

Dr. Will Andrews San Diego, CA

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Abstract

Dr. Will A. Andrews has practiced orthodontics in the San Diego suburb of Point Loma for almost 25 years with his father, Dr. Lawrence F. Andrews, a world-renowned orthodontist. He is also co-director of the L. F. Andrews Foundation for Orthodontic Education, which is active in research, teaching, and publishing. In this Portrait, he talks about how he came to be an orthodontist, what he enjoys about the specialty, and he provides some good advice for young orthodontists.

Christine Hong (CH): Tell me something about your childhood.

Will Andrews (WA): I was born in San Diego on June 18th, 1963, the youngest of four children. San Diego is a wonderful place to grow up, live, and raise a family, and I have always felt blessed to be here. My older siblings went on to become a lawyer, a physician, and a financial manager while I am the only one who pursued dentistry and orthodontics, following the career path of my father, Lawrence F. Andrews.

My early life through high school was consumed with lots of outdoor activities, especially sports. I was a three-sport athlete in high school, playing

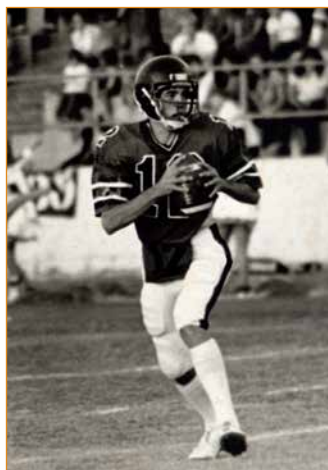
quarterback on a California Interscholastic Federation (CIF) runner-up champion football team, guard on a CIF champion basketball team, and all-city shortstop on the baseball team.

CH: How did you choose dentistry and orthodontics?

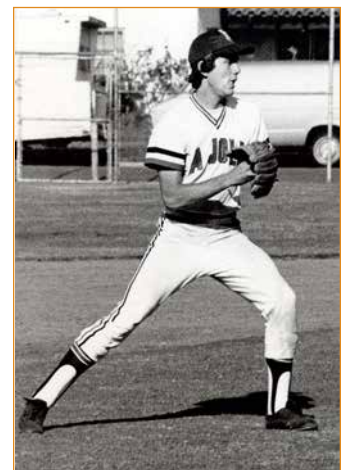
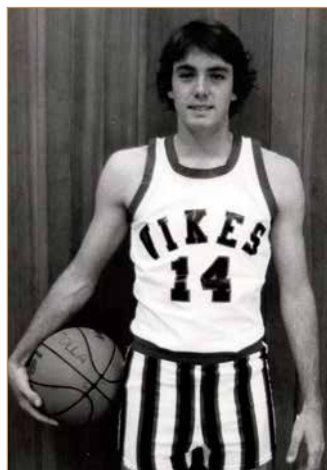
WA: I am often asked, in light of my very well-known and highly esteemed father, how I ended up as an orthodontist. I must admit it was not planned. My father was never even remotely suggestive about my following in his footsteps. Both of my parents were supportive of each of us following our own paths in life. My strategy when entering college was to keep as many doors open as possible by taking a wide range of courses, and seeing what stuck. As I witnessed college friends and siblings graduating from college and embarking on their new careers, I had trouble envisioning my own future. What would I be good at? What would I enjoy? The biggest influence that my father had on me was completely unspoken. I knew only fragments of what he had accomplished in orthodontics and about his stature in the specialty; however, it was plain to see that he truly enjoyed what he was doing. He seemed to be balancing clinical orthodontics with teaching and research; significantly, he was



With siblings in 1967. Left to right: Beth, Lynn, Larry, Will



High school sports in 1980–81



Portrait of a Professional Dr. Will Andrews



The immediate family with parents seated in center. Will is seated on far left with wife Thuy standing behind him (2008).

his own boss. What appealed to me most at the time was the part about being my own boss. My parents didn't even know that I was applying to dental school until letters started arriving at their home.

CH: Where and when did you complete your dental education?

WA: I enrolled in dental school at UCLA, still unsure if dentistry was for me. I decided to treat the first year as a trial period to find out if I had an aptitude for it and if I enjoyed it enough to make a career of it. I have to give a fair amount of credit to my three roommates, who made life fun and interesting and were also very dedicated students. Their study habits rubbed off on me and I began to enjoy the dental school experience more and more.



