

PRIDE

Charlotte's African-American M

September-November 2007

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Like Father, Like Son

**Webbers', Coopers' Legacies Thrive
In Changing Dental Industry**

Like Father, Like Son

Family Legacies Thrive in Changing Dental Industry *by Sherri R. Webb*



Photo by Greg Britley

Dr. Noble Cooper, left, poses with his son Dr. Ford Cooper.



Photo by Markus Perry

Dr. Spurgeon Webber III, left, is mentored by his father Dr. Spurgeon Webber Jr.

Fifty-three years ago, when Dr. Noble Cooper of Columbia, S.C., began practicing dentistry, he thought he was merely entering a profession where he could make a living and be successful. Growing up in the Jim Crow era, there were only a few occupations acceptable for black males. So when faced with choosing whether to enter the ministry or becoming a teacher, doctor or dentist, Cooper chose dentistry.

The same was true for Dr. Spurgeon Webber Jr. In high school, when he was faced with the same occupational choices, he decided to become a dentist. After finishing the Air Force Dental Corps, Webber settled in Charlotte in 1961 and began his 46-year dental career.

In addition to choosing the same profession, Cooper and Webber have something else in common. Both have sons who followed them into the dental industry.

The sons, Dr. Ford S. Cooper and Dr. Spurgeon Webber III, started their professions working alongside their fathers. Ford Cooper practiced in Columbia, S.C., with his father and older brother, Noble Jr. After gaining knowledge and experience, he decided to leave the practice to receive additional training to become an orthodontist. Similarly, S.W. Webber III worked with his father for five years before opening his own practice. Each credit those experiences with helping to shape the men and professionals they are today.

From Simplistic to High-Tech

When the elder Cooper and Webber began practicing, the dental industry was primitive compared to its current state. “When I started, the drills were all electric engine driven,” says Noble Cooper. “Everything now is high-speed (and) air driven.” The elder Webber also remembers the earlier tools. “We used to have belt-driven hand pieces for fillings and crowns that were uncomfortable for patients and

tiring for dentists,” says Webber Jr. “Once we changed to air-compressed equipment, it made it a lot easier.”

Cooper and Webber also recall changes in safety precautions, as well as the medicines used. “We used to have to re-sterilize needles and use them repeatedly, and make sure that we washed our hands thoroughly,” says Noble Cooper. “Now we have disposable needles and disposable gloves that not only help protect ourselves but our patients and staff as well.”

Another big change in medicine, says Noble Cooper, “is the anesthesia. We used to only use procaine, which is commonly referred to as Novocain. Now we mostly use xylocaine ...”

More Practitioners of Color

Perhaps the two biggest changes that all the dentists have witnessed are the increase in African American dentists, and advancements in technology. Webber III talked about the increase he’s seen. “In the ’70s and ’80s, the Charlotte region had around 15 African American dentists,” he says. “Now there are approximately 50 ...”

Dental professionals are now able to use computers, lasers, digital photographs and

digital X-rays to effectively and efficiently treat their patients. “Breakthroughs in technology and computers in the dental industry are paramount,” says Ford Cooper.

“Doctors are now able to utilize their knowledge and clinical skills with high-tech applications to help diagnose and formulate very accurate treatment plans.”

Mutual Admiration

But even with elaborate technological advances, both father/son teams rely heavily upon each other and consult with one another often. Both elders talked about the pride they feel in knowing their sons “followed in their footsteps,” and in knowing that their sons have become knowledgeable and professional colleagues. The sons are happy to be able to call upon their fathers’ wisdom. “My dad influenced and inspired me to be competitive and successful in life,” says Ford Cooper.

“Dad and I are able to share two different approaches: old-school wisdom combined with new-school technology,” says Webber III. “I am usually the one seeking advice, but occasionally I can help him on a decision concerning his practice.”


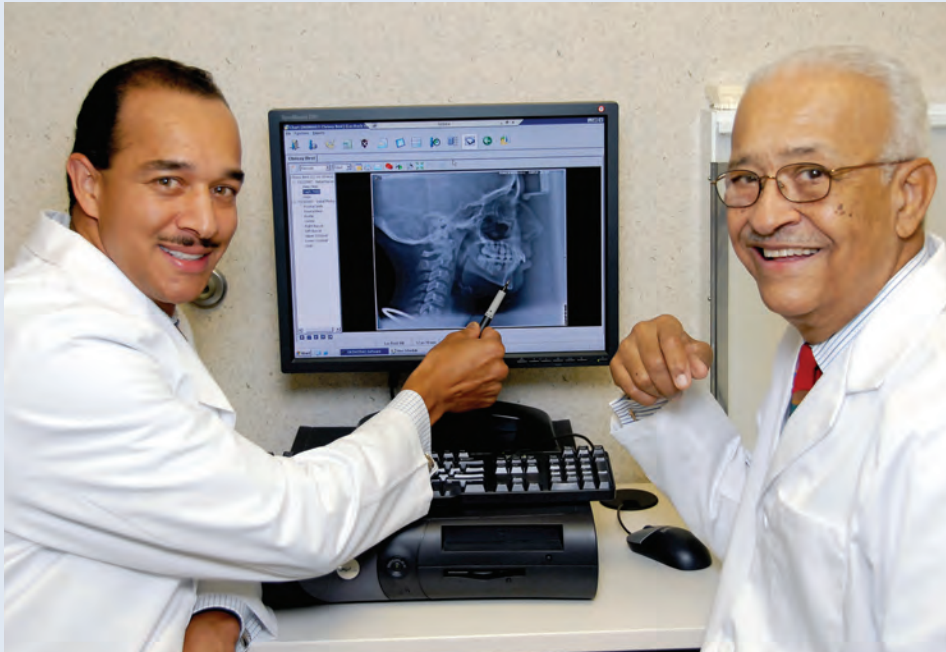
With experience that got its start more than 50 years ago, both families have secured a position in local history. They have also substantiated the long-repeated saying that “Father knows best” — at least in this case. 

Photo by Greg Britley



The Coopers' examine an x-ray.

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2225 E. W.T. Harris Blvd.
(704) 494-4050

Cosmetic Dentistry

Regina Henderson-Jordan
10400 Mallard Creek Road, Suite 103
(704) 503-0202

Michael Stout
700 S. Torrence St., Suite 220

General Dentistry

Kimberly Anderson
8420 Executive Park Drive, Suite 805
(704) 594-9250

Stephanie Ballentine
1315 Matheson Ave.
(704) 334-6907

Kimberly Nixon Blanding
1829 S. Ridge Ave., Kannapolis
(704) 938-4211

Gwyn Davis
8420 Executive Park Drive, Suite 805
(704) 594-9250

Michael Givens
6608 E. W.T. Harris Blvd.
(704) 536-2299

Monique Hudson
1139-B N. Charlotte Ave.
(704) 289-1105

Leon Lester, Jr.
2607 E. 7th St., Suite 102
(704) 333-6010

Thomas A. Mack
2506 Beatties Ford Road
(704) 392-4428

Eugenia Perkins
2120 Keller Ave.
(704) 392-9357

Don Timpton
11535 Carmel Commons Blvd.
(704) 540-2443

Spurgeon Webber Jr.
2120 Keller Ave.
(704) 392-9357

S.W. Webber III
518 East Blvd.
(704) 332-5848

Orthodontics

Felecia Burrige
5232 Albemarle Road, Suite A
(704) 536-0811

Ford S. Cooper
775 Addison Ave., Suite 111
Rock Hill
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