



A FIRST-TIME VISIT TURNS INTO A LIFETIME CAREER

The fourteenth child in a family of 15 siblings, Dr. Roy Page '57 was raised in Campobello, South Carolina, an area that has been home to the Page family for many generations. "When people would ask where I was born, I used to say 'in the front room,'" Dr. Page remembers. At that time, the family raised cotton, and Dr. Page decided he was going to college.

by Deborah K. Rager

photography by Gavin Sisk, University of Washington, HSCER

A first-time visit to the dentist at age 18 proved to have unforeseen consequences. "Farmers and their families didn't go to the dentist unless they had toothaches," Dr. Page says. "When I was in high school, I wanted to join the military — the reserves — as a way to get money for college, and in order to do so I had to have my teeth repaired. So on my own I started going to the dentist, and I was very intrigued. I got to know the dentist very well, and we became friends. I knew before I ever started college what I wanted to do."

Dr. Page attended Berea College in Berea, Kentucky. Berea is a unique institution (there's no tuition) and students have jobs at the college to pay for their education. "During the summers, I worked for the Del Monte Food Corporation in Illinois, canning peas and corn," he says. "After eight summers, I was a chemist there, and I had earned enough money to put me through dental school." At Berea, Dr. Page worked for a dentist at the hospital. Dr. Clement Hahn, also a graduate of the Baltimore College of Dental Surgery (BCDS), became Dr. Page's mentor and was instrumental in teaching him lab techniques. Dr. Hahn "called the Dental School and told them they ought to take me, and they did. So I never considered anywhere else," Dr. Page says.

Coming to Baltimore "was the first time I'd ever been in a city, and it was overwhelming," he says. While a dental student, Dr. Page also worked at the blood bank at the Johns Hopkins Hospital. During his last year of dental school, Dr. Page joined the Navy's senior dental program. He was commissioned as an ensign and spent four years as a naval officer. It was during this time that he first became curious about periodontal disease. "I would have made the Navy a career except I wanted to be a periodontist, and I wanted a Ph.D.," Dr. Page says. He chose to attend the University of Washington, which he judged to have the best training program of its kind in the country at



1957 yearbook
photo of
Dr. Roy Page

that time. Unfortunately, he applied too late and couldn't be accepted into that year's class of students. Rather than remain in the Navy an additional year, he decided to return home to South Carolina and go into general practice.

Dr. Page made it to Seattle in 1961, and he described it as "almost like entering heaven." He was there only a few weeks when he made two decisions. The first was, he wanted to die there, and the second was, he wanted to live a long life.

He completed the requirements for both a Certificate in Periodontics and a Ph.D. and immediately joined the faculty. Dr. Page received a five-year grant from the National Institutes of Health and spent the next several years building his research program—and his reputation as a scientist and investigator.

“The mission of a university is not only to transmit knowledge, but to acquire new knowledge.”

In 1974, Dr. Page received full tenure as a professor at the University of Washington dental school and also as a professor of pathology in the medical school. In addition, he became director of the university's dental research center and remained in that role for almost 25 years. In the 1970s, Dr. Page authored a textbook on periodontology that was subsequently translated into six languages. He hasn't revised the text since the 1980s, but the book is still used in several countries. During the 1980s, Dr. Page was president of the American Association for Dental Research and later served in the same capacity for the International Association for Dental Research.

In 1990, Dr. Page received funding to establish the Regional Clinical Dental Research Center, which he still directs. "In my personal view, I don't see how a faculty member can keep up to date and be a good teacher without doing research. The two are so intertwined," Dr. Page believes. "The mission of a university is

not only to transmit knowledge, but to acquire new knowledge."

Dr. Page practiced for almost 40 years, until his eyesight began to falter. He still sees patients for diagnosis and performs simple procedures, such as scaling and planing. Throughout his years as a researcher, Dr. Page has focused his work on the pathogenesis and immunological aspects of periodontitis. "It's a fascinating disease in that it serves as a model for many inflammatory diseases," he says. He's particularly interested in developing a vaccine and is completing a third experiment with non-human primates. "In this trial, we're using the antigen that would be used in humans. We'll know the outcome in December," Dr. Page says. If successful, a vaccine based on his research group's work could allow millions the world over to be protected against the ravages of periodontal disease cheaply and safely.

A member of the American Academy of Periodontology, Dr. Page is in his third year of service on the BCDS Board of Visitors. "I was very pleased to be asked," he says. "I feel that the student body is one of the best in the nation." Dr. Page views his role on the board as two-fold. First, he defends and supports the



school's research efforts in the hopes that every dental student can have access to some type of research experience. Second, he brings an "outside of Maryland" perspective, and he can comment on the national role the Dental School can play.

Dr. Page married for the first time three years ago. He enjoys a ready-made family that includes six grandchildren. He counts mountain climbing, camping, hiking, and trout fishing among his interests, and, as an avid opera fan, has never missed a performance of the Seattle Opera Company.

From a cotton farm to a dentist's chair to prestigious positions at a highly regarded university, this alumnus continues to lead a rich and full life, contributing to his profession and to the Baltimore College of Dental Surgery in numerous ways.



Roy C. Page, AB, DDS, PhD **Certificate in Periodontology**

Dr. Roy Page has accomplished much during his career and has given back through service to several professional organizations. These organizations and others have also honored him. The following is a snapshot of these accolades and appointments.

HONORS AND AWARDS

- Distinguished Scientist, American Association for Dental Research, 2001
- Honorary Member, British Society Periodontology, 2001
- Distinguished Alumnus, University of Washington, 2000
- Norton M. Ross Award for Clinical Research, American Dental Association, 1998
- Elected Fellow, Pierre Fauchard Academy, 1990
- Elected Fellow, American College of Dentists, 1990
- Fellowship Award, American Academy of Periodontology, 1989
- Elected Fellow, International College of Dentists, 1989
- Doctor of Science (honorary), Loyola University of Chicago, 1983
- Gies Award by the American Academy of Periodontology for his contributions to Periodontology, 1982

SPECIAL LECTURES

- 25th and 30th Dean Ernest M. Jones Memorial Lecturer, University of Washington School of Dentistry, 1995 and 2000

- Helmut Zander Memorial Lecturer, International Conference on Periodontal Research, Gothenberg, Sweden, 1999

APPOINTMENTS

- Member, Consensus Conference on Dental Caries, NIH, 2001
- Member, Committee on Clinical Significance, 2000-2001
- Member, Committee on Classification of Periodontal Disease, 2000
- Member, Search Committee for an Extramural Director NIDCR, NIH, 1998
- Chair, Subcommittee on Clinical Trials, AAP, 1997
- Spokesperson for the ADA, 1995-(present)
- Member, Consultant, Science, Research and Practice Committee, AAP, 1993-(present)
- President, International Association of Dental Research (IADR), 1987-88
- President, American Association of Dental Research (AADR), 1982-83
- Member, Board of Scientific Counselors, NIDR, 1973-1977

EDITORIAL BOARDS

- Editor-in-Chief, *Journal of Periodontal Research*, 1986-99
- *Journal of Periodontology*
- *Journal of Dental Research*
- *Journal of Clinical Periodontology*