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Dana said he and his wife, Jo Conda, have been blessed with intelligent, hard-working children who grew up respecting one another and helping out with all kinds of chores at work and at home. "I told my children whatever they chose to do, they must enjoy it, and wherever they chose to live, they must enjoy that. And behold they chose dentistry. That's the ultimate compliment. They chose what I love, and they chose the place I love. It's pretty much as good as it gets."

The Dana family of dental professionals in addition to Mick includes:

- ◆ Dr. Bradley Dana, 37, a 1994 graduate of the College of Dentistry
- ◆ Dr. Jesse Dana, 31, a 2001 graduate of the College of Dentistry who received his orthodontics degree in 2003 at Nova Southeastern University in Davy, Fla.
- ◆ Raquelle Dana Strawn, RDH, 28, a graduate of the University of South Dakota at Vermillion.
- ◆ Dr. Nicole Dana, 26, a 2005 graduate of the College of Dentistry
- ◆ Monique Dana, 22, a third-year dental student at the College of Dentistry

The only Dana offspring who didn't choose dentistry or the Black Hills is Shannon, 35, a certified financial planner and stockbroker in Denver. Although he graduated from the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology in Rapid City, he is one of the biggest fans in Husker nation, his family says.

Dana Family Fund

In appreciation of the education their family has received, Mick, Jo Conda, and Bradley recently established the Dana Family Fund for the UNMC College of Dentistry. This is a permanent endowment at the University of Nebraska Foundation, with proceeds directed by the Dana family to benefit and support the DDS program. With an endowed fund at the foundation, the principal amount is permanently invested and the net income is made available for use by the university for the purpose designated by the donor. The Dana family established the fund as a meaningful way to give back to their alma mater and to sustain excellence at the college. Succeeding generations of the Dana family will be able to contribute to the fund.

"We can't thank Nebraska enough. We are totally indebted to Nebraska," Dana said. "We are out-of-staters, and look what they have done for my family and me."

When he was 5, Mick Dana moved with his parents from downtown Chicago to Whitewood, S.D., population 198. There, he

helped in his mother's restaurant and learned about hard work from his electrician father. "From the time I was 6, I remember standing on a box and washing dishes in the restaurant."

He graduated from Sturgis High School and Black Hills State College before dental school. "My goal when I went to dental school was to get through and become a dentist. I didn't know if I could do it," he said. During dental school, he worked at the college for Dr. Robert Krejci, making wax models; Jo Conda worked for a Lincoln attorney. When they returned to South Dakota, Jesse, their third son, was 6 weeks old.

More than imagined

Dentistry has provided far more than Dana ever imagined, he said. It has given him the pleasure of working with his hands – something he always wanted – and it has given him the opportunity to help people. "I have seen over 25,000 patients, helping them in different ways, relieving suffering for some, preventing oral disease for many, giving many others great smiles. It has been fulfilling."

Spearfish, too, has been good to him. The people are friendly and the surrounding Black Hills offer beauty, as well as outdoor activities like hunting and horseback riding. "And the climate is awesome. It's not very hot and not very cold, and most people don't know it," he said.

At age 59 and now with associates in the dental practice, Dana is trying to cut back his rigorous schedule. "It would be hard for me to retire," he said. "I hope my hands hold up so I can work until the end of time," he said. His daughter Nicole said, even on his day off, she is likely to call him to ask his opinion. Since the dental office is electronic, he can view images on his computer at home.

"All I can say, and sometimes we forget this, is the older you get, you know there's an end. I want to enjoy my children, and I hope they can enjoy me as much as I enjoy them," he said.

One of his only concerns about the family dental practice in a small community is making sure there are enough patients for each member of the group. Nicole is one of the first female dentists in the area outside Rapid City and is already bringing in young parents with children. The group also has bought a practice in Rapid City and is beginning to remodel that office in anticipation of Monique's return in two years.

Mowing, shoveling

The Dana children were raised in the clinic's office and worked around the clinic when they weren't at school or competing in sports. They planted flowers in spring, mowed grass in summer, and shoveled sidewalks in winter. Monique began working in the business office when she was 14, and Raquelle was especially poised dealing with patients on the telephone, even as a teenager. Both sons and daughters assisted at chairside.

"Over the years people have gotten used to our children being in the dental office," said Jo Conda. "Our children explored other career avenues, but I think they just came home from school and saw their dad was happy with what he does and that certainly made an impression on them."

"I have a passion for it," Raquelle said about her career. "We all work well together. Our number one focus is our patients. We work together, play together, eat together," she said. "In the winter we attend basketball games; we're a big sports family. We like to make trips to Denver to see Shannon, his wife, and daughter."

Nicole, too, said the atmosphere at Dana Dental Arts is special. "Growing up, and even now, my family members have been my biggest supporters. They have always been the people I could count on the most. It's nice to just look around and have a roomful of people who are truly there for me."

Jesse said he appreciates being able to confer with family members about orthodontic cases and, at the same time, maintain close working relationships with other dentists in area. He said his parents' support and guidance have served as a model for the life he wants to provide for his family. ♦

In Memory

■ Class of 1940, **Dr. Ralph W. Ludwick Jr.**, 88, Lincoln, died Aug. 9, 2005, in Maine. He served in the U.S. Navy and the Naval Reserve.

■ Class of 1954, **Dr. Arden V. Means**, 79, Las Vegas, formerly of Lincoln, died Aug. 21, 2005, in Lincoln. He lettered in football at the University of Nebraska. He served in the Merchant Marine and U.S. Navy. He practiced in Holdrege and Omaha until 1987 when he moved to Las Vegas and practiced there.

■ Class of 1976, **Dr. Tom Hasegawa**, associate dean for clinical affairs at the Baylor College of Dentistry, died July 28, 2005. He joined the Baylor faculty in 1986 and served as associate dean since 1996. ♦