UCSF in 1992. Left to right: Bob Boyd (Chairman), Dan Burstein, Will Andrews, Janine Nguyen, Ray Maxwell, Linda Hallman, and Howard Freedman

I got my first inkling to consider specializing in orthodontics in my first year at UCLA when my father's name appeared as the answer to a multiple choice question on an exam in a pre-doc orthodontic class taught by Pat Turley. Later, Dr. Turley was kind enough to work with me and my roommate, Howard Freedman, on a research project involving a survey of orthodontists on the prevalence of spontaneous tooth devitalization during orthodontic treatment. It was my first foray into any sort of research, and I was grateful for Dr. Turley's patience and guidance. He also wrote a letter of recommendation for me when it came time to apply to orthodontic residencies, which I'm sure was a significant factor in my being accepted. Two of my roommates went on to oral and maxillofacial surgery residencies at Parkland Hospital in Dallas, and the other two of us went on to orthodontic residencies at UCSF. I finished dental school in 1990 and went straight to residency. I successfully surprised my parents, yet again, when I announced that I had applied to and gotten into an orthodontic residency.

CH: Tell me about your orthodontic residency.

WA: UCSF was wonderful. I was fortunate to have learned under a fantastic faculty at a program with a great tradition. As I mentioned before, my dental school roommate Howard Freedman was also accepted at UCSF, and he remained my roommate during our residency. He is now practicing in Canby, OR, teaches part-time at OHSU, and remains a dear friend. My other classmates at UCSF were Dan Burstein, who practices in the Atlanta area, Ray Maxwell, who is in the Seattle area, Janine Nguyen, who is in Orange County, and Linda Hallman, who became the founding chair of the orthodontic residency program at Children's National Hospital in Washington, D.C. (the name has recently changed to the MedStar Washington Hospital Center Orthodontic Residency Program).

CH: Who were your faculty mentors?

WA: Our chairman was Dr. Robert Boyd, who is now chair at UOP. Dr. Boyd was a real students' advocate; he allowed us to soak in courses from any and all. It was a very open-minded approach, which I loved. The program provided excellent didactic and clinical exposure to surgery (Dr. Lenny Kaban), TMD (Dr. Charles McNeil), craniofacial anomalies (Dr. Karin Vargervik), and perio-ortho (Dr. Boyd). We also learned from Dr. Sheldon Baumrind (scientific literature review), Dr. Sunil Kapila (biomechanics, statistics), Dr. Rodney Lee (cephalometrics and biomechanics), Dr. David Hatcher (imaging), Art Miller (research design) and the incomparable Dr. Fred Fulmer, who administered the requisite indoctrination into the Tweed philosophy. "Big Daddy" Gene West was a professor emeritus at that time, and still covered clinic a half-day per week, as did his son Steve West.

In addition, we were loaded with great part-timers like George Payne, Brian Payne, Earl John-

Portrait of a Professional *Dr. Will Andrews*

son, Joe Gryson, Neal Wells, Dave Johnson, Reggie Griggs, and Jeff Jang, just to name a few. Each of these individuals brought vast experience and a wide variety of methods to the clinic. Ron Roth was no longer directly affiliated with the program, but he allowed residents to attend portions of his two-year course in nearby San Mateo. Most clinical faculty used some variety of the straight-wire appliance, with a mixture of .018 slot and .022 slot. All in all, it was a wide-spectrum education with lots of freedom to experiment.

CH: Did you do research?

WA: Dr. Ib Nielsen was a resident favorite among the faculty; he was my research mentor. Dr. Nielsen is a passionate teacher and researcher and a highly skilled clinician; qualities we all admired. His primary areas of focus were growth and development and growth modification. We learned the Bjork analysis and superimposition method backwards and forward. I still regularly draw from that knowledge today. My research with Dr. Nielsen involved evaluating the lateral headfilms from the well-known sample of naturally optimal occlusions collected by my father, which had led to both the discovery of the Six Keys to Optimal Occlusion and the invention of the straight-wire appliance. The intent was to find out if there were any universal skeletal characteristics that could explain how the occlusions

had developed harmoniously; I also sought to observe the possible limits of skeletal relationships within which the dentition could naturally and fully compensate. The paper was never published, but I have applied what I learned from Dr. Nielsen to several subsequent scientific publications.

CH: How did you choose your practice location?

WA: When I finished my residency, there was little doubt that I would join my father in his San Diego practice. Several of the faculty at UCSF were involved in father-son practices, and knowing that I would be in a similar situation, they offered great advice as to how to handle it. Mainly, I was cautioned to not waltz in thinking that I knew everything, and not to try to make wholesale changes to the structure and philosophy of the practice.

I had just spent two years absorbing everything I could from our faculty and fellow residents. Accordingly, I decided to treat my first two years in private practice as a new residency. I knew my father had developed a fairly comprehensive orthodontic philosophy over the 30-plus years he had been practicing, so I started out with an open mind and wanted to learn all I could from him before settling on my own way of doing things.



