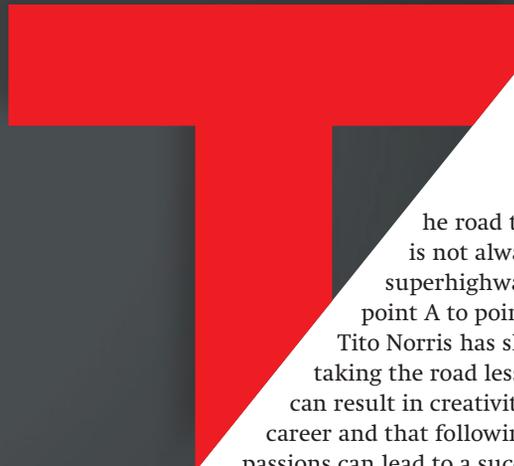


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ROBERT TITO NORRIS, DDS

ENGINEER, DOCTOR, ARTIST,
SCIENTIST, EDUCATOR,
BUSINESSMAN, PHILANTHROPIST



The road to success is not always a superhighway from point A to point B. Dr.

Tito Norris has shown that taking the road less traveled can result in creativity in one's career and that following your passions can lead to a successful and fulfilling business and life.

THE ENGINEER:

From an early age, Robert "Tito" Norris enjoyed problem-solving and working with his hands. "As a kid, I used to love taking apart small appliances and putting them back together again, building Lincoln Logs, Legos, model cars and airplanes, and solving brain teaser puzzles. I've got a handsome scar where I nearly cut my thumb off once while whittling a stick with a Boy Scout knife." Combined with a talent for mathematics, this aptitude of a thinker eventually led him to a mechanical engineering scholarship at the University of Texas at Austin. While engaged in his studies

at UT, he participated in the Coop Program, where students take a one-semester sabbatical to get a job in their career field.

For the first time in his life, he had an income and dental insurance, so he decided to get orthodontic braces and straighten his teeth. Then came the epiphany: "This is engineering in the mouth!"

The wheels started to turn in his mind; he could spend five years working toward an engineering degree, or he could switch tracks and go to dental school in three years, which would put him on the path toward starting his own practice. Less than enthralled with his sabbatical's on-the-job experience, Norris returned to UT for one more semester of engineering studies before he decided to change his major to biology. He chose the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio to pursue his dental education, and he graduated as the salutatorian of the Class of 1992.

THE DOCTOR:

Today, with a thriving 16-year-old orthodontic practice, Norris recognizes the significant influence his mentors have had on him, especially since he is now in a position to impact others' lives in similar ways. One day, a patient's father wanted Norris to speak to her about the dangers of smoking because she held his respect and would probably listen to him. When the patient quit smoking after he talked to her, Norris realized that he never knows how deeply his words and actions could impress someone. A friend once told him, "You're going to be an influence on patients. It's your choice what

Norris strives to be a positive, encouraging mentor to his patients every day.



Tito surrounds himself with talented and energetic people who share his vision for excellence.

kind,” and Norris takes this philosophy to heart by trying to be a positive role model for his patients. He takes care of his health and his teeth, he spends time with his family, and he strives to be a positive, encouraging mentor to his patients every day. Norris is proud of the patients who show interest in dentistry or orthodontics after their favorable experiences at his office; several of these people have gone on to careers in dentistry. As so many look up to him, Norris challenges himself to stay on the leading edge of the technology and materials others in his field use. He dedicates his time and resources to journals, study clubs, and national meetings, as well as giving continuing education on a variety of topics in which it is important to have current knowledge of the world of orthodontics.

THE ARTIST:

Norris views his constant learning as an essential part of being a doctor. To be the best in his field, he must master as many skills as possible. This drive to self-educate led him down a surprising path several years ago: sculpture.

Norris stumbled upon his artistic talents through a surprise Mother’s Day present for his wife in 2003. He hired an artist to create sculptures of his children, then signed up for a sculpting class as an excuse to be away from home in order to attend the artist’s work. While taking the class, Norris discovered that, not only was he good at sculpting, but he loved it too. This craft allowed him to think about teeth in terms of how they fit into the face, as well as the beauty of the face as a whole, instead of just the concepts of biology that he learned in dental school.

