

Leena Peck, 1945-2019

Leena Peck, Boston orthodontist, educator and philanthropist, died peacefully at the age of 73 years in Helsinki, Finland, on January 13, 2019. Death was caused by complications from an ALS-related neurodegenerative condition.

Dr Leena Kataja Peck was born in Finland on May 27, 1945, to Paavo Kataja and Kyllikki Luomala in the village of Kuortane. Soon after her birth, her family moved to Kivijärvi where her father, returning from difficult wartime duty, set up a sawmill. He quickly became the town's largest employer, producing a range of goods from toothpicks to furniture-grade plywood. Leena was the second of 4 children. In their formative years, her 3 brothers often reminded her of the need to develop practical skills, which served Leena well in her life's path.

Leena showed fierce determination and distinguishing aptitudes from her earliest girlhood days. She skipped 2 primary school grades in recognition of her precocious learning abilities. In high school, during a regular visit with her physician, she asked, "What must I do to become a doctor?" Her contemplative doctor, a woman, answered, "Don't go to medical school; medicine is too hard on the life of a woman these days. Instead, become a dentist and you will have it all: the rewards of professionalism and a satisfying personal life." Immediately, Leena prepared herself for a career in dentistry.

Leena was accepted at the Institute of Dentistry of the University of Helsinki and earned her baccalaureate degree in 1965 and her doctorate (*magna cum laude*) in 1969. She then was granted a position in children's dentistry at a public health clinic in Zürich, Switzerland, which she held for 2 years. There she discovered the joys of orthodontics. Her fascination with the analytical methods and anatomic problem solving in orthodontics led her to inquire on her return to Finland about orthodontic specialty residencies. One of the most respected orthodontists in Europe, Kalevi Koski of Turku, Finland, a former student and colleague with Coenraad F.A. Moorrees at Harvard University and Forsyth Dental Center, told the ambitious Leena Peck that she should apply to the University of Minnesota. At the time, that graduate residency was arguably the best clinical program



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in orthodontics in the U.S. and was led by the eminent Robert J. Isaacson. Leena hastily applied with the blessings of Professor Koski, who provided a laudatory recommendation letter. Dr Isaacson invited Leena into his highly ranked graduate program, and in 1974 she moved excitedly from Helsinki to Minneapolis. In recognition of her promise as an educator, Leena won a Fulbright Scholarship and a prestigious Helen Taussig grant of the American Association of University Women to support her graduate studies at Minnesota. After earning her MSD degree in 1976, Leena returned to Finland to initiate orthodontic consultancies at various Municipal Medical Clinics in southern Finland, to engage in teaching and research at the University of Helsinki, and to join the highly respected orthodontic specialty practice of Dr Liisa Santavuori in Tampere. Furthermore, she was instrumental in organizing the first orthognathic surgical treatment team in Finland, drawing on her extensive surgical experience in Minneapolis.

In 1973, Leena attended the Third International Orthodontic Congress in London. There, she was introduced to Sheldon Peck, a young orthodontist from Boston who was a Congress speaker. They enjoyed sharing time at the Congress banquet which they attended together. In serendipitous fashion, they met

again in 1985 and 6 months later Leena and Sheldon were married in Boston, which became Leena's new home.

To join Sheldon's thriving orthodontics practice, Leena needed an American dental degree. Therefore, she matriculated into the Advanced Standing Program at the Boston University School of Dental Medicine and earned her DMD with honors in 1989.

By 1993, Leena had a full and vibrant life: mother of 2 young children, Mark and Anya; partner in the Peck and Peck practice of orthodontics in Boston and Newton, Massachusetts; educator as an assistant clinical professor of orthodontics at the Harvard School of Dental Medicine. Despite these commitments, she devotedly continued her annual work with her Helsinki colleagues to collect clinical records and data for the legendary University of Helsinki longitudinal child growth study initiated more than 20 years earlier. Many of Leena's early publications were with co-workers, particularly her longtime friends Marjatta Nyström and Marjut Evälahti, using this seminal database.

Leena Peck was author or coauthor of more than 40 peer-reviewed original research articles on subjects ranging from craniofacial growth and dental maturity to dental anomaly patterns. She also researched facial resemblance in families and facial esthetics. Leena had a keen 3-dimensional visual sense, which found great utility in her creative planning of surgical orthodontic treatments. She was valued for many years as consultant in orthognathic surgery at the Department of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery at Boston's Massachusetts General Hospital. From 1990 to 2004, Leena was an associate in dental surgery in the Department of Surgery, Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, Boston.

She was a member of many professional organizations both in the U.S. and in Europe. The one she was most involved with and most proud of was the Edward H. Angle Society of Orthodontists (EHASO). Leena was selected for membership in the prestigious Angle Society in 1990. In 1993, she was corecipient of the Edward H. Angle Research Prize for excellence in published orthodontic research. By 2003, Dr Peck became the first woman elected president of a component (Angle East) of the EHASO in its 73-year history. In 2010, she was chosen by her colleagues in Angle East to receive the coveted Distinguished Service Award.

Leena's civic activities were manifold. She served as president of the charitable and cultural Finlandia Foundation of Boston in 2013-2014. She was a key organizer of Suomi Koulu of New England, which provides a school setting in the Boston area for the teaching of the Finnish language and culture. Despite her busy schedule, Leena was an avid supporter of classical music, as a frequent concert sponsor, a performer on violin and piano, concertgoer, and member of the Harvard Musical Association.

Leena's natural visual esthetic sense facilitated her easy embrace of Sheldon's serious hobby of collecting old European art. Together they assembled one of the finest collections in private hands of rare Dutch and Flemish old-master drawings. Leena contributed greatly in their scholarly art research, regularly applying her broad foreign language skills and sharp eye. In 2017, Leena and Sheldon gave more than 134 masterworks by Dutch artists from the 16th to 19th centuries to the Ackland Art Museum in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. The Peck collection included many important art works, such as 7 remarkable one-of-a kind sketches by Rembrandt. This philanthropic action by the Pecks along with an endowment to fund a named curatorship and future acquisitions was the largest contribution ever recorded for the museum. At the time, Leena and Sheldon commented that the visual discrimination skills they cultivated in diagnosing and solving problems in clinical orthodontics helped them immeasurably in the hunt for and authentication of rare works by the European old masters.

In addition to her husband Sheldon in Boston, Leena leaves son Mark in Helsinki and daughter Anya in New York City. Two brothers survive her, Dr Matti Kataja and Erkki Kataja, both in Finland, along with their families. She was predeceased by another brother Hannu Kataja in Finland.

Dr Leena Peck led an exemplary and vivacious life, tragically cut short by an incurable illness. She was a beautiful person in every sense of the word. She was loved by all who were lucky enough to know her—family, friends, colleagues, students, patients—and she loved each one back. Leena contributed to society and humanity in so many special and extraordinary ways. We miss her deeply and shall remember her dearly.

*Sheldon Peck
Boston, Mass*