



Luebker Family Aims for Eight Great Smiles

When Norman Luebker was a teenager visiting Dr. Barrett Parker's office during the 1970's to have his braces adjusted, he never imagined that his future wife would also be a patient of Dr. Parker's – or that one day, all six of their children would get orthodontic treatment at the same office in Alameda, CA.



Dr. Barrett Parker

Many orthodontists today find themselves treating siblings, children, and even grandchildren of past patients. Dr. Parker finds himself in this situation more often than not – largely because Alameda residents are much less transient than would be typical in a large metropolitan area.

"Alameda is an island community in the east San Francisco Bay area," says Dr. Parker. "Even though it is easily accessible by bridges and ferry boats, it is somewhat of a hidden gem. The land proved to be stable during the great San Francisco earthquake (1906), so we have a large number of Victorian homes – something you do not usually see in California. Generations of family members typically live here because many children of Alameda families move back to take their grandparents' or parents' homes."

Like many of his patients and neighbors, Dr. Parker has lived in Alameda for most of his life. In 1974, he took over the orthodontic practice established by his father, Dr. John Parker.

"My dad was the senior East Bay orthodontist and many local residents knew him," he says. "He went to all of the orthodontic meetings of his era and was also well-known in the specialty. Unfortunately, he passed away a year after he retired, but we had three years in practice together before his retirement."

When Dr. Parker went through his practice's large collection of old orthodontic models recently, he discovered that he had models of two to three generations of patients from many families living in and near Alameda.

"I grouped each family's models together and started dropping them off at their houses," says Dr. Parker. He adds with a laugh, "They may have sparked some interesting conversations about family history."

When Linda Luebker moved to the Bay area from southern California as a young adult, she took a job at Safeway. The job came with excellent dental coverage, which she used for orthodontic treatment at Dr. Parker's office.

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The Luebker family, from left: Jeremy, Leah, Joel, Linda, Norman, Lindsay, Luke, Jessica.


Photo by Anna Myers





Out-of-the-Ordinary Orthodontists' Stories


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Luebker Orthodontic Family Tree

Norman 


Linda 


Jeremy 


Leah 


Dr. Parker says his largest patient family thus far is the Luebker family, which includes:

- ▶ **Norman, the father, who had braces as a teenager in the 1970's and now visits the office to address bruxism;**
- ▶ **Linda, the mother, who had braces as a young adult during the 1980's;**
- ▶ **Jeremy, age 20, who has completed the active retention phase;**
- ▶ **Leah, age 18, in retention;**
- ▶ **Jessica, age 17, in retention;**
- ▶ **Lindsay, age 15, currently in braces;**
- ▶ **Joel, age 13, currently in braces;**
- ▶ **Luke, age 10, in a removable appliance waiting for eruption and active orthodontic treatment.**

Jessica 

Lindsay 

Joel 

Luke 

"I was very excited about the opportunity because my teeth were pretty crooked," she says. "It was difficult to clean them properly, and I was embarrassed to smile."

Linda and Norman met while volunteering at a Christian high school outreach camp. Dr. Parker removed her braces temporarily for their wedding.

As first one and then another child came along, the Luebkers quickly realized each child would be a likely candidate for orthodontic treatment.

"They definitely inherited our problems," says Norman. "Luckily, based on our own experience, we know we need to help them be good orthodontic patients. It takes a lot of discipline for a young person to follow all of the instructions, but we continually emphasize that they need to take it seriously."

"I think kids learn a lot from the experience of going through orthodontic treatment," adds Norman. "In the end, they will be glad they did it. I appreciate my parents having put me through orthodontic treatment because now I have a nice set of teeth."

The family lives in Castro Valley, a town near Alameda. Norman works as a truck driver making local deliveries, and Linda is at home with the children full-time.

"We have always kept our kids with Dr. Parker because he is such a personable doctor," says Norman. "He makes visits to his office enjoyable. Also, he takes a great deal of care over each case and always seems to be learning about new orthodontic technologies, making sure they are valid and evaluating whether they are right for his patients."

Linda manages the logistics of getting the Luebker orthodontic patients to and from Dr. Parker's office.

"It gets a little hectic," she says. "It helps to keep those who are at the same stage together because they need about the same amount of time for their visits."

At home, she focuses on making sure each young orthodontic patient brushes well.

"I also try to be understanding when they are in pain after their wires are changed," says Linda. "I keep telling them that the pain won't last long and in the end, when the braces come off, it will feel worth it when they look at their smiles."

Seventeen-year-old Jessica Luebker agrees that orthodontic treatment has been a great benefit, and tries to be supportive of her younger siblings now wearing braces.

"Even though I had seen my older brother and sister in braces and thought I knew what to expect, at first it was hard to get used to not being able to eat certain foods," she says. "I also had to learn different ways to deal with pain, like massaging my gums and eating cold foods."

Now Jessica makes similar suggestions to her younger siblings in braces and reinforces her parents' message that orthodontic treatment is worth the effort required of the patient.

"Orthodontic treatment feels completely worth it in the end," she says. "Since my braces came off, I've had a lot of compliments on my smile."