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A DECADE OF DENTAL HYGIENE IN NEW JERSEY

This year the New Jersey State Dental Hygienists' Association is celebrating its 12th anniversary as the state dental hygiene society and also the tenth anniversary of license of the dental hygienists in the state.

It was between the years of 1918 to 1925 that some determined New Jersey dentists and a few out of state dental hygienists tried to have a bill passed to license the Dental Hygienists in New Jersey. The determination, hope and hard work all combined failed to stir any interest in the majority of practicing dentists in New Jersey. The idea of licensing hygienists in the state slowly died. But in 1925 a new group of dentists had been graduated and licensed to practice dentistry in the state. Many of these new dentists had seen and learned the value of a dental hygienist in the field office overseas in World War 1. With their help and enthusiasm there again came the plea for dental hygiene licensing. However, they were so strongly opposed by fellow practitioners that they too soon lost their enthusiasm.

For twenty years after, the idea lay stagnant. Until November 1945 a group of very determined and pioneer minded dental hygienists living in New Jersey but working in New York and Pennsylvania planned a meeting at the Robert Treat Hotel in Newark, New Jersey. The meeting was open to all licensed dental hygienists who were interested in obtaining a New Jersey Dental Hygiene license and forming a state Dental Hygiene Association. A few of the women who attended this initial meeting were Jane Bulmer, Dorothy Decker, Jane Dutton, Jane Kohler, Esther La Forgia, Ruth Leahy and Loretta Rummel. Out of this first meeting grew plans for the future. A foundation had to be laid for the new Association, so the By-laws were patterned after the National Dental Hygienists' Association. There was then a discussion on study classes. In February of 1946 their mission was accomplished, the original group of women that met three months before were incorporated and the New Jersey Dental Hygienists' Association was born.

The official emblem of the New Jersey Dental Hygienists' Association became the staff with two intertwined serpents and the outline of the state of New Jersey in the background. This was encircled by the words: "Dental Hygienists' Association of the State of New Jersey, Inc."

The meetings that followed were for the purpose of studying. They were held at the respective offices of the members.

Once again with the cooperation of the few enthusiastic dentists in the state, the members of the Association began their long hard battle to pass a bill for the licensure of Dental Hygiene. The week the Governor was to sign the bill was the same week the New Jersey State Dental Convention was held in Atlantic City. The members of the New Jersey Dental Hygienists Association attended the convention with a banner and table clinic. But for political reasons the Governor decided not to sign the bill. Downhearted as they may have been, this did not dampen their plan or spirit to fight until the bill was passed the following year.

The first New Jersey State Boards for Dental Hygiene were given at the University of Pennsylvania, in September of 1948. Those girls interested in obtaining licenses in the state used state board questions

from other states as their guide in studying. Two months later they were notified of the results. All the applicants had passed.

Since that year of 1946, many changes have been made. The Association grew and prospered. From time to time a problem of one kind or another was encountered; the Association survived and has never ceased to function.

The founders of the Society undoubtedly had foresight, because today there is a Southern component to the society. A school of Dental Hygiene was established at Fairleigh Dickinson University in Rutherford but has since been moved to Teaneck, the school was accredited in 1953. There are several meetings held each year which are both interesting and educational. The Association has actively participated "in Children's Dental Health Week and has given table clinics at the semi-annual and annual meetings at the request of the New Jersey Dental Society. The State Journal has proven to be an aid towards making the society a better one and helping it to take its position in the field of dental hygiene.

The New Jersey State Dental Hygienists' Association has had a hard and yet successful 12 years. Many of its members have contributed, and are still contributing to the advancement of the profession in dentistry. But there is still a future ahead. No matter what is to come in the future, those few women who founded the Association will always remain as the firm roots of a growing and proud society.

- DOLORES B. ROMANOW

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