

Michele Rempe, CDA, RDA

I graduated from the College of Marin Dental Assisting Program in 1975 as a DA, CDA. (Hazel O. Torres, CDA, Director. Ruth T. McCarthy, CDA and Berne J. Holman, DDS were instructors at the time) I took my Radiology Exam in 1974. At that time the RDA was not in the schools, however they prepared us for the RDA duties, as well for the RDA exam. I joined the ADAA, became an RDA in 1977, and received my Coronal Polish Certificate. I've been in the dental profession for 49 years. I received a watch for being a CDA member of 45 years.

The Dental Board decided to implement a Practical Exam along with the written. I was one of several RDA's that took one of the first mock board tests.

Yes, I was on the Marin Dental Assistant Society Board with Shirley Watt CDA, RDA, and Melissa Rinck CDA, RDA (before she became a dentist). There were several other RDAs on the board. One of my jobs, was being in charge of the mailing list for all the members. In those days, we didn't have email. Everything was done by hand. I used to have to take the flyers to the Post Office. It was time consuming and a lot of work, but we got it done.

I did some volunteer work in my community showing the kids how to take care of their hygiene. Mainly, in the day care center and elementary schools where my children went. I worked with Carol Hatrick, RDH, for many years. She loaned me some props, such as puppets, large toothbrushes, etc. I enjoyed it and the kids loved it.

When I started working in an office, we processed x-rays by using the dipping method in both developer and fixer. I think the full process was 20 minutes, then they had to dry. If you processed too long you would have to retake the x-rays. Which meant you had to call the patient back in. As time went by, we started to use an electronic processor to develop the x-rays. When I retired, we were obviously using digital X-Rays.

When I started assisting in my first office, the only time we wore gloves or masks was if we did surgery. We also only used the sterilizer on surgical instruments. Cold Solution was used on all other instruments. Amalgam did not come in capsules and we had to use a squeeze cloth to remove excess mercury, and without gloves.

We started wearing gloves and mask when the Aids Epidemic started in the early 80's. Scary times! As assistants we had to learn to work with gloves. It was weird at first, but we managed. We changed the way we cleaned the rooms, not that we didn't do so before. We had to change what types of products we used as well as sterilization techniques. Testing autoclaves and so on.

I have work for 5 different offices. All but one doctor was a UCSF graduate. I loved working with the UCSF doctors because they all worked in similar ways, such as using same instruments and techniques. It was just easier to fit in to a new office, because of the similarities. You caught on faster.

The second health crisis I worked through was Covid-19. More protocols were put in place, like placing adequate ventilation in each of the operatories and throughout the office. I never thought that I would see two health crises in my career. A patient said to me "I bet you had to change the way that you sterilize the office now." I just said that we did have to make some changes but explained that we already had a lot of them implemented, because of the Aids Epidemic. Also, that over the years we kept up with all current safety protocols.

I retired from while working with Dr. Lawson Evans after working together for 32 years, along with the same office manager. I had some wonderful years with the office. We were all like a family.

In those 32 years we switched over to Digital X-rays, scanning for crown & bridge work and then electronically sending them directly to the lab, and placing crowns on Implants placed by Oral Surgeon. Dr. Evans also works with the Oral Surgeon on ALL-on-4 cases.

I had many different responsibilities, in addition to my chairside duties, and taking x-rays. I worked in the lab, pouring models, making night guards, bleaching trays, etc. My responsibilities included being in charge of the ordering all supplies for both doctors, hygienists, and the office. I had to make sure all the equipment, handpieces, & so on, were maintained. Oversight of SDS (MSDS), maintenance of the compliance book, OSHA Binder, AED Monitor permits and registration, proper disposal of sharps & medication, amalgam waste (including old amalgam fillings) NXT Hg5 amalgam separator and all inspections are updates, were all under my purview.

As you can see there have been a lot of changes in my career. I'm sure that I am missing a few things. I can tell you, that I loved my dental career and would not change anything about it.