

In Memoriam

Claude Nabers, DDS, MSD: A legendary clinician dedicated to periodontics

Dr. Claude Lowry Nabers, former president of the American Academy of Periodontology (1973), passed away in San Antonio, Texas on March 17, 2020, just shy of his 96th birthday. He was a recipient of the Academy's Master Clinician and Gold Medal awards, a philanthropist, and a highly regarded lecturer throughout the world. Dr. Nabers had a commitment to the care of his patients and to his profession, and a constant quest for knowledge that inspired graduate students and colleagues for many years well past his retirement.

Claude was born in Vernon, a small north Texas town, one of two sons of schoolteachers, along with his brother John, who also became a notable periodontist in Wichita Falls, Texas. Claude attended The University of Texas at Austin, served in the US Army, graduated from University of Texas Dental School in Houston, and received his periodontal training from Northwestern University in 1949. During dental school, he was mentored by Ralph A. Cooley, DDS, the father of the future world-renowned heart surgeon, Denton C. Cooley, MD. This was the common theme of Claude's life: surrounding himself with exceptional and dedicated friends, colleagues, and advisors. He married the former Blanche Eaton, daughter of Marquis Eaton who became president of the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants and was instrumental in developing the first CPA exam. Claude and Blanche gave scholarships in his honor to accounting students at The University of Texas at Austin.

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Claude was a superb clinician who published several innovative periodontal surgical procedures, co-authored, or contributed to several textbooks, and designed the "Nabers probe" to facilitate assessment of furcation involvement. From his clinical practice in San Antonio, Claude was widely sought after for courses to leading US periodontal programs including the University of Pennsylvania, Harvard University, University of Michigan, Boston University, and several others. His eloquence as a speaker also took him throughout the world, including South America, Australia, England, France, Ireland, Japan, and South Africa.

One of us, during periodontal training, sat in the front row of a lecture by Dr. Nabers on managing challenging cases at an AAP Annual Meeting. I was inspired at multiple times during his lecture, but what imprinted in my brain was Dr. Nabers' discussion about his approach to maintenance care and its importance for success of all cases.

Claude gave back to the profession that had given him so much. In 2008, along with Blanche, they established The Claude and Blanche Nabers Visiting Professorship in Periodontics, which is held annually at The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston Dental School. Claude was personally involved in the selection of the lecturers.

Communications with Claude were preferably in person over lunch as his guest, or easiest by telephone in later years. A telephone call always ended in those years with "Gotta go," which usually meant that Blanche was calling him. Every conversation with Claude was filled with quality information that was caring on a personal level, up to date, and useful.

Just weeks before his death and nearing 96, he asked for articles on salivary diagnostics and the association of Alzheimer disease and periodontitis. His mind was

sharp, and his heart was still beating to the tune of service to his church, family, and profession. A balanced life well lived, and a role model for our profession. In addition to Blanche, his wife of 68 years, Claude is survived by two sons, six grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren.

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