A large portion of the UCSF faculty and residents attending one of the first "Six Elements" courses given by my father in San Diego in 1991



Joining my father's practice in 1992

Portrait of a Professional ***Dr. Will Andrews***



Thuy, Will, and Myla in 2003

In the beginning, I worked up all of my patients twice; once using what I had learned at UCSF, and once using my father's approach. It didn't take long to realize that my father's approach was logical, comprehensive, and worked extremely well. After the first year, I never looked back. At that time, my father decided to bring in a foreign-trained orthodontist for a one-year mini-residency. Eventually there were over 20 such foreign residents, who rotated through our office during my first 18 years in practice. It truly felt like a residency in the sense that the atmosphere revolved around learning, researching, and teaching. What a fantastic way to spend the first 18 years in practice!

CH: Do you have an emphasis or interest in some aspect of clinical practice (surgery, craniofacial, interdisciplinary, mixed dentition, and/or adult treatment)?

WA: My father and I have devoted our efforts over the last 24 years to teaching, researching, applying, and improving upon what we call the Six Elements Orthodontic Philosophy. The philosophy not only includes the use of the straight-wire appliance and the goals known as the Six Keys to Optimal Occlusion, but extends to the use of treatment goals for the jaws, taking into account facial appearance, centric relation, and airway, as well as goals for the arches (length, width, shape, depth, and symmetry). It is, in my opinion, by far the most scientifically defensible orthodontic philosophy that exists. Basically, it outlines treatment goals that lead to optimal health, function, and appearance for the patient; it provides recommended methods for reaching those goals that are efficient, effective, and safe. This philosophy is virtually universal in the sense that it can be applied equally to most or all individuals with normal orthodontic problems, regardless of age, gender, or race. Those who understand the Six Elements Orthodontic Philosophy know that is a

complete game-changer when it comes to diagnosis, classification, and treatment. Nothing else even comes close.

I recently posed the following question to my father: "Knowing what you know now, if you could start your career over, would you rather practice with the straight-wire appliance, but without knowing anything about the Six Elements, or would you rather practice with the Six Elements without the straight-wire appliance and be forced to use unsophisticated brackets like standard edgewise?" His answer: without a doubt, he would prefer using the Six Elements! We agree on that. That being said, if the straight-wire appliance is used properly in conjunction with the Six Elements, there is no better formula for success.

I have been very fortunate not only to land on my feet as an orthodontist, but also to practice with my father. We have been able to travel to almost literally the four corners of the earth as teachers. We have designed and patented new orthodontic products, published articles, and are now working on a new textbook about the Six Elements of Orofacial Harmony. I am also currently an assistant clinical professor at UCSF, an adjunct professor at West Virginia University, and co-director of the L. F. Andrews Foundation for Orthodontic Education.

CH: How did you meet your spouse?

WA: The greatest thing that happened to me while in dental school at UCLA was meeting my then future wife, Thuy, who was my classmate. Thuy is still practicing general dentistry part-time. We have one daughter, Myla, born in 1998. Myla graduated from high school this year and will be continuing the Bruin tradition by attending UCLA this fall.

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A nice left on a peaky morning at South Mission Beach, 2015

CH: Tell me about your family life and what you like to do in your free time.

WA: We all enjoy travel and try to pick at least one interesting place to go each year. I often combine a teaching invitation with a family vacation. One of our favorite such trips was to Peru. I spend some of my weekend free time surfing; it's nature's way of erasing stress after a busy week.

CH: Did you take the ABO? Are you an Angle Society member?

WA: I knew that I wanted to be board certified, so I made a point of taking quality records on all of my patients from the very start. I was also encouraged to pursue membership in the Angle Society; I became a member in 2001, and a Diplomate of the ABO in 2003. I have been involved with the Southern California Angle Board of Directors for the last 14 years, and just recently finished a two-year stint as president of the component. The great thing about the Angle Society is the continuity and the commitment that members make to high-quality treatment. In the

Southern California component, we insist that all members bring at least two newly treated cases every year. This definitely keeps us motivated, and even better, it allows us to learn from our talented colleagues, who do not rest on their laurels but continuously bring new work to share. Ultimately, that's good for patients, and they're what it's all about!

CH: Do you have any advice for young orthodontists?

WA: My advice to young orthodontists is the same advice that was given to me when I was starting out: "Don't let your practice run you." Take time to think. Take good records. Take lots of progress records of your work. It's amazing what can be learned from seeing the month-to-month incremental changes that occur during treatment, as opposed to just evaluating before and after records. Challenge yourself by becoming board certified, and consider joining the Angle Society for an ongoing source of inspiration and education. ♦



The Sacred Valley of the Incas in Peru with wife Thuy and daughter Myla. The Urubamba River is in the background (2014).



Board of Directors of the Southern California Component of the Edward H. Angle Society on the front porch of Angle's home in Pasadena (2015)