

# Dr. Gary Stranik – A Dentist Story

## The price of inspiration – how one dentist’s unfortunate injury changed his entire life.

No pain, no gain. That’s how the old saying goes. Sometimes you need to suffer a little to improve and reach your potential. Minnesota dentist Dr. Gary Stranik knows all about this idea, having experienced it firsthand. But not in the way you might think.

Back in the year 1970, Dr. Stranik was an athletic young man playing basketball for his junior high school in Minnesota. It was Christmas Eve day and he was attending a practice session. But little did Gary know how big an impact that practice would have on the rest of his life.

While running some drills, Dr. Stranik suffered an injury to his mouth that severely damaged three of his teeth. He was rushed out of the gym and taken straight to his dentist. There was only one problem – his dentist wasn’t available that day.

Things were looking grim, when one of his neighbors recommended their dentist. Dr. Stranik was seen right away. That dentist was able to save all three of his teeth and fix the damage done to his mouth. Dr. Stranik was grateful for the dentist’s quick and attentive work that ultimately saved his teeth.

This experience was less than pleasant, as anyone could agree, but it nonetheless left a profound impression on the young athlete. Since that traumatic Christmas Eve day, Dr. Stranik had developed an undeniable interest in dentistry. “I remember that day so well and how lucky I was that our neighbor’s dentist could help me,” said Dr. Stranik. “After that, all the way through college and no matter what else I did, I stayed interested in dentistry.”

Dr. Stranik completed his undergraduate studies at the University of Northern Colorado, and remained in the mile high state to pursue his longtime interest in dentistry. In 1983, he received his dental degree from the University of Colorado School of Dentistry.

After graduating, Dr. Stranik stayed in Colorado and started his career in Denver. The economy in Colorado was struggling at the time and interest rates were high. Dr. Stranik sought a more stable long-term solution for his dental career. He searched back home in the Midwest where he had family in Minnesota and Wisconsin.

In 1986 he purchased a practice in the riverside city of Mankato, Minnesota where he stayed for the next 30 years. "Looking back, I am so glad I chose to settle down in Mankato," said Dr. Stranik. "I was able to build a successful practice, raise a wonderful family, stay active in the community, and make a lot of great friends along the way. It was everything I could have wanted for my career and my life."

In 2013, 30 years after earning his dental degree, Dr. Stranik began to think about retirement. "I wasn't quite ready to retire yet," Dr. Stranik admitted. "However I wanted to give myself plenty of lead time so I could be sure I made the right decision for my practice and my patients."

Around that same time, Dr. Stranik was contacted by Midwest Dental. After giving it some thought, he decided to dig a little deeper. "Since I was already looking for a retirement plan, I figured I should see what Midwest Dental had to offer," Dr. Stranik said. Long story short, they were able to offer quite a bit.

"Midwest Dental was able to offer me more time to focus on my dentistry and less time worrying about running my own practice," Dr. Stranik said. Midwest Dental already had a practice across town and offered to merge with Dr. Stranik's practice so he would continue to serve his same patients at the Midwest Dental location. Dr. Stranik was able to bring most of his own equipment with him and continue his philosophy of care with patients. "They even helped me work out a solution for the lease at my former office," Dr. Stranik exclaimed. "They really went above and beyond to make this transition work for me."

Dr. Stranik has settled into his partnership with Midwest Dental very well. So too have his patients, some of whom have been with him since he started practicing back in 1986. "Everything came together so perfectly," he said contently. "I have been able to give up all the headaches of running my old practice and now I can just practice dentistry until I decide to retire."

And when he does, Dr. Stranik has big plans... to relax. "I don't have any plans to leave Mankato, except maybe for a few months during winter," he said. "Other than that, I am going play golf, ride the nearby bike trails, walk the dogs, and just spend a lot of good time outdoors."

To think, all this success was inspired by an injury to the mouth. Talk about making the best of a bad situation!



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