

DR. NELSON CLEMENTS

CLASS OF 1980



‘The Best of Both Worlds’

Valdosta Alumnus Credits MCG with Career of His Dreams

Dr. Nelson Clements didn't fully appreciate his MCG education until it was over.

It was during his continuing education courses as a practicing dentist that he noticed he was often outpacing graduates of other schools. "I was very surprised at what a very good education I'd received compared to other dentists," he says. "Dental school was hard at the time, but I surely grew to appreciate it."

His loyalty to his alma mater is a family tradition. His grandfather and father graduated from the MCG School of Medicine in 1900 and 1943, respectively.

Dr. Clements shared their love of health care but grew fascinated with dentistry while receiving orthodontic treatment as a child. "My teeth were very crowded, and I was just amazed my orthodontist could move them like that," he says. "And all the dentists were so nice."

He chuckles that his father wasn't completely sold on his career choice. "The day before I left for dental school, my father had me in the operating room watching him do a hysterectomy. He said, 'I just want to be sure you're making the right choice.' I assured him I was."

After earning his dental degree in 1980, Dr. Clements began a general dentistry practice in Valdosta, Ga., just a few miles from his hometown of Adel.

"I'm just a country boy," he says, citing the satisfaction of treating some 2,500 of his friends and neighbors.

"I like everything about my practice. I emphasize cosmetics and cosmetic reconstruction, and I enjoy people's reactions to the results."

He also teaches cosmetic dentistry to fellow dentists. "I taught for six years at the Las Vegas Institute," he says.

"I counted 51 trips to Las Vegas in six years. Now, I'm teaching at The Dental Healthcare Centre in Cleveland. I hope to limit myself to four trips a year."

Traveling may wear thin, he says, but teaching never does. "The cool thing about teaching is I'm always up on the latest techniques and materials. The teaching centers are living laboratories. For me, teaching is a hobby. It's how I get reinvigorated. Between my practice and my teaching, I have really the best of both worlds."

Although he doesn't teach MCG students, he supports their education—and many other School of Dentistry initiatives. He and his wife, Angela, recently pledged \$25,000 to the school's building fund.

"I think dentistry has a very, very bright future," he says. "Dentists seem to get progressively more enjoyment from what they're doing."

And as he learned early in his career, nowhere are dental students better-prepared than at MCG. "I think MCG is headed in the right direction," he says. "I like the dean. I like her vision. I like her commitment to dentistry and to MCG. I hope that others who came along in my era will take the time to get to know her and understand what she's trying to do, because they're going to want to help her do it. I'm very excited about the school's future."

Christine Hurley Deriso

“IT WAS AN EASY DECISION TO COMMIT AND GIVE BACK. MCG HAS BEEN REALLY GOOD TO ME.”