

Dear family and friends,

On Thanksgiving weekend each year I always enjoy opening my heart to share a piece of myself with all the lovely people in my life; my friends, patient family and colleagues. This year has been bittersweet for many of us. Author Joseph Campbell wrote: "Find a place inside where there is joy and the joy will bring out the pain." I have certainly found this to be true.

Just after Christmas last year my dear mentor and the founder of our wonderful practice, Dr. Tom Matthews, passed away. Our friendship began more than 20 years ago when I was a dental student and he was my teacher. Dr. Matthews was a gentle man; a man of few words, who led by example and did his best every day, for every patient, period. In graduate school, he taught us how to make our own braces, forming and welding each one by hand so we would appreciate what our founding fathers did and what the early orthodontic patients had to endure. With Dr. Matthews there were no shortcuts, only thorough diagnosis, treatment planning and dedication to improving the life of each patient we served.

Even in his 80's he was teaching. He always carried a little black binder of notes everywhere he went. One day as I watched this humble man taking notes, it reminded me of the time he was writing notes about me in that little black binder. It was during my admissions interview for the orthodontics program at Baylor 1990. I always wondered what he wrote so one day I decided to ask. After pondering for a moment, he flipped back through the pages and said these three words, "fight for her."

Not only did he fight for me then when only 5 people were chosen out of almost 500 applicants, but he was one of my greatest fans throughout my entire professional life. I will never forget his unending kindness and support.

In January, my mother passed away. She had a difficult life and rheumatoid disease. Throughout my life I watched this disease ravage her small body despite all efforts to control it. The constant pain and medications affected Mother's ability to interact with others as she would have liked to. Even though she is no longer with us we're all so happy her physical and emotional pain have stopped.

Then in March my Father died suddenly. Dad lived with me and words cannot express the sadness that followed. Dad had many friends and he truly loved everyone in his family. He was loyal to the bone. Dad stood up for what was right regardless of the consequences and he would frequently inform anyone that despite his age, he was disgustingly accurate.

I believe much of my Dad's personality was due to the fact that he spent his childhood in the streets of Detroit. He was tough, resilient, and made the best of any situation he was in. He always had a passion for figuring out how things worked and when they didn't work he was driven to figure out why. This is what ignited his love of all things mechanical, particularly automobiles, airplanes, and jet engines.

Like his father and grandfather, he was a dreamer. His bloodline is filled with great men that worked with the likes of Henry Ford, other famous automobile designers, and even men that worked on the design of the first space rockets with NASA.

Dad shared his wealth of knowledge to make airplanes safer for everyone that has ever flown on a commercial airliner. Dad was thoughtful and kind in every way. He shared his time with his neighbors and friends, fixing anything that needed fixing. And if he didn't have the tool he needed, he made one. He was also known to put sticky notes on anyone's car when he noticed the inspection sticker was due, or if they had a low tire that needed to be tended to. He cooked, cleaned and dedicated his life to our mother for 57 years. And last but not least, he protected his family until his death.

Each of these people had a tangible impact on my personality and my life. I am thankful for the years I had with them. I will continue to bring the best of them with me and lead by their example wherever I go.

On a much happier note my youngest son, Chris, returned from Afghanistan safely. He moved back to Dallas and has just been accepted into aviation mechanic school. My other son, Bryan, is also doing quite well. We continue to spend each Sunday together cooking something wonderful but it isn't quite the same without Dad.

Like many of you we have certainly felt the economic stress. We tightened our belt every way we could and thankfully the practice is strong and healthy. I am truly thankful for each of you and for my family. The personal losses this year have heightened my attention, appreciating more than ever, each beautiful moment and each smile. Every kind word each of you has shared with your heartfelt reviews and testimonials and sweet notes to me about your care in my practice means the world to me. Please know that I do not take these kind words for granted.

Presently, more than forty per cent of all our new patients come from online reviews and more than sixty percent of our patients can be linked directly to your kind words about me and my staff. My peers have once again selected me for the "best orthodontist" award in December issue of *D Magazine*. It is such a blessing to work with other doctors who have great pride in their work and express their confidence in my skills with their continued support.

In closing I pray that our Lord will bless you and keep you. May God's light shine upon you and bring you peace. From my family to yours we wish you a wonderful happy season!

Thank you again for your believing in me.

*Linda Crawford*