

Footprints in the Sands of Time: Remembering Herschel Horowitz

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Thank you, Dushanka, and thanks to the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research for organizing this celebration of one of the most indispensable individuals in the history of the dental profession. It is certainly appropriate for our celebration to be taking place on the campus of the National Institutes of Health. Where better could we pay tribute to one of our greatest dental researchers than here in the nation's official health research center? It is also very appropriate that our celebration takes the form of a symposium. That makes it an occasion for learning, and the person we are here to celebrate would surely like that. Dr. Herschel Horowitz—or Hersh, as he is known throughout the dental profession—remained committed to learning all his life. Equally important, he remained committed to sharing his learning, so that his knowledge could be put to use and end up having the greatest possible impact on the public's oral health.

To be honest, for many people in Hersh's area of the profession, what we do in organized dentistry—with all our councils, committees, and things like that—doesn't really have all that much appeal. It was different with Hersh. He saw getting involved in organized dentistry as a way to serve, offer his expertise, and make a difference in people's lives. The American Dental Association, the dental profession, and the public are all better off today because he was willing to step out of the clinic and the laboratory to take part in some of the nitty-gritty processes that shape policy and help determine where oral health care is going.

The late American actress Helen Hayes quotes her mother as having drawn a distinction between achievement and success. "Achievement," her mother said, "is the knowledge that you have studied and worked

hard and done the best that is in you. Success is being praised by others, and that's nice, too, but not as important or satisfying. Always aim for achievement and forget about success." We can all see the truth in that, but the fact of the matter is that Hersh gets to have it both ways—achievement *and* success. That's why we are here today to praise him.

The American Dental Association owes him a particularly large debt of gratitude. You look in the ADA literature, including the old "Accepted Dental Therapeutics" and the new "Guide to Dental Therapeutics," and you see his name cited everywhere. You also see phrases and concepts that came directly from Hersh or clearly bear the stamp of his mind. How many times have you heard the recommended amount of fluoride toothpaste for brushing described as being "pea-sized"? That came straight from Hersh. Parents may not know it, but they are quoting Hersh whenever they say that to their children.

His role as a consultant to the ADA dates back to when we still had a separate Council on Dental Therapeutics. As a consultant, he was always timely and responsive, and his input was always thoughtful and constructive. What will work best? What is the right and most responsible thing to do? What is in the best interests of the public? These are the principles by which Hersh Horowitz was guided.

For a quarter of a century, Hersh was a disciplining and energizing force on the ADA's National Fluoridation Advisory Committee, which looks at issues relating to fluoridation and makes recommendations to our Council on Access, Prevention, and Interprofessional Relations. It was nothing short of a coup to have Hersh, a world-renowned researcher on water fluoridation and dental caries, on this committee. The combination of exper-

tise and enthusiasm that he brought to the table helped make the promotion of community water fluoridation one of the ADA's biggest success stories.

As if all this wasn't enough to ask of one person, Hersh also served the ADA as an expert media spokesperson on fluoridation, getting out word about the oral health benefits of fluoride and helping counter those who would send us backwards in the war on dental caries.

To keep the media and the public focused on sound scientific information on this and other issues, such as the safety of dental amalgam, the ADA is dependent upon the willingness of experts to serve as spokespersons. Hersh wrote the book on willingness to serve, and in this area too he came through for us. And it wasn't just for us. It was, as always with Hersh, for the best interests of the public's oral health.

It was two years ago, when he was in Chicago to further sharpen his media skills at a spokesperson training seminar, that Hersh unexpectedly had to be admitted to Northwestern Hospital, just up the street from the ADA. His wife, Alice, came to Chicago to be with him through that illness. Hersh's friends in our Division of Dental Practice were pleased to be able to help Alice with her NIDCR work through that difficult time by letting her send faxes, print documents from disks, or in any other way they could, as you would do for members of your family.

Earlier this year, the ADA nominated Hersh for a Fluoridation Merit Award at the National Oral Health Conference in Milwaukee. He was unable to attend the conference to accept it, but Alice has said that word of the award lifted his spirits. Before that, of course, he was honored with the coveted John W. Knutson Distinguished Service Award in Dental Public Health from the Oral Health Section of the

American Public Health Association.

As the history of oral health continues to be written, Hersh will continue to be remembered and honored. He will be honored for his clinical trials to determine the safest and most effective procedures for fluoride treatment. He will be remembered for his work to determine the appropriate concentration for over-the-counter mouthrinses. Whenever we look at the statistics on the dramatic reduction in dental caries in Americans, particularly among children, we will remember the passion and determination of Hersh Horowitz. At the ADA, Hersh will be remembered by many, on a very personal basis, for the kind of human being he was.

Although I have long known of Hersh through the literature and his reputation, our paths never actually crossed, and I regret that I never had the opportunity to meet him face-to-face. But I *have* had the pleasure of talking with members of my staff who knew him, and I want everyone to know the kinds of things they say about him. I can tell you they have huge affection and respect for him.

Dr. Kenneth Burrell, senior director of the ADA Council on Scientific Affairs, refers to Hersh as being "a joy to talk to." As Ken puts it, "Hersh was a wit and a thinker, and a conversation

with him was always on a plane where you were talking *substance*."

Dr. Cliff Whall, director of the ADA Seal of Acceptance Program, was out east earlier this year on a family visit and took the opportunity to visit Hersh. I believe that says a lot. Cliff has told me he was always impressed by the gracious manner in which Hersh would question someone at a scientific session if he didn't happen to agree with a point the person was making. "Sometimes I was that person," Cliff says, "so I know firsthand." According to Cliff, there was no one-upmanship or intent to intimidate or humiliate. You accepted Hersh's criticism of your viewpoint because you knew that he was not attacking you. He was looking for the truth, going for the best approach and the wisest course of action. Hersh's questions were always well thought out and to the point. He was not only a thinker, but a rigorous thinker, and he wanted you to be rigorous in your thinking, too. Above all, he wanted whatever came out of the process to be right.

Jane McGinley, manager of Fluoridation and Preventive Health Activities in the ADA Division of Dental Practice, echoes Cliff, saying that while Hersh could be firm and hold his ground, he was always considerate. He always listened, and he was always eager to be of help. I believe Jane

speaks for everyone at the ADA who worked with Hersh when she says that in addition to losing a well-respected expert, we lost a friend.

Jane recalls with amusement the relationship between Hersh and his close friend Dr. Erni Newbrun, of the University of California at San Francisco. Hersh and Erni both served on the National Fluoridation Advisory Committee. Hersh was laid back, and Erni was more your Type A personality. When Hersh thought Erni was going too far with something in a committee discussion, he would suddenly just say, "Erni—enough." Then, when Hersh's illness prevented him from attending committee meetings for the past two years, Erni would sometimes stop himself in meetings and say, "We need Hersh back. He's the only one who can keep me under control."

We will move on, as Hersh would want us to, but we have indeed lost a respected expert and a friend. We have the comfort of knowing the level of satisfaction he must have felt about the difference he made with his life, his talents, and his time.

Let me close with some lines from Henry Wadsworth Longfellow:

Lives of great men all remind us
We can make our lives sublime
And, parting, leave behind us
Footprints in the sands of time.