

# I.B. BENDER REMEMBERED

## Mahmoud Torabinejad

On Saturday morning June the 7<sup>th</sup>, Dr. Israel B. Bender (known as I.B. to friends and colleagues) did not feel well and was taken to the hospital by his son (Dr. Andrew Bender) for a check up. While the staff prepared him for an endoscopic examination, he died of heart failure.

Birth and death signify the beginning and end of a Marathon known to us as life on earth. Everyone runs this race at his or her pace. Some have a great start and an excellent finish. Some start late and have a good finish. And then there are people who never get started, living life without a plan, acting as observers. Still others have a purpose; they lead the way for themselves and their fellow runners and come out as champions. Is there not a difference between being alive and having a life? Let us examine the life of our beloved endodontic colleague I.B. and see how he ran his Marathon.

Israel B. Bender was born in 1905 in Czarist Russia. Because of political unrest, his family decided to leave their homeland and come to the United States in 1914. He worked his way through school and graduated from high school in 1925. He received his dental degree from the School of Dental Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania in 1930. Dr. Bender was accepted in the same year as a dental resident at the Jewish Hospital, later to become Albert Einstein Medical Center. He was hired as an instructor in the department of oral medicine in 1942 and became assistant professor in the same department in 1954. He later went on to become professor and chairman of the Department of Dental Medicine at Einstein. He was Professor Emeritus and actively engaged in research and teaching until the end.

Dr. Bender co-authored the classic text on Dental Pulp with Dr. Samuel Seltzer. This book went through several printings and has been translated into several foreign languages. The Russian edition (1971) was the only dental text to be translated into this language. The fourth edition, edited by Drs. Ken Hargreaves and Harold Goodis, was published last year and is one of the major texts used in many advanced programs in endodontics. Dr. Bender published more than 130 articles on endodontics and oral medicine. Last month, he and his son (Andrew Bender) published an article on diabetes and the dental pulp in the *Journal of Endodontics*. He has been the recipient of numerous major grants including several from the Department of U.S. Public Health. He served as an advisor for on the editorial board of *Journal of Endodontics* for many years.

Dr. Bender served as President of the American Association of Endodontists (1972–3), the International Association of Dental Research (1956–9), and a Director of the American Board of Endodontics (1978–84). He was a Fellow in the College of Physicians and a member of the Honorary Society of Sigma Xi. He was

a Trustee of The Fourth Annual National Security Seminar, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks in Pennsylvania.

Dr. Bender received the Louis I. Grossman award in 1978, the most prestigious award conferred by the American Association of Endodontists in research; the Distinguished Service Award from the University of North Carolina in 1980; the Pulp Biology Award from the International Association of Dental Research (Pulp Biology Group) in 1981; the Edgar D. Coolidge Award for leadership and exemplary dedication to Endodontics and Dentistry in 1987; the Ralph F. Sommer Award in 1993; and the Louis I. Grossman International Award conferred by the French Endodontic Society in 1990. In September of 1989, Albert Einstein Medical Center in Philadelphia dedicated the I.B. Bender Division of Endodontics and I.B. Bender Research Endowment Fund. To recognize his contribution to full time teaching, the AAE established the I.B. Bender Lifetime Educator Award in 2001.

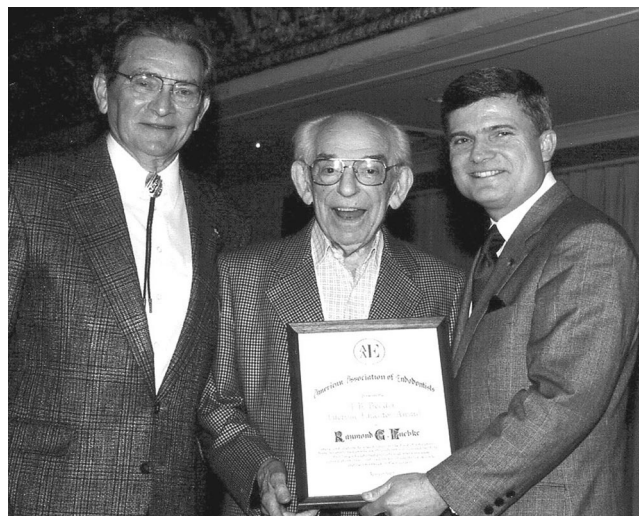


FIG 1. Dr. Bender (center) assists Dr. Jeffrey W. Hutter in presenting the first I. B. Bender Award to Dr. Raymond G. Luebke (left) at the 2002 Annual Session in Chicago.

