

# Ivar Andreas Mjør

## 1933-2017

Ivar Mjør was one of the giants of 20<sup>th</sup> century dentistry -a man of many important academic achievements and special accolades. In addition to his numerous, diverse personal contributions of international significance to the art and science of contemporary dentistry, Ivar nurtured and mentored a large number of now eminent basic and clinical scientists, widely distributed across the world, with the common bond of pursuing research, tempered by Ivar's exemplary ethos and commitment to excellence. Furthermore, Ivar was as a distinguished and inspirational leader, heading up various organisations, including the Nordic Institute of Dental Materials Testing (NIOM) -inaugural Director 1973-1993, and the International Association for Dental Research (IADR), which he served as President in 1986-87.

Born and brought up in Norderhov Ringerike, Norway, Ivar studied dentistry at the University of Dundee, Scotland, graduating Bachelor of Dental Surgery (BDS) with commendation in 1957. Following compulsory service in the Norwegian Army, Ivar, accompanied by his devoted, surviving wife Birgit, crossed the Atlantic to study at the University of Alabama where he graduated Master of Science in Dentistry (MSD) in Pedodontics in 1960 and Master of Science (MS) in Anatomy in 1961. He then returned to Norway to the University of Oslo where he graduated Doctor of Odontology (Dr Odont) in 1966, following the successful completion and defence of a thesis entitled "Studies of normal and experimentally altered human coronal dentine". In 1970, a mere thirteen years after the successful completion of his primary qualification in dentistry, Ivar was appointed Professor of Dentistry and Chairman, Department of Anatomy, Dental Faculty, University of Oslo.

With leave of absence from the University in 1973, Ivar assumed the position of founding Director and Head, Biological/Clinical Division, Scandinavian Institute of Dental Materials (NIOM) -a position he held with distinction for 20 years. During his time at the University of Oslo and NIOM, Ivar's research



output was consistently remarkable and of international significance -many of his highly cited papers remained state of the knowledge to this day. Before moving on from NIOM in 1993, Ivar had amassed a large list of honours, including five honorary doctorate degrees, the IADR Wilmer Souder Award, two Medals of Honour of the Norwegian Dental Association -a silver in 1971, followed by gold in 1986, the Eero Tammissalo Medal and Honorary membership of the Finnish Dental Association and the Centennial Medal of the Finnish Dental Society, to mention but a few!

On his retirement from NIOM in 1993, Ivar moved back across the Atlantic, together with Birgit of course, to be appointed Academy 100 Eminent Scholar Chair at the College of Dentistry, University of Florida -a position he held until 2008. In this position Ivar continued to publish widely and extensively, producing his fifth book - "Pulp-Dentin Biology in Restorative Dentistry"<sup>1</sup>, editing two others, and authoring/co-authoring the last hundred or so of his c.400 papers, together with numerous other miscellaneous articles, editorials and opinion pieces. A focus in many of Ivar's more recent papers and opinion pieces is the growing importance of evidence-based knowledge, with an emphasis on the need for practice-based research, which he championed with vigour and great passion.

During his time in Florida, Ivar continued to lecture extensively around the world -one of his career-long activities, to give generously of his time to many, different organisations, including the Academy of Operative Dentistry, which he served for many years as Chair of the Academy's Research Committee. As in all things Ivar did, if he thought it was worth doing, the only way to do it was to do it to the best of his ability, and this meant doing it exceptionally well. In addition, Ivar finished his remarkable career the way he started it by being a highly committed, greatly acclaimed teacher and much-loved supervisor and mentor. That said, Ivar did not 'suffer fools gladly' and would be quick to challenge anyone who, to his analytic, encyclopaedic thinking, spoke or wrote "nonsense."

The authors of this obituary are but two of the countless people who advanced their careers and learnt a great deal in the process under Ivar's exceptional tutelage. Many might say a tough, demanding man to work for and with, but given his academic qualities, ability to make people realise their potential and infectious enthusiasm, let alone his great sense of humour, it remains for all those he 'helped along the way' a great honour, privilege and matter of pride to be able to say: "I worked with Ivar Mjør."

As to his legacy, over and above his three children -Per Ivar, Siri and Thor, and eight grandchildren, Ivar, while acknowledging the many advances in oral and dental science credited to him, might well have said on retiring back to Norway, where he spent his remaining years, more common sense and sense of purpose in dentistry than when he entered it in the early 1950s, notably the shift to prevention rather than cure. Also, the growing appreciation of the value and need for "real world" research in the interest of patients and dentistry appreciating its shortcomings - "At best we repair diseased and damaged teeth, and the only permanent fillings are the ones people die with". Always a pragmatist, Ivar appreciated that not everyone clung to his every word, but in not doing so, you had to have good reason, or new evidence to justify your position.

For once with Ivar, we may have the last word: thank you on behalf of dentistry and all the patients who benefited from your unswerving commitment and dedication to teaching, excellence in clinical practice and research. Rest in peace, colleague, friend and, above all, great man of oral and dental science.

Nairn Wilson and Valeria Gordan

#### REFERENCES

1. Mjør IA (2002) *Pulp-Dentin Biology in Restorative Dentistry*, Chicago, Quintessence