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# Corydon Palmer Dental Society

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Dr. David Liddle

Each spring, as the leadership of this society is passed from one president to another, we have cause to reflect upon the society's gavel, beautifully handcrafted of porcelain with gold inlay, and its maker, Dr. David Liddle. What motivated this man to devote one hundred hours of his life to this symbol of leadership and purpose? For those of us who didn't have the opportunity to know him, what was he like and how did his career shape our present-day society? Recently the editor and CPDS president met with Ms. Suzette Liddle, Dr. Liddle's only surviving child, for an interview and the chance to chronicle Dr. Liddle's career.

Dr. David Liddle was born in poverty in 1897 in Sharon, PA. Working on the railroad to finance his education, he studied mechanical engineering at Ohio Northern University before transferring to the University of Pittsburgh. There, he changed his course of study and graduated from the school of dentistry in 1924 as valedictorian. He then established his general practice in Warren in the Union Savings Building (now Bank One).

Dr. Liddle had been the first senior student to have an orthodontic patient. He later returned to the University of Pittsburgh in 1935 as its first orthodontic post-graduate student. Following receipt of his specialty degree, he continued to practice general dentistry as well as orthodontics. Through this combination practice he discovered a unique technique that proved to impact mainstream orthodontic thought: the selective use of second molar extraction as a major component of the treatment program in some orthodontic cases. He pioneered and documented this procedure and was published internationally. He was called upon to lecture throughout the United States and Canada. The procedure is still a viable option in orthodontic treatment today and it certainly changed orthodontic thought at the time. Dr. Liddle broke the mold of what up until that point might have been a "cookbook" approach to orthodontics. His research proved that there were alternative

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approaches to consider and that each case should be thoroughly examined so that a careful selection of treatment may be tailored to the individual's needs. He also developed innovative techniques for bridges and dentures.

It was not until the 1970s that Dr. Liddle limited his practice to orthodontics. In 1974 he was presented the C. Edward Martinek Award by the Great Lakes Orthodontic Society. In 1981 he was awarded the Ohio Dental Association's Achievement Award.

Dr. Liddle served for 20 years on Corydon Palmer Dental Society's program committee. He was historian of the society and compiled a scrapbook on Dr. Corydon Palmer and the early days of the society. He was instrumental in securing a set of handmade dental implements from the family of Dr. Corydon Palmer and worked for many years developing the historical dental display seen annually at the Canfield Fair. He was a three term president of the Warren Dental Society.

Dr. Liddle's office decorum was casual and the practice had many rural patients. If children had to wait too long to see the doctor, he brought them back into the laboratory where they could make toy cars or animals in plastic molds. He loved children and loved to make them laugh with jokes and comedy. (As a child he unsuccessfully ran away to join the circus himself). In his advanced years, he insisted that despite popular thought, patients came to him not because he was young and good looking, but because of his special procedure!

A veritable legend, Dr. Liddle practiced dentistry until his death at age 87 in 1984. At that time he was the oldest practicing dentist in the area and one of the oldest practicing dentists in the country. More than 150 patients were under his care at the time of his death. Sheer love of the profession and his patients kept him going.

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He enjoyed helping people and charged very little for his services, particularly in later years since he had "already made money." He was grateful for the lifestyle dentistry had provided him. Having spent his childhood in poverty, he appreciated that dentistry was so good to him, even during the depression.

A perfectionist with bountiful energy and great digital dexterity, he crafted the CPDS gavel, made puzzles out of metal, was a woodworker, and landscaper (he planted and cared for 100 apple trees and a substantial rose garden on the fifteen acre family property on Mines Road in Howland.) After becoming a father at age 46, he built an outdoor gymnasium and lighted winter sled run.

Dr. Liddle married Helen Brewster in 1940. Helen worked in the office from 1940-1944. The Liddles had two children; David and Suzette. David became a podiatrist and was killed in a tragic snowmobile accident in 1971.

Suzette and her father had a very close relationship. Her childhood memories are of a playful father. She never needed orthodontics, but she was the only one of her friends who had a bridge after her baby teeth were knocked out! Suzette loved working with her father in 1969 and again in 1980-84 as receptionist, chairside assistant, office manager and chauffeur all in one. One memory that makes her chuckle is how he once filled one of his own cavities with a diamond which he proudly displayed to all of his friends and patients.

Special dental friends included Dr. Charles White, Dr. Leroy Hoffman, Dr. Leon Schnur, and Dr. Herschel Cooper. Highly recommended, referred, respected, and loved, he attracted a crowd of colleagues and well-wishers at the last society function he attended in 1983. Even then there was a twinkle in his eye and a sparkle in his personality.

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Thank you Dr. Liddle, for your legacy of excellence, creativity,  
commitment and fun!