



# Gerald Shklar



*Photograph courtesy of the Harvard Dental Bulletin*

Dr. Gerald Shklar, former Brackett Professor of Oral Pathology at the Harvard School of Dental Medicine, died on January 21, 2015 at the age of 90. Born in Montreal, Shklar was the son of a general dentist, although his career path was not predestined as Gerald was a prodigious musician and accomplished flutist. Such so that during the Second World War, he was a member of the Canadian Army's band. Subsequently though and ultimately to our benefit, he decided to pursue dentistry and graduated with a DDS from McGill in 1949. After a year of general practice, Dr. Shklar and his wife Judith (later to become Professor of Government at Harvard and a MacArthur Fellow recipient) made their way to Boston where Gerald completed specialty training in Oral Pathology at Tufts.

Dr. Shklar remained on the Tufts' faculty where he developed a world-renowned Oral Pathology service and served as Professor and department chair until 1971 when he was recruited to the Harvard School of Dental Medicine as the Charles Brackett Professor of Oral Pathology and the Chair of the Department of Oral Pathology and Oral Medicine. He served as Department Chair until 1993 and was awarded emeritus status in 2000.

Dr. Shklar was the prototypical triple-threat, a prolific and innovative scientist whose interests and accomplishments transcended both pre-clinical and clinical research, an educator with a commitment to excellence that was unsurpassed, and a clinician whose histopathologic acumen was envied by many. His publications numbered into the hundreds and many were demonstrable of his foresight into topics which are still considered to be novel. As early as 1954, he was publishing on relationships between oral and systemic health. A paper which he co-authored with Teicher and Ervin reported on the use of nude mice as a platform to assess human xenografts. Not only were the subjects of his research and manuscripts relevant and diverse, but the scope of his co-authors speaks to Shklar's collaborative nature, open-mindedness, warmth, and generosity. He was never one to seek the limelight. Rather, he would use every opportunity to promote, recognize and support others. His accessibility to students, residents and junior faculty was legendary – in his clinics he was like the Pied Piper with a trail of students. Importantly, as a mentor he was unsurpassed. He advocated for women and minorities throughout his life. He was always enthusiastic

and encouraging. His ability to facilitate interactions knew no bounds. No matter what the topic, he could always initiate a new relationship or collaboration with a simple phone call. And his interest in students and mentees was long-lasting – they became his adopted children who periodically called for his advice long after they “left home”.

Probably the reason for this success was his likeability and character. His integrity, humility, and competence all catalyzed relationships at all levels. And he had a cutting sense of humor – an asymmetrical smile and a unique (but not subtle) laugh.

In addition to his scientific achievements and interests, Shklar had a perpetual interest in the history of dentistry. Throughout his professional life accumulated an extensive collection of primary documents relating to oral and dental medicine. He enlisted the many foreign students who he trained to serve as translators many of the non-English dental texts. Ultimately, he wished to produce a text on the history of dentistry that utilized original works through the cultural history of each Age. After eight years and thousands of pages of editing he and David Chernin produced a Sourcebook of Dental Medicine – a documentary history of dentistry and stomatology from the earliest times to the middle of the twentieth century. Along the way, Shklar published the first English translation of Bratolomeo Eustachius, *A Little Treatise on the Teeth: The First Authoritative Book on Dentistry* (1563).

Shklar’s contributions to the profession have been recognized by numerous accolades and national and international awards. He was a luminary who never sought to be one. But the greatest tribute to his legacy is the many who called him their teacher, mentor, colleague and friend.

Respectfully submitted,

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