

BU MOURNS DENTISTRY DEAN SPENCER FRANKL

REMEMBERED FOR DECADES OF INNOVATION, LEADERSHIP, AND KINDNESS

BY ART JAHNKE

AS DEAN OF the Goldman School of Dental Medicine for thirty years, Spencer Frankl led the young school to national prominence, expanding educational, public service, and research projects. Frankl, the longest-serving dean at any dental school in the country, died on October 20. He had announced last July that he would step down July 1, 2008.

Frankl was a man of uncommon vision, says Aram Chobanian (HON.'06), president emeritus of Boston University, former Medical Campus provost and dean of the School of Medicine, and a colleague for four decades. Chobanian cites particularly SDM's evolving education. "He looked at dentistry in many new ways," he says. "He became a leader in simulation methods of teaching."

In sharpening the school's focus on experiential learning, Frankl built its community involvement, working with Boston Medical Center and national organizations to offer dental care to low-income and underserved populations. A grant from the National Institutes of Health helped fund SDM's Northeast Center for Research to Evaluate and Eliminate Dental Disparities, and funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation established the New England Dental Access Project to recruit and train minority dentists.

He also strengthened

SDM research, says President Emeritus John Silber (HON.'95), who appointed him dean. "Spencer's deanship was notable for his unrelenting and highly successful efforts to build the research capabilities of the School of Dental Medicine and to integrate its programs into Boston Medical Center," says Silber. "He emphasized the pursuit of excellence in advanced medical research and in the compassionate care for patients."

But mourning his death, faculty and staff speak most often of his collegial qualities. "He deeply appreciated the talents of the school's faculty, staff, students, alumni, and board of visitors, and the many friends to whom he listened attentively as they provided him with many creative ideas," says Kathleen Ferland, director of SDM administration, who worked with Frankl for thirty-five years. "His vision and love for people in dental medicine will live far into the future."

"He cared so much for his troops," says Thomas Kilgore, an SDM professor and associate dean of advanced education. "At almost every faculty and staff meeting he said, 'Our people are the dental school's most important asset.'"

Frankl graduated from Temple University School of Dentistry in 1958 and completed a postdoctoral residency in pediatric



dentistry at the Children's National Medical Center in Washington, D.C., in 1959. In 1964 he was recruited to the faculty from Tufts by Henry M. Goldman, SDM's founding dean, to create the department of pediatric dentistry at the year-old school. He held various administrative titles within the school, including assistant dean for dental health affairs and associate dean. While associate dean, he initiated, planned, and developed the basic D.M.D. program (the school had previously offered only advanced degrees) and secured a \$1.1 million federal construction grant to enlarge the physical plant to accommodate it.

In 1976, he was appointed SDM dean designate, and in 1977 he became dean and deputy director of Boston University Medical Center.

"When he announced his retirement, I think he felt comfortable that he was leaving the school in good hands," says Kilgore. "Of course, he built our team, so the credit for what we do in the future ultimately goes to Spencer."