



Professor Bettie McKaig:

«Dentistry is actually more fun when we are current with our knowledge base and share that expertise and passion with others.»

The International College of Dentists (ICD) brings together the most famous, creative and tireless representatives of our profession from many countries of the world. Bettie McKaig, an Adjunct Associate Professor in the Operative Dentistry Department of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (USA), is such a tireless hard worker in the field of practical dentistry, education and social activities. She was installed as the International President 2019. Dr. McKaig is the first female Fellow to hold the position as President of the Worldwide Council of this organization. Today at the DentArt magazine, Mrs. Bettie McKaig will share her work experience and vision for the future of the dental community.

«I made sure that in every country, dentists carry out important humanitarian events»

Dear Madam McKaig, in November 2018 you officially assumed the duties of the ICD International President, and before that you were Vice President and for four years led the District 16 USA Section. What was the most memorable, dearest to you during this time?

DEAREST MEMORIES: There are so many memorable moments during these leadership years with ICD. One of the most treasured times in my role as District 16 USA Section Regent was participating in the Fellowship Induction of the dentist who encouraged me to apply to dental school. One of my fundamental beliefs is that people around the world are more alike than they are different and my travels as ICD International President reinforced that belief. We all want the same things for our families-health, safety, happiness, and prosperity. Serhiy, I am humbled you are interviewing me yet am delighted I now have the privilege to converse with an outstanding dental leader from Ukraine. I absolutely loved each of my Presidential visits especially the conversations shared with colleagues around the globe which allowed me a small window into their lives. Dentists are leading amazing humanitarian endeavors in every country. One of the new inductees in your ICD Section was already organizing ambitious mission trips each year to help the underserved. In Bali a new Fellow traveled with other health professionals to outward islands which were without doctors of any kind to deliver not only dental care but health screenings and eye glasses. Lastly, during each visit female ICD Fellows shared their professional journey and the importance to them to see a woman become President of Worldwide ICD.

In your opinion, in what areas should the Fellows of the International College of Dentists focus on in the future?

ICD FOCUS FOR FELLOWS IN THE FUTURE: 2020 is the year of the Centennial Celebration of the formative conversations which culminated in the ICD organization we see today. Celebrating this historic milestone in their local communities will serve as a catalyst to invite current and prospective Fellows to participate in Continuing Education events and Humanitarian efforts in their area. Activities such as these are the best way in any year to celebrate ICD

and energize your Fellows to understand the strength of an organization which gives them opportunities to interact with other Fellows around the globe.

In November 2020, in Japan, Nagoya, will celebrate the 100th anniversary of the ICD, which was founded by American Dr. Louis Ottofi and Japanese Dr. Tsurukichi Okumura. It is symbolic that the preparations for this celebration are again led by an American and Japanese – you and ICD International President 2020 Professor Akira Senda. What would you wish your successor as President of ICD?

AKIRA SENDA WISH: My wish for Akira Senda as 2020 ICD President is to savor the joy of meeting ICD Fellows in their home Section and the privilege of understanding more about the unique aspects of each culture. I hope Akira will be committed to implementing and strengthening the College Strategic Plan which is our Roadmap for leading a successful ICD into our next One Hundred Years. And, of course, best wishes for a successful Centennial meeting in Nagoya, Japan in November 2020.



«Local leadership is the number one criteria to affect change»

In the literature, periodicals of the dental field, the most modern technologies for the treatment and prevention of dental diseases are discussed and promoted, and progress in dentistry is observed in many countries. But still, there remain regions where dental care for the population is at a very low, figuratively speaking, cave level. What should the governments of these countries do to facilitate access for the general public to truly modern dental care and how does ICD help in this?

GOVERNMENTS IN LOW DENTAL ACCESS AREAS: ICD is recognized by many global leaders as the organization with the expertise for global dental access and dental education. Each government must have a leader in the decision making arena who is an advocate for basic dental care for the general public to have a realistic chance to make the difference we all desire. Is there a dentist in the government or close to those in that circle who could be the catalyst for that advocacy? Is that dentist an ICD Fellow? Local leadership is the number one criteria to affect change.

ICD can connect Fellows in different countries to share protocols that have been successful for healthcare systems in other places. I attended a

Healthcare Summit last year when the United Nations met in New York. Ministers of Health from Vietnam, Brazil, and South Africa discussed their challenges to include oral health for the general public and the different methods used that afforded them a degree of success.

«Each year the USA-ICD Section presents Student Awards – Leadership and Humanitarian»

You are an Adjunct Associate Professor in the Operative Dentistry Department of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, so you know very well modern student youth. Tell us about ICD programs aimed at supporting the professional development and leadership of students.

ICD STUDENT SUPPORT: ICD support for students is primarily generated from the local districts. (You are now seeing a theme that emphasizes LOCAL ICD FELLOWS are the ones who will make the difference!) I will now share several programs supported by UNC and/or the USA-ICD Section. The University of North Carolina School of Dentistry has the Office of Global Initiatives which organizes several international leadership experiences for the selected students each year. One is a direct student to student exchange with students (and sometimes faculty) in Moldova where a few of our students travel to their country and they reciprocate with students to UNC. While in Moldova these students interact and learn about the host country's educational system, culture, and partner with these students to treat patients in an orphanage. The other Global opportunities are more mission style trips where the focus is dental education and the delivery of dental services to children in orphanages and schools.

