



### **Kenneth D. Rudd, February 10, 1916-June 14, 2013**

By his own admission, Kenneth Dielman Rudd decided to become a dentist for the money. He told his son he discovered the earning potential while working as a meat-cutter in Marion, Kan., where he was raised. The store was beneath a dental office, and Rudd, needing his wisdom teeth pulled, went upstairs for the procedure.

“He extracted all four in only 20 minutes at \$5 per tooth,” Rudd said. “It didn't take long for me to figure out that he had earned in 20 minutes what took me almost a week to earn; I knew I was in the wrong business.”

By the time of his death Friday at 97, he had contributed much more to the field than he received.

Rudd earned a doctorate of dental surgery from the University of Missouri School of Dentistry at Kansas City in 1943 and was busy establishing a private practice there when the U.S. entered World War II. He was drafted by the Army and taught prosthodontics. When the war ended, he resumed building his practice but joined the Air Force when the Korean War started.

The Air Force gave him the opportunity to “work with new materials and techniques,” his son Kenneth E. Rudd said. It was “beyond anything else anyone was doing. Back then, the medical community said, 'We do it this way because that's the way we've always done things.' But a lot of his friends and colleagues were intrigued.”

He used the then-new material ticonium, teaching others how to use it to make removable dentures, bridges and other prosthodontics, his son said. “He learned and passed it along; he was looking for a way to make them fit better, feel better and last longer.”

Rudd retired from the Air Force in 1975, finishing his career as director of dental service at Wilford Hall Medical Center.

He also provided care to the original seven Mercury astronauts, Ken E. Rudd said. “He was in command of the dental clinic at Wilford Hall at the time the space program started, and the astronauts were all here for training at Brooks (AFB),” including John Glenn, his son said. “He brought him home to dinner one night.”

Rudd started working at the University of Texas Health Science Center in San Antonio as a tenured full professor in the department of prosthodontics, later becoming associate dean of continuing education and ultimately professor emeritus.

“He ended up working most of his time in the continuing education department, teaching dentists who have already graduated and teaching about new products,” his son said. “Not just at UT, but around the world.... He had groups of friends in England, Mexico, Spain, Sweden, China, Japan,” where he had been invited to pass on his knowledge in prosthodontics.