

Dr. Michael Pellegrini – A Dentist Story

Making the most of a second chance.

How many people can honestly say that when they were in grade school, they were excited about going to the dentist? Dentists are of course wonderful people who perform very important work, but a trip to the dentist doesn't usually end up on many kids' list of favorite things. But there are always exceptions to the rule, and Dr. Michael Pellegrini was one of them. From a young age, the future Dr. Mike was fascinated by dentistry. Why? Read on and you'll understand.

Dr. Pellegrini's parents were born in Italy and immigrated to the United States, eventually settling in Watertown, Massachusetts where they raised Michael. As early as second grade, Dr. Pellegrini was intrigued by dentistry. Weird for an eight year old, right? His father was a brick layer and very skilled with his hands; an important trait for any dentist, so maybe there was a bit of an innate interest there. And when he was very young, he remembers watching Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer and being particularly bemused when the snowman gets his tooth pulled. So maybe television played a role as well. Whatever the case, to Dr. Pellegrini, going to the dentist was an exciting time rather than one to be feared.

Dr. Pellegrini vividly remembers his childhood trips to the dentist. "It was the 60's and oral hygiene wasn't what it is today," he said. "I was chewing Bazooka Joe and drinking Pepsi all day and cavities were a common thing. So trips to the dentist were never in short supply." But this was just fine by him.

He and his mother would walk the mile and half from their home to the dentist office, and the moment he walked in he experienced a sensory overload that he can still recount perfectly to this day. "The sound of classical music on the PA, the smell of Copalite varnish, the pulley-operated hand pieces, and the porcelain beaded table; for whatever reason, I just loved it all," Dr. Pellegrini fondly recalls. He would sit in the chair and play around with the instruments (regulations were not as strict back then), pretending to be a dentist himself.

Throughout his youth, Dr. Pellegrini never actively undertook any dental-related pursuits. He didn't read up on the subject or shadow a local dentist. In fact, during high school he worked at a grocery store stocking shelves. But despite this, his interest in dentistry never faded.

Dr. Pellegrini went to Boston College where he pursued a degree in Biology, with every intent of going to dental school. But then his life took a sharp turn. During the summer after his freshman year of college, he was involved in a terrible car accident that sadly took the life of his close friend. The incident had a profound impact on Dr. Pellegrini and he lost interest in school. His performance slipped and his advisor eventually told him he wouldn't have the grades to get into dental school. At the time, he just didn't care.

He managed to graduate with his Biology degree, but ended up jumping around to odd jobs after college. He spent some time processing blood samples in a chemistry lab before joining his father in the brick laying trade. One day while on the job, it was so cold that Dr. Pellegrini couldn't feel his fingers. "I remember thinking to myself, 'what am I doing with my life?'" he lamented. A short time later, he caught up with a school friend of his. His buddy had ended up going to dental school, but he didn't even really want to be a dentist. This was a real gut check for Dr. Pellegrini. "That should be me!" he remembers thinking. "I'm the one who had always wanted to be a dentist, and at that moment I knew I needed to get my act together."

With a renewed vigor, Dr. Pellegrini hit the books, passed his dental boards, and was accepted into Tufts University in Boston. He immediately had an amazing experience. A great clinical education and great new friends (and no regrets) cemented his conviction that this was his passion in life. He was back!

He graduated in 1987, and after a one-year residency at Tufts, he worked for a few establishments to get his feet wet, including a hospital, a psychiatric ward, and a large group practice in Boston. Then in 1989, he came across the opportunity to buy a home office in the nearby town of Belmont. "It was a very dated building," Dr. Pellegrini said. "But it reminded me of the practice I went to as a kid. So I bought it, did some renovations, and started a new, two-chair practice from scratch. My wife and I even moved into the attached living space when we were married in 1990."

The practice started at one day a week, but quickly grew into a flourishing, full-time operation. Ten years later, Dr. Pellegrini officially ran out of space. Also he and his wife now had four daughters, three of whom were triplets! It was clearly time to make a move. He relocated the practice into a commercial building around the corner and stayed there, enjoying every moment.

After 16 more years passed, Dr. Pellegrini was nearly 30 years into his career and was beginning to think about what his next steps should be. He didn't want to retire just yet, but wanted to start winding down with the goal of retiring in a few more years. He had primarily been thinking about hiring an associate but hadn't pulled the trigger on that yet. Then one day, Dr. Pellegrini was introduced to the idea of partnering with Midwest Dental. He had not considered selling his practice, but he talked it over with his wife and decided to learn more. After some additional conversation, he realized it would be a perfect fit. A contract was drafted and the deal was done in no time.

"I simply couldn't be more thrilled with my decision to partner with Midwest Dental," Dr. Pellegrini relished. "Their entire team was knowledgeable, straightforward and honest. I never felt threatened or felt they were pulling the wool over my eyes on anything. They made it very clear that they wanted me to be happy. And I definitely have been."

Dr. Pellegrini proudly admits he can't think of a single negative thing to say about the transition. "The layers of support I get from their team of experts is amazing. They are so helpful and always there to answer my questions," he said. "Of course I had the to-be-expected anxiety about the gravity of our decision, but Midwest Dental has never given us a single reason to regret it."

Now, Dr. Pellegrini practices stress-free, content with the fact that his practice is in great hands. All that's left is the smooth ride into retirement.



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