Research has shown that students who have international experiences usually have better grades when they return to school and many times alter their post-graduation careers based on these impactful opportunities. And, even more important to me, travel in cultures different than our own breaks down barriers, relieves prejudices, and creates empathy for others.

The USA-ICD Section presents Student Awards – Leadership and Humanitarian – each year to graduating students selected by the faculty for their excellence in the above categories. This is another way to highlight the Core Values of ICD and support the students. UNC and several other USA dental schools have Global Health Student Associations





which are student- directed with local ICD chapter financial support and Fellow participation. The USA-ICD Section donates «start-up» money to the schools for these student groups. These student organizations are usually the hub of discussions and presentations about Global health as well as a place for planning the previously mentioned international trips. Often local ICD Fellows will come and share their stories and PIZZA!

Many schools also have structured ICD Mentorship programs for the dental students in which the Fellows take the students to local dental meetings and invite dental students into their offices. Also, recognizing outstanding faculty with ICD Fellowship can certainly create an advocate for ICD on campus.

In 2011-2012 under the leadership of ICD Worldwide President Garry Lunn of Canada, I chaired an International Collaborative Initiative Committee which tried to stimulate the Councilors to encourage dental schools in their Sections to agree to participate in the type of international Global experiences I described for UNC. Unfortunately we were not successful at that time yet I do envision ICD being a framework to connect interested ICD Fellows around the globe who want to help schools develop similar programs.

«I accumulated thousands of hours of high quality continuing education throughout my career»

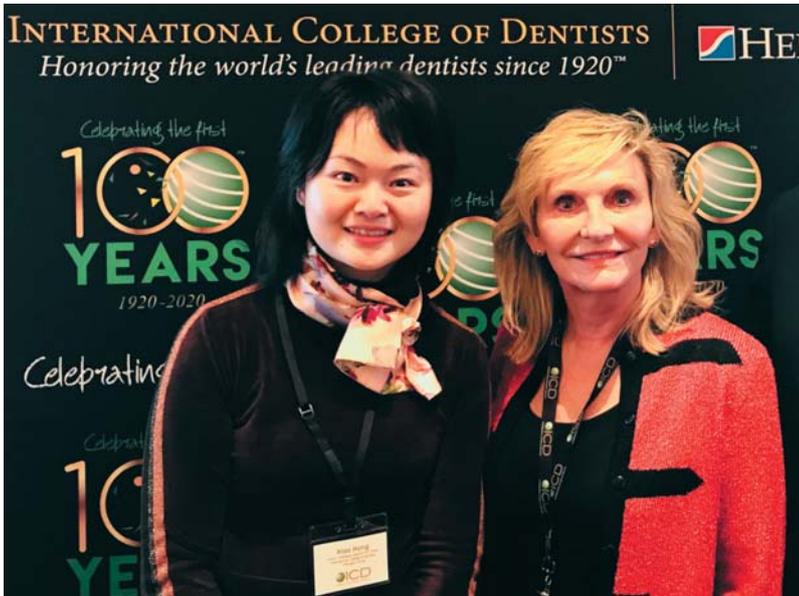
What was the reason for your choice as a dentist?

REASON FOR CHOOSING DENTISTRY: I grew up in rural America as the daughter of a tenant tobacco farmer. We were considered poor by most standards, yet my mother believed strongly that hard work and a solid education would give her children better life alternatives and pave the way to success. Even though I was number one in my high school graduating class, no one considered that a female could be a doctor. When I was required to list an area of interest when applying for scholarships, I chose dentistry because a teacher's husband (a dentist) had previously introduced me to his dental hygienist. After my Dental Hygiene degree, I studied to receive a Bachelor of Science degree. After graduation I worked as a hygienist while taking studio art courses at night. My employer dentist (who was also an artist) practiced dentistry as a marriage of art and science. With his encouragement and support I applied to dental school and the rest is history.

Your experience in private practice in dentistry has reached three and a half decades. Tell us about the most important stages of your professional development.

STAGES OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: One of my dental school professors told me that as students «we only learned enough in dental school to know how to keep learning». With that mantra ever present in my consciousness, I accumulated thousands of hours of high quality continuing education throughout my career wanting to learn more to elevate my proficiency with treatment planning and clinical expertise. I continue that learning curve today as an adjunct faculty at University of North Carolina School of Dentistry.





As a dental student I represented UNC at the national level in the American Student Dental Association so I realized before graduation the necessity and responsibility to be involved in organized dentistry.

I completed my graduation requirements early so UNC allowed me to develop a mini-residency in Operative Dentistry with a dedicated operatory which was unheard of at that time. This experience was huge for me when I bought a two-person general dentistry practice immediately after graduation from dental school. I was a solo practitioner who saw patients six days each week for many years with a classmate joining me on Saturdays as I was determined to take care of all of the patients and I did!