With his newfound aptitude for creating smiles in a different medium, Norris began to both visualize the most beautiful smiles and manifest his respect for his mentors. He believes that sculpting someone is akin to deifying them. “It’s one of the most substantial ways to honor them. Their image lives in perpetuity, much like the lessons they taught, which pass down from generation to generation.”

THE SCIENTIST:

His love of learning has also led him to participate in practice-based research, serving as a consultant and participating in clinical trials for The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio’s School of Dentistry, as well as numer-

ous companies, such as OraMetrix, Invisalign, 3M, Ormco, Rocky Mountain Orthodontics, Class One Orthodontics, Henry Schein Orthodontics, and BioLux Research. These trials span the spectrum of innovations in biomaterials, accelerated metabolism, product design, and orthodontic treatment efficiency. Norris’ clinical acumen and grasp of engineering principles make him highly sought after to serve on the Clinical Advisory Boards of numerous companies.

THE EDUCATOR:

In addition to participating in the research and development of new products and ideas, Norris enjoys sharing his knowledge with others by training his staff members and having guest orthodontists shadow him in the office. His first teaching experience involved giving seven seminars per year to all the orthodontic residents in the country under the sponsorship of 3M’s Bottom Line lecture series. These lectures focused on how to open and run a practice, something dental schools don’t spend a lot of time covering. He presented such subjects as negotiating a lease, hiring the first employee, branding and vision, and applying for loans. He feels fortunate to have had the opportunity to impact so many people over the five years that





he participated in the lecture series. “At every orthodontic meeting I attend, I am inevitably stopped by someone who attended one of my seminars, and they thank me profusely for the guidance and mentorship that they received during my lectures.”

THE BUSINESSMAN:

Although he learned a great deal of the biology, mechanics, and philosophy of clinical treatment in dental school, Norris had to figure out the business side of orthodontics for himself. On some level, he felt driven to achieve by his father, an optometrist whose business still allowed him to spend time with his family and was well-respected in Norris’ hometown of Kingsville. Other experience came from working in an orthodontic office on nights and weekends during his residency. While Norris was in United States Air Force during the 1990s, he was able to hone his clinical skills until they were second nature, which allowed him to focus on learning about business and marketing for his own private practice. He discovered that producing consistently excellent results requires developing strong systems and predictable procedures, as well as surrounding himself with talented and energetic people who share his vision for excellence and are willing to do whatever it takes to give patients the level of care they would want for themselves.

THE PHILANTHROPIST:

Norris attributes a significant amount of his practice growth to the thousands of patients who share their positive experiences with friends and family, and he feels obligated to give back to his community in order to return its support and keep the office environment a patient-centric one. One way he accomplishes this is by engaging in quarterly “volunteering” days, in which his office selects a charity and spends one day working there as a team. They have volunteered at such organizations as the San Antonio Food Bank, Daily Bread Ministries, the animal shelter, Habitat for Humanity, and Haven for Hope. The practice also loans out a Hawaiian shave ice truck to various charitable organizations. By allowing the fundraisers to keep the profits of their labor, Norris feels that they will better appreciate the money in addition to raising more than Norris’ office would be able to contribute by mere donation. He looks forward to participating in the Dancing with the Stars fundraiser event that Family Endeavors is putting on in September. These events allow Norris to repay his debt to the community, bring the office together, and make them cognizant of the less fortunate and grateful for the blessings that they have. According to him, the “quarterly rejuvenations” make sure that his staff are refreshed and always keep community service in the forefront of their minds by putting into perspective how little the minor stresses of the office matter in comparison to the bigger problems others face.

Norris is glad to have found his passion in orthodontics. He enthusiastically gives his full energy to every project he works on, whether diagnosing orthodontic problems, running a business, sculpting, or doing philanthropy. As a man who tries to live every day to the fullest, he says, “If it’s worth doing, it’s worth doing right, and it’s worth doing well.”