

Milestone

Saline dentist celebrates 30th year in practice

By Debra Talcott

Special Writer

When Saline's Dr. J. Michael Dibble opened his dental practice in Sept. 1971, he couldn't have predicted he would celebrate three decades in the same location. But celebrate he has, by enjoying cake with his office staff and by taking on a new associate, Dr. Jennifer McFinton.

"I realized early on the more I got to know people here, that Saline is a great place to be," says Dr. Dibble. "I am fortunate to have stayed."

Dibble, who is a 1969 graduate of the University of Michigan School of Dentistry, was inspired to pursue this career by his father, who was a surgeon. The younger Dr. Dibble knew he wanted to study in a science-related field but wanted more flexible hours conducive to marriage and family life.

After graduation from the U-M, Dr. Dibble enlisted in the Army and spent two years in Williamsburg, Va. during the Vietnam War. While in the service, he took classes at the renowned Walter Reed Army Medical Center, named for the Army physician who, in the early 1900s, discovered that mosquitoes transmit yellow fever.

DR. DIBBLE resides in Ann Arbor with his wife Linda, a retired speech pathologist. The couple has one daughter, Carrie, who graduated from Albion College and New York University and teaches language arts to sixth-graders in the Pinckney Schools.

"Our daughter was one when I opened the office here, and now she's 31 and recently married to a nice young man," the proud father explains.

In his spare time, Dr. Dibble can be seen working out at Liberty Sports Complex or doing a little running.

"I think in dentistry it's important to not only be prepared mentally, but to be physically fit as well," he maintains.

THE MODEST dentist, who is well known for providing mouth guards for Saline football players, wanted to speak less about himself than about the new associate he has welcomed to his practice.

Dr. Jennifer McFinton is an affable person with the obvious ability to help people relax in the dentist's chair.

"Jennifer and her assistant Tina are so good at communicating with patients and putting people at ease. The way she handles children is especially nice to see," Dr. Dibble says proudly.

Dr. McFinton, herself a graduate of the University of Michigan School of Dentistry, feels blessed to have found this practice.

"Dr. Dibble is a fantastic mentor. He is a brilliant dentist," she states. "I will learn a lot from him."

THE FEELING IS mutual, says Dr. Dibble.

"Having Jennifer in the office has re-inspired me. It's so nice to see U of M graduating people like Jennifer, who are truly interested in other people and their welfare," Dr. Dibble says.

It is easy to see why the two doctors work so well together. Their personalities are very compatible, and they share the same philosophy that patient care comes first.

"This might be the thousandth time the dentist has done a particular procedure, but to the patient it's the first time. It's important to let them know you understand their concerns," Dr. Dibble explains.

Likewise, both doctors are active in the Washtenaw District Dental Society and are pleased to be members of the Michigan Dental Association, and the American Dental Association.

Something else the doctors share is their fondness for

dogs. Dr. Dibble is the owner of Belle, a Vizsla (Hungarian sporting dog) who hunts pheasant. Dr. McFinton is the owner of Jack, whom she describes as "a mutt who does tricks and is very smart." And, yes, the two dentists brush their dogs' teeth and gums.

DR. McFINTON RESIDES in Ann Arbor with her husband Andrew, an artist who specializes in oil paintings. Originally from Nebraska, she has called the college town home since moving there in the eighth grade. She works in the Saline dental practice on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays. In her spare time, Dr. McFinton enjoys gardening, especially heirloom roses.

The two dentists have some practical advice for people wanting to pay better attention to their dental hygiene. As most people realize, we should practice good home care and visit our dentists regularly. In addition, Drs. Dibble and McFinton encourage us to use a very soft toothbrush and non-abrasive paste to brush our gums as well as our teeth. This stimulates the tissue, thereby promoting healthy gums.



Photo by Debra Talcott

Dr. J. Michael Dibble and Dr. Jennifer McFinton say patient care comes first in their Saline practice.

The dental team explains that sucking cough drops or sipping sugary beverages all day long causes a good deal of the decay they see. They also warn against tongue piercing, which has caused broken fillings and even broken teeth in some cases. Finally, they encourage anyone who is chewing tobacco to stop that dangerous practice, which is responsible for many of the pre-cancerous lesions they have seen.

Asked about the importance of fluoride treatments, both dentists agree fluoride stops decay.

"Fluoridated water is one of the greatest achievements of the 20th century," explains Dr. McFinton.

DRS. DIBBLE and McFinton practice all phases of general dentistry including limited oral surgery and periodontics. They do some cosmetic dentistry such as laminates and porcelain veneer crowns. They refer serious cases to area specialists, such as Saline's Dr. Cass Radecki, who is known for his excellent work in extractions and dental implants.

Drs. Dibble and McFinton see patients ranging in age from 2-95. Residents new to the area will be happy to know the

practice is accepting new patients.

Their waiting room is a pleasant space, complete with toys for younger family members. Patients will enjoy reading the poem which hangs on the wall entitled *The Doctor Dibble*, written by Carrie as a tribute to her father some years ago. And for anyone who has avoided regular check-ups because of fear, rest assured, you will experience no guilt trips while in the care of these two special people.