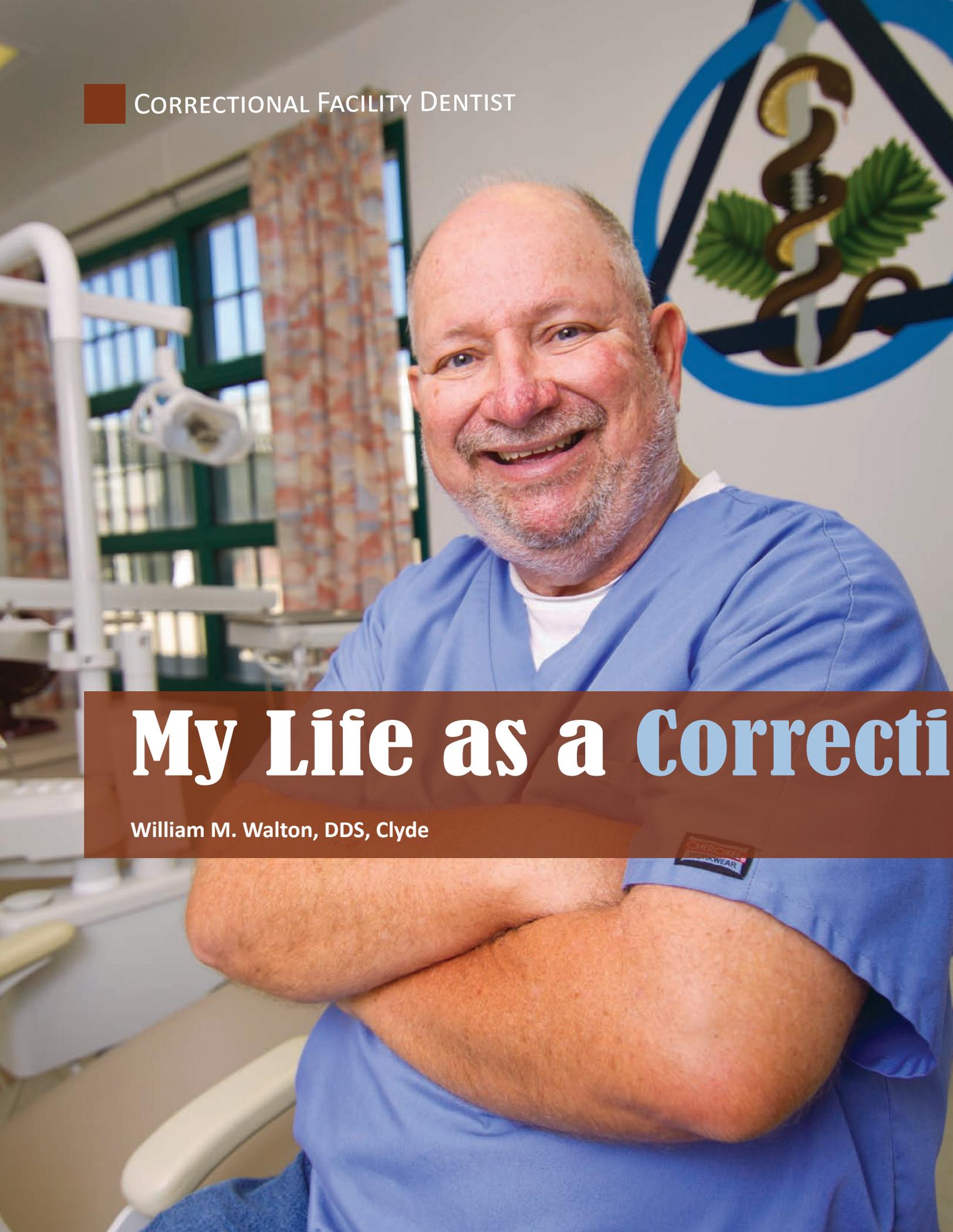


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Every Member...One Association

