

## **Dr. Robert Lee Vanarsdall, Jr.** **(February 07, 1940 – January 01, 2017)**

Robert Lee Vanarsdall Jr., 76, loving father and grandfather, pioneer and innovator in orthodontics, passionate teacher, loyal friend, world traveler, navy man, fantastic storyteller, and all-around great person, passed away on January 1, 2017.

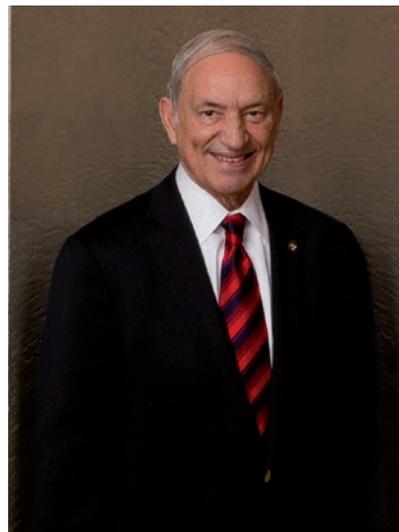
Born in Crewe, Virginia and known by most as “Slick,” as much for his engaging personality as for his winning style. The story that was told began with Slick buying his clothes at the local men store, Kincheloe’s. In Crewe, being a small town, this was the only place to buy the local styles. Slick was a neat dresser and always wanted the latest styles. As he purchased more clothes, the salesman began to call him Slick. When the other guys his age would come in to buy clothes, the salesmen would recommend what “Slick” had purchased. Hence, began the life of nickname “Slick.”

He received his undergraduate degree from William and Mary, where he met the love of his life, his wife Sandra Hoffman, whom he married in 1962. He served in the U.S. Navy as a line officer beginning in 1962. In the late 1960s, he moved from service to his country to service of patients, receiving his dental degree from the Medical College of Virginia ('70) and his postdoctoral specialty training in both Orthodontics and Periodontics at the University of Pennsylvania ('72, '73).

At Penn, Slick was a key component in the Orthodontics Department for more than 44 years. He played a pivotal role in developing the Department’s reputation for innovative clinical instruction, including development of the dual Orthodontics/Periodontics Postdoctoral Program. He served as Chairman of the Department of Periodontics, Department of Pediatric Dentistry, and directed Orthodontics for more than 25 years (from 1982 to 2011), all while serving as a professor and maintaining a private practice for more than four decades, continuing to teach and practice until his death.

Among his many honors and awards, he was awarded the Penn Dental Medicine Alumni Award of Merit in 2015. Slick was also due to receive the Joseph Jarabak International Teaching and Research Award from the AAO Foundation at the AAO Annual Session in San Diego, April 2017.

He is survived by his son, Lee Vanarsdall (wife Rachel, of Silver Spring, Maryland); daughters Lesley Vanarsdall (of Narberth, Pennsylvania) and Ashley Vanarsdall Burke (husband Brendan, of Washington, D.C.); five grandchildren, Jeff and Becky Vanarsdall, Grayson and Crosby Jason, and Emerson Lee Burke; his brother Joseph E. Vanarsdall (Chesterfield, Virginia); and his sister Barbara V. Ragland (Crewe, Virginia). He is preceded in death by his beloved wife of nearly 50 years, Sandra Hoffman Vanarsdall; parents, Robert Lee and Margie Jenkins Vanarsdall; and grandson Christopher Jackson Burke.



## In remembrance of Dr. Robert Vanarsdall

### *A few words about a man who had many things to say*

I have had the privilege of knowing many of the orthodontic “greats,” people who made an impact on the development of the orthodontic specialty. Certainly, Robert Lee “Slick” Vanarsdall fit into that group of individuals who was larger than life. From a professional standpoint, his contributions in educating orthodontists on the importance of periodontal considerations were seminal. As adult orthodontics became more in vogue, it was Slick who constantly harped on the need for a thorough periodontal evaluation as well as an understanding of the biologic limits of tooth movement. He focused on transverse dental changes and the potential to cause significant damage by moving outside the biologic limits of existing bone and soft tissue. His were some of the first lectures at national meetings on surgical arch expansion as well as on periodontal procedures to augment the alveolus and soft tissues. These aspects are well documented in his many articles, lectures, and the books to which he contributed, including, “Orthodontics: Current Principles and Techniques” which he coedited starting in 1994 initially with Tom Graber and ending in 2016 with Greg Huang, Kate Vig, and me. He taught us all so much.

