

Blast From the Past



by Kyle Patton, Editorial Assistant, *Orthotown Magazine*

Dr. Myers, what drew you to orthodontics? What inspired your career decision?

Myers: I always enjoyed going to the dentist. By the time I was five or six I had started saying I wanted to be a dentist. When I was maybe six or seven, my grandpa told me what an orthodontist was and I thought, "I like messing with small stuff and building

things, that sounds cool." I've been on the orthodontist track ever since. I had a great orthodontist (Dr. Dennis Briggs of Neenah, Wisconsin) who tolerated my millions of questions. I enjoyed my ortho experience, all the wire tying and whiskers hanging out of my mouth, the whole deal. The only thing I didn't care for was the band driver and I remember saying to myself as they used it during my strap-up, "I (bang) will not (bang) have (bang) one of (bang) these things (bang) when I'm (bang) an orthodontist (bang)."

OFFICE HIGHLIGHTS

Name: Dr. David Myers

Practice Name: DJM Orthodontics

Graduated From: UT Memphis

Practice Location: Conway, Arkansas

Staff: 3

Website: www.djmortho.com

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- Reliance Light Bond
- Assure
- Pro Seal
- Reliance Band Lok

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- Wires are from Highland Metals

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- ScanX digital x-ray scanner
- Zap soft tissue laser
- Quick Ceph Office management software
- Quick Ceph Studio. Mac workstations and server
- ClearCorrect clear aligners
- Sirona Orthophos XG 3D pan and ceph





You have a very unique office. What motivated this kind of design?

Myers: After 12 years of practicing in my original office, we finally outgrew the space. As we began looking for a new office, a developer in town announced plans to incorporate an old gas station into a new development. During our talks with him, we started thinking of how we might finish it out. One of the things the staff really wanted in a new space was some sort of seating area at the foot of the chairs for the parents, siblings and friends

that always come along. Ultimately, we purchased a property two blocks from the existing office, which made it handy to check on construction when the time came. What we purchased was actually a 3,500-sq.-ft.-church building. There was a congregation still using the property which had another year on the lease, which worked great because it gave us time to work up renovation plans and also offered income while that process took place.

After researching office design companies, we chose Green Curve Design. They design fantastic offices and I was impressed with their ability to make an office flow as well as look great. I had ideas floating around in my head, but no idea how to put them all together into an office that worked. My initial ideas to them were to have the look of a city within the walls of the building. Each room or area was to look like a building. We have a movie theater, soda fountain, gas station, 5 & 10 cent store, barber shop, etc. I had piles of reference pictures and some rough sketches of what I thought the facades of the rooms should look like. Green Curve took the ball and ran. While they were designing, I began cutting up junk cars and building furniture.

Once the plan was complete, I sat down with a contractor. During that meeting it became

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evident that it was going to cost more to renovate the building than it would be to tear it down and build a new one. When we settled with Salter Construction as our construction team, they reminded me that we paid much less for the property and the building than equal property and location a few blocks away, so we were really ahead of the game even without the building in the picture. So now we had a floor plan, but no building to put it in. Fortunately, Rik Sowell Architects are in town and we are friends. I sat down with Ricky Russell and showed him our floor plan and talked about the kind of building that would go with what he classified as the Americana theme we had going. The existing building had vaulted ceilings that went from 12 feet to 15 feet; I asked if we could do 15 ft. ceilings all the way across to have the height to make the room facades more effective. Ricky said we were only 3 feet short of being able to have walk-up storage on a second floor essentially for free. Who doesn't like free? Going through the inspiration pictures I had, Ricky and I had this retro gas station/diner/drive-in thing going and I left him to start drawing. A few days later, he called me to look at his first concept drawing and somehow, he got all that nebulous stuff that had been floating in my head for 20 years out onto paper and nailed it. They worked up final construction plans and we were finally on our way.

The crew at Salter Construction was gun shy at first, not sure we knew what we were getting into. My wife and I had contracted our own house years previous, so we had some experience in the field. No one had any direct experience building a building with as many details as this, although Salters had several dental clinics under their belt. We set a tight budget. I made it clear I intended to be very hands on, which scares any construction team. They were all skeptical, but stepped out in faith. The first time I showed up on site with the welded-up shell of the woodie wagon front desk for a fitting, all fears were set aside and the guys realized I wasn't some ordinary doctor getting in their way making their job harder. I was on site nearly every day. Having a super-detailed set of plans and a great team was key. There were only a few very minor hiccups along the way, but being two blocks away and on site so much, we were able to catch them early and fix them quickly. What can often be a nightmare was, for us, pretty smooth sailing. The whole project finished according to plan, on budget and on time. All said and done, we built the whole thing including property, building, furnishings and equipment for the same cost as property and regular office building in the same area. It's amazing what can be accomplished for very little cost with paint and trim and doing lots of work yourself.

Tell me a little about your practice? How is it laid out? What is the workflow like?