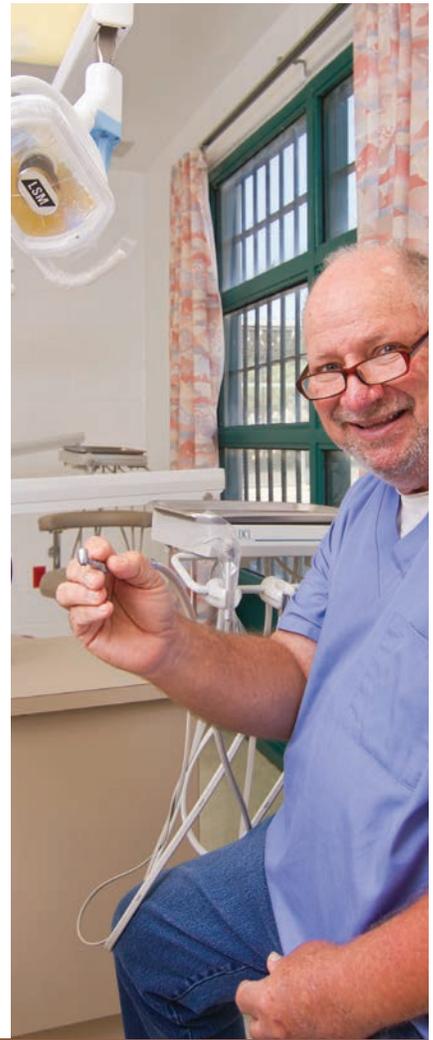
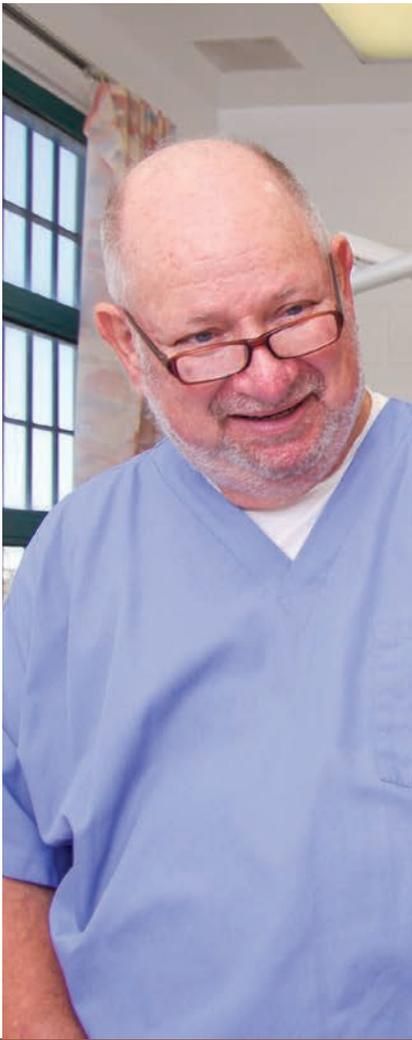


A middle-aged man with a grey beard and mustache, wearing blue scrubs, is smiling warmly at the camera. He is sitting in a dental office, with a dental chair and equipment visible in the background. A large medical logo featuring a caduceus and green leaves is on the wall behind him. A dark brown banner is overlaid across the middle of the image, containing white and light blue text.

CORRECTIONAL FACILITY DENTIST

My Life as a Correcti

William M. Walton, DDS, Clyde



Correctional Facility Dentist

When I started working 1 day a week as an independent contractor at a Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) facility 17 years ago, I had no idea I would eventually become a correctional facility dentist with the Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center (TTUHSC).

In the beginning, I gave up my golf day to earn extra income to pay for the college education of my 3 children. But even when the college expenses were behind me, I continued to enjoy my work at the prison and even added more time.



Dr Walton and his staff

I operated a solo private dental practice for 35 years, but the challenges of operating in a small town and how to transition toward retirement lead me to consider a full-time position at the prison. This type of practice is not for everyone, but it has been great for me.

Owning my own dental practice was my dream in becoming a dentist. As times have changed, a large number of dentists are employees in one situation or another. Being a correctional dentist is very fulfilling for me.

TDCJ dental clinics provide diagnostic, preventive, surgical, basic restorative and periodontal services to patients in the system. The goals are elimination of pain and preservation of function. Difficult surgery and large composite or amalgam restorations are the norm.

Dental assistants and clerks are employees either of the university or a local hospital. Equal access to care is a benchmark and clinic procedures are audited to be sure that patients are treated in a timely manner consistent with the priority of their needs. Referrals are allowed on cases

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that require additional expertise. Dentists make all treatment decisions.

Patient education is often more effective because the dental team can be blunt about the patient's responsibilities in attaining oral health. At times you even hope oral hygiene education might impact the patient in other areas of personal responsibility.

Work conditions are good. Hours are normal and employees receive paid holidays and vacation. Security is the highest priority. For the most part, I am comfortable that I am safe; but employees are always cautioned to not become complacent. Employees go through a metal detector and are pat searched upon entering the facility. No cell phones or cameras are allowed. Certain email communication is possible while on the unit.

Membership in the TDA has been very important to me. Many mentors were helpful in molding my appreciation of the profession. Volunteering in organized dentistry has been a way to honor the support they gave me as a young dentist. Early on I was encouraged to attend reference committee meetings at the annual session to participate in the formulation of the policies of the TDA.

I have been privileged to be one small part of the chorus that is the voice of dentistry in Texas, the TDA. Others may wish to fragment responsibilities for the delivery of dental treatment, but I believe the TDA will remain steadfast in its support of the dentist as the head of the dental team.