He was married for 68 years to his only wife (Lillian Bender) who died in 1998. He loved and respected her very much. Once he told one of their children, “your mother is very intuitive; when I want to know about someone, I ask her!” His remaining family members include a son (Andrew—neurologist), a daughter, Susan, who works at Manhattan School of Music, and several grandchildren. He was a great family man who, when asked by them, would

say, “my only regret is that I didn’t spend more time with my children.”



FIG 2. Dr. James L. Guttman (center) and former Executive Director Irma S. Kudo present Dr. Bender with an honorarium announcing the creation of a new AAE award in his name.

Here is what some of his friends and colleagues tell us about this legendary figure in our Association:

W.H. Auden and other sages have made the observation that the great liberators of the mankind of the world have not necessarily been the political and military leaders but those dedicated scientists who have given mankind such great benefits in the reduction and elimination of so many dread diseases and in the great reduction of pain and human suffering. Dr. Bender qualifies as one of these dedicated scientists. (Jake Freedland)

A crowd of students approaches this diminutive giant to encounter a legend. They expect to stand aside and observe but find themselves first enticed by a joke and then challenged by a new way of looking at an old problem. Where does he find the vitality,

the energy, and the enthusiasm? The question is rhetorical; he gets his energy from us and we from him. We are all his students, and our lives will never be the same. (Dan Green)

When the AAE was formed it was only natural for I.B. to be one of the first to join. I.B. has always been known to stand up for what is right. (Louis Grossman)

No one has contributed more to our specialty than I.B. He established biological principles that now form the very foundation on which our specialty stands. He has also enriched us with philosophical concepts that will be passed on for generations to come. (Jack Harrison)

When you walked next to I.B. at an endodontic meeting, it was like being with a movie star—always being stopped for photographs and greetings. Each person he had taught and influenced adored him. His knowledge went beyond dentistry to literature, music, art, history, politics and religion. He was a man who never stopped thinking, and continued to stimulate his colleagues and students. (Lou Rossman)

Dr. Louis Grossman taught me the technique and Dr. I.B. Bender taught me the biology of endodontics. I.B. justly earned his title as the Father of Biologic Endodontics. (George Stewart)

No other person has been a charter member, an AAE president, a recipient of the Coolidge, Grossman and Sommer awards, and a guiding light for the *Journal of Endodontics*—and no one again ever will be. I doubt if I.B. considers himself perfect. Which is to say he’s human; and it is that very humanity that makes him so likeable. (Henry J. Van Hassel)

For myself, I have known I.B. since my first research presentation as a graduate student in 1976. He was a regular participant in the Annual sessions of the AAE. Whenever he was asked about his attendance at the annual sessions he would say, “They couldn’t hold the meeting without me!” During my visits with him, I found him kind, respectful, cordial, knowledgeable, honest, persistent and above all, a man with a good sense of humor. We are all going to miss him next year in Anaheim. I would like to thank his parents for bringing this invaluable gift to the United States and his family for unselfishly sharing him with us.

We can go on and on about his family, accomplishments, friends and memories. He has an amazing life story. He ran a tremendous Marathon with a great start and an excellent finish, and joins some of our previous giant runners, including Louis Grossman and Irving Naidorf. He was a relentless teacher and, as such, he would expect us to simulate his run if we could.

**I praise our God who kept us alive and gave us an opportunity to be with I.B. and celebrate the life of this special icon and giant.**