

## Over 60 but not over at 60

Dr. Jeffrey Galler

It was right after Helen's impromptu, in-office, birthday pizza party. Laurie came up to me and exclaimed, "Do you realize that as of now, all of us are over 60?"

That took me by surprise. I, of course, think of myself as somewhere between 28 and 35, but I realized that she was right. All of us, from office manager through hygienists and dental assistants were now on the senior side of 60 years of age.

We do have a sprinkling of much younger, part-time dental assistants and students in the office, but all of us full-timers are now officially seniors! Our entire senior staff is, well, senior.

That got me wondering, was this sudden revelation a good thing or bad thing?

I guess you could make a lot of bad, senior citizen jokes, like:

"Senile dementia makes us view every patient as a new patient," or, "Every procedure and material seems novel, fresh, and innovative to us."

The truth, however, is far different.

Working with the same loyal team for over three decades is a wonderful experience. We work together like a well-oiled machine. We know everyone's likes and dislikes. We read and understand each other's gestures – a raised eyebrow, finger signal, shoulder shrug, has clear meaning to other team members.

All our staff still joke about something that happened several years ago. I had a bad case of laryngitis, and couldn't speak at all. Fortunately, as I worked on patients, our assistants and hygienists were able to speak to the patients and say to the patients exactly what I would have usually said.

I heard them say, "You're doing fine," "You might feel a little pressure for a few seconds," "Sorry, you're going to feel me pushing a little bit, but please don't let it bother you," etc., with my exact tone of voice and inflection.

It made me wonder, “Is this what I really sound like?!” It was an eerie experience, but it made me appreciate and value how well we know each other and work together.

Okay, I suppose it is acceptable to make some jokes at our expense, now that we are all on the other side of 60:

\*There’s nothing left to learn the hard way.

\*No one complains that the office’s soft, easy-listening, music station is old-fashioned.

\*If we buy new uniforms they’re unlikely to wear out.

But, enough of that. I look forward to writing a follow-up article in ten years, when we all pass age 70. I pray that we will be able to continue serving in our wonderful profession.