Dr. Albert Leonard Midgley was one of the founders of the American College of Dentists and served for many years as the secretary of the organization. Born in Worcester, Massachusetts in 1878, he attended Brown University and graduated with honors from the Harvard Dental School in 1901. After his graduation, he opened a dental practice in Providence, Rhode Island, and was admitted to the staffs of Rhode Island and St. Joseph’s Hospitals. He played a prominent role in the planning and designing of the Forsyth Dental Infirmary where he served as a staff oral surgeon from 1915 to 1920. In 1915, he was elected President of the Rhode Island State Board of Dental Examiners. He served in World War I as a lieutenant commander in the Dental Corps of the United States Naval Reserve, was a consultant to the United States Public Health Service, and worked with the Office of the Surgeon General.

In 1935, he became president-elect of the ACD and subsequently served with distinction as president. His activities were not confined to the American College of Dentists. In 1910, he took upon himself the task of laying the foundation for the Council on Dental Education of America and the classification of the dental schools in this country. No man had higher regard for high professional standards, or the ethical involvements in such standards, than did Dr. Midgley. There were many times when he had to battle for some of these principles, but he never wavered. While his interests were many, his greatest concern had to do with medico-dental relations, to which he devoted many hours. Dr. Midgley was instrumental in placing dental education exclusively under university control and was president and secretary of the Dental Educational Council of America for nineteen years.

In addition to a clinical practice that spanned sixty years, Dr. Midgley devoted himself to the teaching of dentistry and the improvement of dental techniques and standards. He served as president of the Rhode Island Dental Society and the National Board of Dental Examiners, established the Dental Students Register providing statistical data to dental schools, established a dental clinic at St. Joseph’s Hospital, was instrumental in organizing the Joseph Samuels Dental Clinic for children, organized the Providence Dental Guild to serve the indigent and chronically ill, and taught at Harvard School of Dental Medicine for fourteen years.

It was a fitting tribute that in 1955 Dr. Midgley received the highest honor of the American College of Dentists, the William John Gies Award, for his role in advancing dental education. In 1959 Dr. Midgley was honored by the Rhode Island Dental Society as Rhode Island’s dentist of the century. Dr. Midgley shared his knowledge and experience with others in all his endeavors. He was a prolific writer and widely published in dental publications. It is reported that “his talents as pianist, photographer, philatelist, and envied rose grower brought him the greatest pleasure when they were enjoyed by others.”

On October 31, 1967, the long, prolific, and distinguished life of this clinician-scholar came to an end. Dr. Hubert A. McGuirl said of his friend, “with the passing of Dr. Midgley a page in the history of dentistry in this country was closed. His life extended over a truly critical period in the development of dentistry into genuine health service, and he helped to cast the mold from which the newer form of dentistry emerged, a profession which is today producing highly trained and skilled clinicians, researchers, and educators, who are ever mindful of the necessity to improve dental education to meet the changing needs of the public which they serve. Dentistry may forget the names of individual greats in its ranks, but it will never forget what they did.”