Also, while a dental student I enrolled in the Masters Level programs in the UNC Public Health School. I completed my Masters degree in Public Health Administration after I was in private practice. My experiences within this curriculum provided an international perspective of dentistry within the framework of general health and how we are interconnected across the globe.

I quickly became active in local dental organizations ascending to leadership positions in several on the state and national level. Once I was traveling for the national responsibilities, I hired a part-time associate to treat my patients when I was not in the office.

ICD was the first dental honorary organization in which I was inducted. After many years as a member I was asked to serve on a committee.

Interestingly, I was a Fellow in two other dental honorary organizations yet ICD was the only one which asked me to be involved so I would definitely encourage the ICD leaders in every country to ask your Fellows to participate in your committees and events. Younger Fellows are not interested in only being a member. They want their organizations to have a purpose. They want to be involved and make a difference.

After selling my private dental practice, I was able to accept the position of Adjunct Professor in the Operative Department. My favorite aspects of this are the chance to demonstrate with the students ethical decision-making, the development of individualized treatment planning, and the practice of the intricate clinical skills necessary to bring the varied disciplines of dentistry together.

«Life is fabulous-so much to learn and so little time!»

In addition to dentistry, what else captures you in life? We read the following about some of your hobbies on the Internet: «I balance these commitments (in ICD guidelines – Ed.) with outdoor activities of hiking (summitted Mt. Kilimanjaro with my family in 2008), snow skiing, beach events and chasing young grandchildren...» Does grandmother turn out to catch them?

NONDENTAL ACTIVITIES: Adventure traveling is my favorite way to experience new areas. My husband and I hope to enjoy more challenges in different countries and when the grandchildren are a little older to introduce them to the exciting world of

travel. On the local front we plan to spend more time at our place on the coast of North Carolina where the beach is beautiful and the skies are blue. Along with my responsibilities at the School of Dentistry, we both support the UNC Lineberger Cancer Institute and the general campus Global Studies. I am also beginning to mentor female varsity athletes which should be invigorating. My dental mentor I mentioned earlier has given me the basic materials to start a sculpture so I hope to add that to my repertoire this year. I am an avid reader who travels with a Kindle and has a stack of books by the bed at all times. Life is fabulous-so much to learn and so little time!

Has dentistry become a professional fate for someone else from your family?

FAMILY IN DENTAL PROFESSION: A niece and a nephew are dental hygienists. They each first considered being a dentist yet after working in my office and seeing how hard I worked they were dissuaded from that role. They envied the financial rewards yet decided they wanted a lifestyle with less responsibility. My niece is a professor in the Dental Hygiene Department at the UNC School of Dentistry and lectures nationally. My nephew loves every minute of private practice so they chose wisely for themselves.



What would you wish to colleagues who will read this interview, and these are dentists from 13 countries of the world?

COLLEAGUES: Dentistry is the best profession in the world so celebrate the honor and hard work you did to become a dentist yet embrace the responsibility that comes with being addressed as “Doctor”. That leadership includes staying current with the best knowledge and techniques available to you for your patients. Being a Doctor in your community requires you to serve that population who are less fortunate whether in your office or through your charity affiliations. Be a mentor to someone



■ Living room

who has an interest in dentistry. Dentistry is actually more fun when we are current with our knowledge base and share that expertise and passion with others.

THANK YOU FOR THE HONOR OF SHARING MY THOUGHTS WITH YOU!!

*Interviewed by Serhiy Radlinsky
and Hanna Antypovych.*

Photo from Bettie McKaig Archive



Dear readers!

You probably noticed that there are no signatures under the photos?

Professor Bettie McKaig was tireless and responsible. When at the end of last year we turned to her as the International President ICD 2019 with a proposal to give an interview for DentArt magazine, she agreed with enthusiasm and, despite her busyness and endless business trips, promptly sent a photo and then answered the questions. We did almost everything we planned, Professor Bettie McKaig approved the design of the interview and the magazine cover. It remains to clarify the captions for the photos, and she promised to do so from Monday February 3, as soon as she returns home ...

And then, as we were informed, that same Monday at Denver Airport, Bettie had a heart attack occurred due to aortic aneurysm. Urgent hospitalization and surgery did not help, and by the evening of February 3, Bettie was gone ...

It is impossible to believe in it, and it is difficult to recognize ...

How to find words that could reduce pain when the heart of a person stops suddenly and unexpectedly at that moment, when you are waiting from this person only good news ?!

Dr. Bettie McKaig was an inspiring leader and a true enthusiast!

We will remember her active, joyful, one who looks with faith in the future, as in this interview! She will be for us an example of the dedicated service of the profession, this main mission of the International College of Dentists!

District 15 of the European Section ICD, the editors of DentArt magazine and Clinic-Studio Apollonia express deep condolences to the family and friends of Bettie McKaig about the bereavement. The best way to perpetuate the memory of the International Past President ICD 2019 is to fulfill our mission – serving human health and humanity.