On the less known side of this accomplished and acclaimed professional were his many supporting roles for others – a true gentleman. When somebody shared a need with Slick, be it a staff member, resident, colleague, or neighbor, he was always willing to help. This character trait was seen not only in his immediate circle but also was truly worldwide. Slick traveled to many far away destinations to share his knowledge and also his enthusiasm for education and patient care. It was not unusual for him to perform a surgical procedure in a foreign clinic, answering the call of a colleague who needed help from “the master.” It was not unusual for Slick to share extra time with students and provide his own personal support far away from the view and approbation of others. He was an individual “who can’t say no” up until his past weeks on this earth. In the days immediately before his death, he was still organizing courses for his friends. Author, teacher, mentor, humanitarian, we all were bettered by his presence.

Respectfully submitted:

*LEE W. GRABER, D.D.S., M.S., M.S., PH.D.*  
Co-Editor with Dr. Vanarsdall  
Secretary General, World Federation of Orthodontists  
Past President, American Association of Orthodontists  
Past President, World Federation of Orthodontists

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### *He was our teacher*

He taught us by the care his gave to his patients. He taught us by coming to our towns to speak to our referral dentists about interdisciplinary dentistry; he taught us to respect everyone. He taught us to share our clinical findings to anybody seeking the truth, and he showed us how to do it with grace, humor, and compassion. Orthodontics is a better because of Slick Vanarsdall and so is the world.

*BILL NORTHWAY, DDS MS*  
Traverse City, Michigan

***An exemplary educator, a Southern gentleman, and a good friend***

He comfortably answered to “Slick” by everyone, but he was always Dr. “V” to me.

Will and I lectured many times at Penn. Dr. V always found time to take us out to dinner and we all laughed the whole time every time. On a teaching outing at Penn, I walked by Dr. V’s office and decided to quickly step into say hello. He was not there but I saw this 3-foot plus stack of correspondence on his desk. His secretary commented that “his desk is always that way and he knows exactly where to find any one of the papers he is looking for.”

To me, Dr. V was a perfect mix between being an exemplary educator, a Southern gentleman, and a good friend. He even had a dress code for residents that was impressive.

**LARRY ANDREWS, DDS**  
University of California at San Francisco  
San Diego, California

***A pioneer in the area of multidisciplinary care***

Dr. Vanarsdall had a profound impact on the orthodontic specialty. He was a pioneer in the area of multidisciplinary care. His dual training in periodontics and orthodontics provided him with the background to almost single-handedly move the specialty from a discipline limited to adolescent care to the routine management of the adult orthodontic patient. He demonstrated that it was not only safe to treat the periodontally compromised adult but also that proper management of the patient’s occlusal needs actually improved the patient’s long-term periodontal prognosis. His understanding of the concept of posterior bite collapse, the role of occlusal appliances in managing multidisciplinary cases, and the significance of occlusal adjustment by selective grinding to control occlusal trauma was groundbreaking and a message he took internationally.

Dr. Vanarsdall can also be credited for the current consensus that the orthodontist’s areas of diagnostic and therapeutic responsibility include the transverse dimension. His early position that the transverse dimension is of foremost importance is now widely accepted and helped move orthodontics from a two- to three-dimensional specialty.

A contemporary view of orthodontic care includes an assessment of the entire stomatologic system. The cervical spine, the upper airway, the temporomandibular joints, and the craniofacial structures are assessed and treated by a multidisciplinary team. Dr. Vanarsdall is one of the handfuls of gifted clinical educators responsible for this evolution.

During his long tenure as Chairman of the Department of Orthodontics at the University of Pennsylvania, Dr. Vanarsdall had a highly inspirational and aspirational impact on hundreds of orthodontic residents. It is clear that many of those individuals contributed to the evolution of his early conversations related to “Posterior Bite Collapse” to the current conversation of the significance of “Stomatologic Collapse” affecting the health of our patients.

