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A Life Well Lived: Professor Michele Leonardi Darby, BSDH, MS

Michele Darby is gone. She was my friend... and not just a friend to me, but to the entire dental hygiene community throughout the world. Michele Darby devoted her entire career to the improvement, recognition and respect of dental hygienists in every corner of the globe.

Did you know that Michele received both a Certificate in Dental Assisting and a Certificate in Dental Hygiene at the beginning of her career? She was also one of the early dental hygiene educators who received not only a Bachelor of Science in Dental Hygiene but also a Master of Science in Dental Hygiene. She graduated from Columbia University, which was the first university to offer a Master of Science degree in Dental Hygiene to prepare "teachers." Michele was one of several wonderful academicians and leaders who graduated from that program.

Michele conducted the majority of her career at Old Dominion University in the Gene W. Hirschfeld School of Dental Hygiene. She handled several roles in the Division of Dental Hygiene, from serving as Chair of the Dental Hygiene Program to her role as Graduate Program Director. She earned the rank of Full Professor in 1986 and was also recognized with a professorship, Eminent Professor and Eminent Scholar from 1986 throughout her remaining career.

Michele will best be known for her textbook, *Dental Hygiene Theory and Practice*, which is in its fourth edition. Along with her co-author, Dr. Margaret (Peg) Walsh, she instilled the concept of the Human Needs Model. Both Michele and Peg were early proponents of critical thinking in dental hygiene education and practice. But Michele also wrote a groundbreaking book with her colleague, Professor Denise Bowen, titled *Research Methods for Oral Health Professionals*. The book, published in 1980, can still be found on my bookshelf, worn and tattered but still used frequently! Michele was an early proponent for research and its necessity for moving the profession forward. She mentored faculty, students and professionals in research methods, writing, and publishing throughout her career.



Michele Darby at the 3rd North American/Global Dental Hygiene Research Conference, October, 2014
Pictured: Second row (left to right): Linda Kramer, Ann Spolarich, Denise Bowen, Jane Forrest
First row (left to right): Michele Darby, Margaret (Peg) Walsh



Michele Darby (right) mentoring Anna Hilla, BSDH (left), a first year graduate student in Dental Hygiene Education at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill School of Dentistry

Michele was passionate about service as well. She was the editor of the publication *Dental Hygiene* and also *Educational Directions*, both produced by the ADHA. She also served on the Editorial Review Board for the *Journal of Dental Hygiene*.

for most of her career and she was also the Associate Editor for the International Journal of Dental Hygiene for seven years. She was a leader in the field of publishing with more than 50 publications in peer-reviewed journals.

Michele was always an advocate for global oral health. In 1981, Darby was part of a delegation of visiting professionals who visited the People's Republic of China, sharing dental hygiene concepts and techniques with Chinese dentists. Later in 2010 she was a Fulbright Scholar and she spent six months in Irbid, Jordan, at the Jordan University of Science and Technology. There she provided training to faculty and students and served as a curriculum consultant.

Michele received many prestigious awards throughout the years. But aside from all the accolades that she received and rightly deserved, Mi-

chele will be remembered as someone who gave the gift of time. She gave her time to her wonderful family, husband Dennis and children, Devan and Blake. She gave her time to making the world a better place for dental hygienists. She gave her time to write textbooks and scientific papers that will contribute to the dental hygiene profession for years to come. She gave her time to mentor graduate students, speak at professional meetings, consult with oral health care companies, and she gave her time to think about the future of dental hygiene. Michele was excited about dental hygiene in our country and abroad. She will be greatly missed... but her legacy will live on everyday as her work continues to inspire dental hygienists around the world!

Sincerely,

Rebecca Wilder, RDH, BS, MS
Editor-in-Chief, Journal of Dental Hygiene