

Alumni Profile: Captain Sean Meehan, D'92

A distinctive career of dentistry and military service culminates in a Deanship.



FOR CAPTAIN SEAN MEEHAN (D'92), a degree from Penn Dental Medicine launched a distinguished and varied dental and military career. His accomplishments include teaching and practicing dentistry as a civilian and as a Naval officer, in multiple U.S. settings and as far away as Japan — including on a Naval vessel during the Kosovo War. Most recently, following a decade of academic and administrative service, he was named Dean of the Naval Postgraduate Dental School (NPDS) in Bethesda, Md.

As a child in Connecticut, he excelled at school, particularly in science. Dental and medical school were both options for him, but “I chose dentistry because it seemed to offer a better work-life balance. I wanted to be able to care for people and still enjoy the personal parts of my life,” says Captain Meehan, who is married to Angie and has two children, Sean Jr. (16) and Emma (11).

After graduating from Penn Dental Medicine in 1992, Captain Meehan completed a general practice residency at St. Francis Hospital and Medical Center in Connecticut, and was soon commissioned as a Lieutenant in the United States Public Health Service (USPHS), a uniformed service corps overseen by the Surgeon General of the United States. He was assigned to the National Institutes of Health, where he received specialty training in oral medicine, completed the Core Course in Clinical Research, and was involved in bench-top and clinical research in salivary gland disease that led to published studies in medical and dental journals.

Seeking experience in academia, Captain Meehan next accepted a position as Assistant Professor of Diagnostic Sciences at the University of Mississippi Medical Center, School of Dentistry. While he enjoyed teaching and was selected as “Teacher of the Year” by his first-year dental students, he felt something was missing: the camaraderie, discipline, and patriotic fulfillment that had come with serving his country in the USPHS. He joined the Navy as a Lieutenant the following year.

A GLOBAL TOUR OF DUTY

The next several years brought a wealth of experience in military dentistry — at home, at sea, and abroad. At Camp Lejeune, N.C., Captain Meehan served the Second Dental Battalion as Oral Diagnosis Department Head at Branch Dental Clinic French Creek and Command Consultant for Oral Medicine.

During this time, he deployed as Senior Fleet Marine Force Dental Officer with the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit, Landing

Force 6th Fleet, aboard the USS Nashville during Operation Allied Force in Kosovo. Once on board, he quickly adapted to the challenges of practicing dentistry in the middle of the ocean.

“Fortunately, the equipment was pretty much the same as you would see in any dental practice, and I had a captive audience of patients. If someone didn’t show up for an appointment, I sent someone to find them,” he remembers. “The ship was fairly stable, but sometimes heavy seas made things interesting.”

Captain Meehan’s next assignment took him even farther from home, to the U.S. Naval Dental Center Far East in Yokosuka, Japan, just south of Tokyo. At an onshore clinic, he and the staff provided comprehensive dental care for soldiers on U.S. Naval vessels stationed in the harbor. His son was born in Japan in 2000.

DISTINGUISHED STATESIDE APPOINTMENTS

Captain Meehan returned to the United States in 2002 and reported for duty at the National Naval Dental Center in Bethesda, Md., as a member of the oral medicine staff. He served as an Associate Professor at NPDS and Program Director for the Oral Medicine Residency until June 2006. At the end of this tour, he was selected as a Military Fellow at the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations in Oakbrook Terrace, Ill., with a medical staff appointment at the Naval Health Clinic Great Lakes.

He returned to NPDS in 2007, was appointed a full Professor at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences, and, after nearly a decade of service as a faculty member and administrator, he was named Dean of NPDS in June. In his new position, he is pleased to have an opportunity to lead the school he has grown to know and love.

NPDS is the only centralized post-graduate dental school within the Department of Defense. It offers fully accredited two-and-three year residency programs to approximately 50 residents in the specialties

of comprehensive dentistry, prosthodontics, maxillofacial prosthodontics, endodontics, periodontics, orofacial pain, and oral and maxillofacial pathology, and includes ten clinics offering the full spectrum of specialty dental care.

As Dean, he has significant short- and long-term goals. He plans to advance the school's digital initiative by expanding its use of imaging technology and CAD/CAM in restorations, and to build its program in distance education, which brings online continuing education courses to Navy dentists at sea. In addition, he hopes to oversee the opening of a new laser training and research center at the school, and establish the military's first residency program in oral and maxillofacial radiology.

POSITIVE FACULTY ROLE MODELS

Looking back on his years at Penn Dental Medicine, Captain Meehan remembers the excitement of attending a dental school that was fully integrated into a busy University campus. In addition, he still recalls fondly the influential faculty members who helped shape his current understanding of dentistry, especially Dr. Gordon Levenson, who at the time was a faculty member within the Department of Anatomy & Cell Biology. "Dr. Levenson was one of several very positive role models whose teaching style blended intellectual rigor with a high level of collegiality," he says. "They made me feel comfortable and welcome without watering down the academics."

Today, as he observes the residents who arrive at NPDS to begin their training, those from Penn Dental Medicine stand out. "The level of academic preparation I see in the Penn Dental students is always impressive," he says. "It makes me proud to be an alumnus." ■



Save this Date: Monday, February 13, 2017
Penn Dental Medicine visits South Florida!

- Enjoy a day of golf at the pristine, award-winning Falls Club of the Palm Beaches, conveniently located in Lake Worth, Fla., courtesy of club-member Lawrence Kessler (C66, D70) — greens fee \$132 per person, tee time 1:00 p.m.
- Network with classmates and Penn Dental Medicine friends.
- Enjoy dinner, drinks, and conversation with Dean Denis Kinane, compliments of the Office of Development & Alumni Relations — reception 6:00–8:00 p.m.

For more information or to confirm your attendance, contact Elizabeth Ketterlinus at ekett@upenn.edu, 215-898-3328.

By the Numbers: FY16 Giving & Engagement

TOTAL GIVING

- \$13.62M total cumulative gifts
- 12% of alumni made gifts in FY16
- 108 were consecutive donors for 3 years
- 406 (41% of all FY16 donors) were consecutive donors for 5+ years

CAPITAL & ENDOWED GIVING (RESTRICTED)

\$10.92M raised toward capital & endowed gifts

ANNUAL GIVING (UNRESTRICTED)

- \$515K gifts raised toward unrestricted annual funds
- 994 annual giving donors (16% were young alumni, classes 2001-2015)
- 85 Benjamin Franklin Society Members

ENGAGEMENT

- 708 alumni on Find a Penn Dentist (29% increase from FY15)
- 887 attended a PDM event in FY16 (26% increase from FY15)