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February 1996

"Why of all things did you decide to become a Dentist?" I have been asked many times. In thinking back over my many years I recall mostly there wasn't one reason. However, an early direction was provided by Stevens Institute in Hoboken, N.J.. At 11 years of age I underwent 3 days of aptitude testing. The results indicated my best direction was to become a Dentist. I suppose this was a result of unusual finger dexterity, interest in skills that took finger dexterity and personality characteristics. In any case by the time I went to college I majored in the biological sciences, but don't remember dreaming about becoming a Dentist. Botany and organic chemistry were major interests, but when graduation loomed I applied to Columbia University, School of Dental and Oral Surgery. To my surprise and delight I was accepted. The class was composed mostly of World War II veterans (whose G.I. Bill had gotten them through college and now paid for some graduate work). The competition was huge, only one in forty accepted, as I remember. They were for the most part much my senior in age. I looked like a young kid. The largest majority of them came from large city Universities, and while there were excellent students, most of them didn't have a background for neat, orderly, artistic papers and exams. I suspect they were weaned primarily on multiple choice exams. My familiarity with finger-dexterity related elements of school made that part easy, while for some this was a struggle.

I had to work hard on my studies. For the first 2 years I lived a subway ride away from the school so that I wouldn't be tempted to go out with my friends. I recall most Saturday afternoons meeting with one of my classmates at the local drug store, drinking coffee, and going over the week's classes. We always finished up by asking each other questions, trying to stump the other as a form of game. He helped me in chemistry and I helped him in mechanical and artistic areas.

Upon graduation I entered the Navy Dental Corp and for 2 years was able to hone my dental skills and chair-side manner. Fortunately, I was stationed in Washington, D.C. with many high ranking officers. The above mentioned skills were helpful.

I did enjoy most aspects of Dentistry, but after 33 years of practice a number of elements came together that pushed me into retirement. All people who work find certain elements rewarding and parts that are difficult, if not downright unpleasant. Most of the dental work I enjoyed and received great satisfaction by what I was able to accomplish. However, the constant pressure of dealing with 20-35 (between me and the Hygienist) sometimes nervous patients, a staff to keep focused and contented, a town in which your life was always open to public scrutiny, and being on call 7 days a week for emergencies, does cause some wear. So when many calls started to come in on selling my home:office (a nice setting with parking in a town that had little and now prohibited home:office combinations) I decided the time might be right to pack it in. We had discovered Cape Cod recently and viewed this as an exciting new direction for our lives. And, when a younger Dentist contacted me and I was able to sell the home/office/practice to him we came to Cape Cod.

"Are there problems in retirement?" you ask. Well, I still rush everywhere and

have a guilty feeling if I waste an hour, or worse a day without accomplishing something. I still tear through meals and spend time organizing my day. However, after 9 years in retirement I rush less, am more relaxed, and don't worry when the weather turns snowy and my staff can't get in. I can play all the tennis I wish, paint the local landscapes, learn to use a computer, and read the paper. Under the appropriate circumstances retirement is great.

