

MY TENURE AS “CAPTAIN” OF VENETIAN POINT DENTISTRY

Thirty-five years ago (in 1987), at age 26, my bride (Trish) and I borrowed the money needed to open a new practice in my hometown of Orlando. After being refused a loan by a major bank, we were fortunate enough to have been granted this loan from a small community bank. Trish and I decided to locate this office in Dr. Phillips which was a mostly rural suburb that was relatively sparsely populated at the time. Where Universal Studios is today was still an empty lot. We proceeded to gut the interior of the vacated prior professional office located on Sand Lake Road (near its intersection with Turkey Lake Road). The office building was owned by a gregarious local legend, “Coach” John Shelton. We renovated the interior with a four-treatment room office; only two rooms were equipped.

The practice opened its door on Monday, September 1, 1987. The staff consisted of one person (Nancy) who worked the front office and as my dental assistant. I served as dentist and dental hygienist. The accounting system at the time consisted of a “peg board” and likely a half dozen checks for the month. We didn’t purchase our first computer until three years later. Trish was there every step along the way both in person and in spirit. In addition to keeping busy with the office, Trish also served as a school counselor at Altamonte Springs Elementary School. Soon after the office opened, we found out that “we were pregnant”! Dr. Rick was born 9 months later!

Slowly but surely staff was added and the office expanded. Several of the current staff members to this day were early pioneers in the practice and instrumental in its success and growth ... we couldn’t have done it without you! Not only this, but numerous loyal patients were among my first and continue to present for treatment to this day ... certainly we couldn’t have done it without you! We leased additional space and renovated a second and third time and increased the size of the office to six treatment rooms. There was no room for further expansion. A few associate dentists came and went. It became clear with time that the office space was not large enough to accommodate two dentists along with the hygienists who were essential in serving our base of patients.

Looking for a new place to call “home”, in 2001 (three months after “9/11”), Trish and I took a “leap of faith” and purchased the lot where our current office building is located to this day (2 miles north of our original location). Since the national and local economies were in a slump following 9/11, we were able to quickly rezone the lot from its original “country rural estate” to “professional office” then to complete the construction at a rapid pace. From first looking at the property in December of 2001, to rezoning, to designing the building with Scott Architecture, and the construction by Scherer Construction, we occupied and opened our door at Venetian Pointe in January 2003. Already a nautical theme was established as we dedicated ourselves to “Guide the Way to Better Oral Health”. When we moved our practice, this nautical theme was merged with a Venetian theme. The Venetian theme was in honor of my paternal ancestors (which, BTW, according to 23 and me, my DNA is “100% Italian”).

There have certainly been “ups” and “downs” along the way. Fortunately, the waters were most often met with fair weather. This much I know for sure: I was very fortunate to have had Trish as co-captain, our wonderful “crew”, and a faithful following of loyal patients to carry us through. The experience has truly been a thrill and a joy! I will be forever grateful for having served as “Captain” of this ship for the past 35 years. While I hope and plan to continue practicing dentistry at VPD for many years to come, I have passed my role as “Captain” to new Captains – Dr. Palmer and Dr. Rick. With these two “at the helm”, I’m very sure the future for VPD will undoubtedly be bright! Thanks again to one and all for your support!

Yours truly ... Richard C. Rampi, DMD