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# THE EDITOR'S CORNER

## A Farewell to Two Orthodontic Giants

Two key figures in our specialty have died within the past few months: Ronald H. Roth on Jan. 24 and John H. Hickham on Sept. 25. Both Ron and Jack were major contributors to JCO and to the advancement of clinical orthodontics, but in different ways. Ron was a perfectionist in seeking to standardize the diagnosis and treatment of malocclusion. He was convinced that his insistence on gnathological finishing was key to the soundest occlusion and stability. Today, the Roth bracket prescription and clinical procedures have wide adherence around the world.

Jack was the quintessential clinician. From his engineering background, he instinctively understood force and its application. With his creative ability, he developed and offered to orthodontists devices and procedures that made the correction of malocclusion easier and better. Orthodontics continues to evolve, and Ron and Jack will be remembered as outstanding participants in that evolution.

I'm turning over the rest of this month's Editor's Corner to colleagues who will add their own personal tributes. ELG

## Ronald H. Roth, 1933-2005

"Doctor, it is not about you; it is about the patient." This is a direct quote from Ron Roth, in one of his many discussions with groups of orthodontists. It tells you about his true devotion to the profession and to the improvement of patients' health, esthetics, and stability. Early in his career, he realized that the standards and goals of traditional orthodontics failed a large percentage of our patients. This led him on a life-long pursuit of solutions for these problems. He studied not only with orthodontists, but with the leading clinicians in prosthodontics and restorative dentistry.

These studies led to what was later called the Roth Philosophy. It is a goal-based system of diagnosis and treatment planning that provides excellent orthodontic treatment results, optimum facial and dental esthetics, and

lasting stability and health of the gnathic system. It brought the concepts of condylar position and functional occlusion into mainstream orthodontics. Once Ron learned to apply these concepts to his own patients, his next goal was to teach his colleagues what he had discovered. This was sometimes a frustrating experience, but he never gave up. As a result, Ron has left a legacy in more than 40 countries; there are Roth Teaching Centers in 12 countries, and Roth-trained doctors on the faculties of many of our leading American and foreign university orthodontic departments.

Submitted by Friends of Dr. Roth

### **John H. Hickham, 1935-2004**

There is an indispensable kind of person who cuts a swath in the world not merely because of his own accomplishments, but also because of what he has enabled others to accomplish. This kind of person brings energy and direction to a community, and in his own way defines the experience of living in a particular place and time. Orthodontics lost such a person with the death of Dr. Jack Hickham, my friend for 45 years. Jack would have been the last to regard himself as indispensable, but through force of intellect and personality he became so. He lived a life that most of us would envy—

inventor, electrical engineer, pioneer, lecturer, pilot, aircraft designer and builder, motorcyclist—and he had the constant love, devotion, and care of his beautiful wife, Nancy.

There are two instances in Jack's life that may give you the essence of the man and his ability. As a child, Jack built a model airplane and entered it in a prestigious competition. He won first place, but was later stripped of the prize because he was only 9 years old and the contest was for adults only. And while still a student in his second year of postgraduate training, he designed and constructed the Hickham headgear that is still being used by clinicians throughout the world.

Jack was not the captive of any one "school" or style of orthodontics. His biomechanical prowess was formidable, but his mechanics uniquely coupled common sense with expediency and precision. He was intensely serious about the efficiency of what we orthodontists do. He believed that progress was not defined by promoting weatherbeaten concepts with a clever voice. Jack would have wholeheartedly agreed with the poet Blake, who wrote: "Great things are done when men and mountains meet;/This is not done by jostling in the street." Jack met his mountains.

JOHN J. SHERIDAN, DDS, MSD