

Western Pennsylvania

Guide to Good Health*Health News You and Your Family Can Use to Achieve Optimal Health***Dr. Robert Luther, Jr / Dental*****Dr. Luther Treats Patients As Himself****By Lois Thomson*

Despite the advancements that have been made in the past couple of decades, many people still fear going to the dentist. Perhaps it's time for those people to meet Dr. Robert Luther, Jr.

"My philosophy for every patient I see," Dr. Luther said, "is to place myself in the chair and hope I can treat them the way I would want to be treated when I'm in the chair. And if you do that you'll do a good job."

When Dr. Luther started his practice more than 30 years ago, he wanted his patients to appreciate having work done by people they were familiar with. "We made an effort to educate ourselves broadly in dentistry so our patients could have a lot of services performed here. We started doing orthodontics and ultimately started placing implants and doing a lot of surgery and root canals, things that aren't typically done in a general practice. By having a broad knowledge of the different aspects of dentistry, it helps you to plan your cases better and deliver a better product for the patient. Our patients appreciate the convenience and familiarity."

That caring attitude extends to the staff as well. "This is a cliché, but we want to use the personal touch, and do everything we can to make the procedures as comfortable as we possibly can. I think developing a staff that is warm and caring is absolutely critical, and I owe a lot to my staff because they provide that. Our patients know the staff and they're comfortable with them."

Dr. Luther has put a lot of thought into the practice of dentistry

since his Dad first suggested it. "He had thrown it out as something I ought to think about. He thought it was a profession that was well-respected in the community and provided a nice lifestyle, but that you still had a life of your own with a fairly regular schedule. I wrote my career report in 8th grade on dentistry, and I decided around that time that I'd like to be a dentist."

The idea of dentistry was attractive to Dr. Luther because it combined his interest in science with his love of working with his hands, a skill he nurtured early-on as he built many models as a child. "It had an appeal, I think, because it had that combination that's not always present—using your brain, and also using your hands, and making the two work together to help people."

Dr. Luther was born in New Jersey, and lived in Ohio and Syracuse, New York, before arriving in Pittsburgh. He attended Virginia Military Institute, then transferred to the University of Pittsburgh to graduate, and went on to earn his degree in dentistry there. It was during his college days that he became passionate about something in addition to dentistry.

"I'm a history buff and I love the Civil War in particular," he said. "That's been my major hobby since I started college at VMI. The school fought in the War as a unit for the Confederacy, so it was steeped in Civil War history."

Dr. Luther was therefore both pleased and amazed when he opened his practice in Oakdale, to learn that two of his ancestors who fought in the Civil War are buried in a cemetery just three miles from his office. He said his grandmother had heard a rumor about his family being in the War, "So I took it upon myself to be the family historian and did my research, and I was very fortunate to find that I had ancestors who fought in the Civil War, and that my ancestry in Pennsylvania went back into the 1700s. It was very exciting for me to find direct participants in my family. And that opened up a whole world because I could visit the (battlefields) and study the battles. Isn't that some sort of Divine Providence?"

Although Dr. Luther has been in practice for 34 years, he has no plans to retire from his practice. "I'm going to keep doing this as long as I can, because I enjoy it. Things progress and you have to stay up with techniques and technology, so it's always challenging to get better, both in the services you deliver and also in the way you care for patients. I'm still interested in doing that and I plan to continue for quite a while."

So those folks who fear visiting a dentist still have time to make an appointment with Dr. Luther.



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