives and questions to evolve – and served to “open the discussion and jar the thinking” for those schooled only in the dental and oral sciences. He was a patient,

passionate and dedicated mentor to students and colleagues alike. While he valued overviews, he relished burrowing into the details of data analysis and reporting, while relishing the nuances of the discussion

section of any publication. He was committed to preparing the next generation of scientists and once they worked or trained with Tom, he was their mentor, coach, and colleague for life.

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