Myers: My day generally starts with resetting the movie theater sign with the names of the new patients and the names of the de-band patients we will see that day. We will see a group of adjustments and observations first thing and then the morning slows down into our longer appointments of banding, de-bands



and new patients. We finish up the morning with another group of adjustments and checks. After lunch is again longer appointments until school lets out, then we are back to the rush of our shorter appointments until the end of the day.

What is your practice philosophy?

Myers: Treat everyone with the same respect, honesty, as you would like to be treated yourself. A good bit of fun goes a long way to help keep the day moving along nicely as well.

What do you do to set your practice apart from others?

Myers: We have a community of great dentists and specialists. Honestly, we aren't out to be the No. 1 gun in the area. We work hard at providing an atmosphere the patients, parents and tag-alongs can enjoy being in. We just come to work, do our jobs with a happy face, have some fun, enjoy the folks we are with and let the rest take care of itself.

What is it like to be involved in orthodontics? What are some of the advantages? Disadvantages?

Myers: I love orthodontics, plain and simple! When I was a kid wanting to be an orthodontist, I was drawn to the tiny stuff, the mechanics of it all. As I got older, and ultimately into the profession, the greatest part is being involved in the patient's lives. For the adolescents in particular, playing a small part of that change in their lives from the awkward, goofy stage and maturing into the wonderful young men and women they become. What greater reward is there than when they come back with their senior picture and say thank you for my beautiful smile? That totally shadows the few hiccups along the way of running a business and dealing with a few people now and then that are not having a great day.

What are your concerns for the graduating dentists and future orthodontists?

Myers: Certainly looming changes in health care that we don't even know what they will be yet, is a great concern. Along with that is the level of debt students are stepping out of school with. I put myself through school and while I was fortunate to have a full ride through college, I paid for dental school and residency entirely with student loans as most do. I started my own practice from scratch upon graduation and it was very difficult to acquire financing with over \$100,000 in student loans. I was blessed and had some great folks that really went to bat and made it happen. With all the debt I have been hearing students finish up with now, I can't imagine walking into a bank and trying to secure financing to start or purchase a practice. That surely limits options and adds another whole hurdle to

the private practice dream many or most of us set off onto this journey with.

What are your favorite marketing techniques? How do you get the word out about your practice?

Myers: Like most, we do regular deliveries to our referring offices. We have a great graphic design team that designs all our stuff from stationery to t-shirts, website, etc. They always work us up fun cards for the themes of our deliveries that help put the happy, fun twist we enjoy with everything. Certainly, word of mouth from happy patients cannot be beat. As I already mentioned, patients are always posting pictures of their names on the movie sign, sitting with their friends on the car couches, etc. We have had the snow cone truck out on hot summer days, bowling parties, etc.

What has Orthotown done for your professional life? For your social life? What is your favorite feature?

Myers: Dr. Howard Farran founded Dentaltown and Orthotown on the premise that no doctor would have to practice alone. For me, Orthotown is a fantastic resource of creative solutions, new techniques

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and encouragement that the hiccups of business and management are nearly universal. I love the discussion, suggestions and resolutions of difficult cases. Over and over again, through the discussions and myriad of voices, solid ground emerges to work from to approach the problem at hand, be it a case, staff, difficult patients and parents, what have you.

What do you think is the biggest problem orthodontics faces today?

Myers: The looming cloud of government health care is pretty unnerving, particularly since no one really has a handle on what it will end up being or how far it's going to go.

What is the greatest advancement of change you have seen during your tenure as an orthodontist?

Myers: TADS have been a game changer for me. It has changed the whole dynamic of our mechanics. For all of history, orthodontists have had to work around the lack of solid anchorage. That is no longer the case. We are no longer tethered to the idea that for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction.

Looking ahead, what would you like to see ortho do in terms of the way it operates as a profession in the next five to 10 years?

Myers: While I suppose corporate dentistry and orthodontics has its place somewhere in the grand scheme of things, very little of the independent private-practice paradigm exists in health care outside of dentistry, and even that seems to be rapidly shrinking.

I hope that as a profession we are able to hold onto being the captains of our own ship, build and run our individual practices as works best, and that it is most enjoyable for each of us.

Describe your most successful or rewarding experience in your professional life.

Myers: Early in practice, I treated a handicapped man who was on a completely blended and chopped diet as a result of a total bypass bite. Additionally, he was unable to speak, was limited to a wheelchair with minimal control of his arms and hands and had several significant medical issues. So, essentially, the patient was unable to cooperate with treatment in any way. Thanks to my training at UT and a few tricks up my sleeve I had seen Dr. Sandusky use, we were able to correct his bite and his quality of life was improved with the ability to actually chew food. He was a fun patient and we were able to learn how to communicate with him and even had our own jokes between us.

What do you like to do when you are not working?

Myers: My wife, Michelle, is my best friend and we enjoy camping, junk shopping, traveling and just plain being together. We have two great kids who are funny and smart like their momma. We are active in our church and are blessed beyond measure with both our families here in town. We live outside of town on property with Michelle's parents and her brother and his family. The kids get to experience life with cousins, cows, dogs, chickens, goats, rabbits and whatever other kind of critter makes its way inside the fences. ■

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