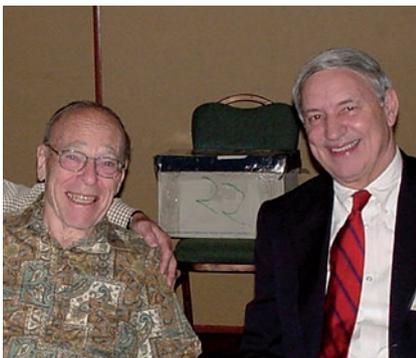
Thank you Dr. Vanarsdall,

**NORMAND BOUCHER, DDS**  
University of Pennsylvania  
Wayne, Pennsylvania

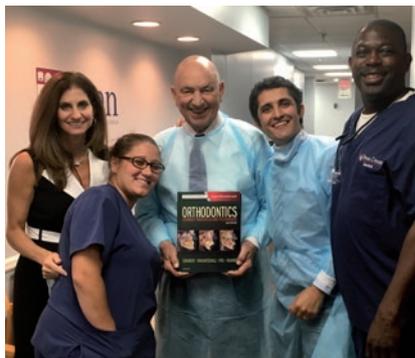
**A shining example of courage for all of us**

When we remember Slick Vanarsdall, our thoughts invariably go to his significant and innumerable contributions to the specialties of both orthodontics and periodontics. All who have been his students read his articles, attended his lectures, and/or interacted with him over the years know of his excellent clinical expertise and of his many contributions to the education of generations of orthodontists and periodontists. Dr. Vanarsdall was a world-class teacher, clinician, researcher, and lecturer who is sorely missed by the specialties of orthodontics and periodontics. He wore all these hats and more. However, his most remarkable and endearing attribute was his “strength of character” - his unfathomable optimism in the face of adversity. Slick gave every one of us who called him “friend” a very valuable road map of how to handle life’s struggles with grace, courage, and a smile. He told me many times that he could not worry about his health issue because he treasured each and every moment that he had with his friends, his students, his colleagues, and his patients. Slick was a shining example of courage for all of us. He set a very high standard for each of us as we go through the trials and tribulations of our lives - and go through them we will. His “standard” was to handle all that life throws at you with willpower and with grace. We must all, as a lasting tribute to Slick, attempt to live our lives by emulating his courage and his strength of character.

*JIM VADEN, DDS, MS  
Cookeville, Tennessee*



*Slick with Tom Graber, planning the next edition of Graber, Swain and Vanarsdall’s text book in the 90’s.*



*Slick in private practice with Dolores, Connie, Ignacio and Derrick.*



*Slick sharing thoughts with colleague and friend, Bill Northway.*



*Left to right: Slick, Lorenz Moser, David Musich, Raffaele Spena, and Mauro Cozzani. Presenting at the International Interdisciplinary Dental Conference in Italy, 2007.*



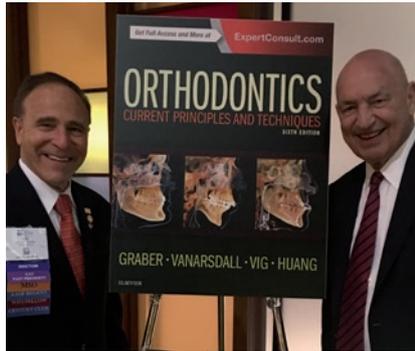
*Slick and Sheldon Peck. December of 2010.*



*With Ignacio Blasi at the AAO in Hawaii, 2012.*



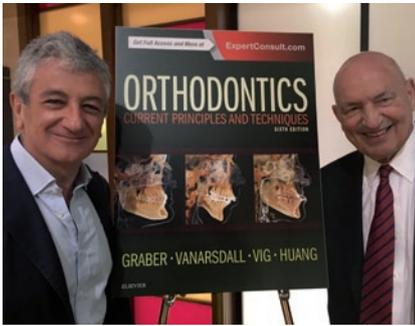
*Dolores Dodds, Dave Musich and Slick at the MASO meeting.*



*Slick with Lee Graber. Recently published 6th Edition of Graber, Vanarsdall, Vig, Huang in 2016.*



*Left to right: Ignacio Blasi, David Musich, Slick, Greg Huang and Raffaele Spena. Recently published 6th Edition of Graber, Vanarsdall, Vig, Huang in 2016.*



*Slick with Raffaele Spena at the AAO in Orlando, 2016.*



*Slick enjoying time with friend Jim Vaden at the AAO in Orlando, 2016.*



*Family photo from the 100th Anniversary of the Department in October, 2016. Bottom row, left to right: Rebecca (granddaughter), Ashley (daughter), Slick, Lesley (daughter). Top row, left to right: Rachel (daughter-in-law), Lee Vanarsdall (son).*



*At the International University of Catalonia, 2012.*



*Slick, delivering a class at the International University of Catalonia, 2012.*