

Legacy: BONDS & BRIDGES

a newsletter from UTSD Alumni Association, Winter 2026

Tricia Fullerton, Editor

2026: Holiday Tour, White Coats, Class Reunions, Dinner with Friends



Our heartfelt congratulations to Dr. Ron Collins, a distinguished member of the class of 1971, who has been honored as the 2025 UTSD Alumni Association Distinguished Alumnus. Dr. Collins has held significant roles within the Alumni Association, serving both as President and Treasurer. His academic journey began at the University of Houston entering dental school in 1967. He has contributed to dental education through lectures and published articles on a variety of topics. Dr. Collins also remains actively engaged in the community.



utsdalumni.com

Determination: A Key to Success for Dr. Leighton Wier

Dr. Leighton Wier believes in persistence. He's the kind of man who dusts himself off when knocked down and gets back to business. He speaks from experience, focusing on life experiences and the drive to succeed.

Dr. Wier has always challenged adversity. It didn't start off well. His determination was first dashed when he lost the third-grade election to become "assistant fire marshal." Heartbroken, he accepted his fate and resolved to no longer seek leadership roles.

It wasn't until his college days when he found the inner mettle to follow his dreams. Dr. Wier mustered all of his courage to interview with the University of Texas-Austin pre-dental committee head. "He was legendary," Dr. Wier recalled. "He'd rip you apart." Dr. Wier chuckles about botching answers to pointed questions and defending a "grade C" in one of his classes. Dissuaded from applying for dental school and without the chair's recommendation, he managed to get endorsement from all committee members. Soon after, he received word that he was accepted into the UT Dental Branch (now UT School of Dentistry-Houston) in the incoming Class of '64.



UTDB Class of 1964 graduates, Dr. Leighton Wier and classmate Dr. Larry Duran

Things really started to roll for Dr. Wier while in dental school. It was there that he met Linda, a dental hygiene student, whom he would marry in 1968. "We met at the school mailbox," he remembers. "She was seeking a ride home to the Dallas area with my roommate. When he told me afterwards that he was going to ask her out, I informed him that he was too late. I'd already asked her."

Dr. Wier made friends with upperclassman Jerry Long, who would later become a UT faculty member and American Dental Association trustee. Long introduced him to Xi Psi Phi dental fraternity. While there, Dr. Wier held several leadership positions, including chapter president. "We were a popular group," he reminisces. "Our local chapter there was the largest in the country with more than 140 students."



When they were young, Dr. Wier and his wife, Linda, proudly gave their granddaughters their first dental exam before referring them to a children's dentist.

Upon graduation and marriage, Dr. Wier and Linda moved to the U.S. Army's Ft. Eustis. There, Dr. Wier was a captain in the dental corps working on young helicopter pilots and mechanics preparing to deploy in Vietnam. "I'd often have only three days to take care of the soldiers before they'd ship overseas," he states. "Did you know that dental emergencies were the primary cause of evacuation from the field?" Dr. Wier rotated through different departments, finding a passion for restorative and cosmetic dentistry. "If it would bleed or hurt, I'd refer them," he chuckles. "In retrospect, after 50 years of practicing and with all of the new dental developments, it's still hard to beat a gold crown."

The couple then relocated to San Antonio, Dr. Wier's childhood home. There, Dr. Wier purchased two practices within one month, taking on five employees and becoming busier than he ever would have imagined. Twenty years later, the office he rented was listed for sale. He wrestled with the idea of making an offer. He shared this thought with his patient, a prominent businessman, who literally jumped out of the exam chair and exclaimed that it would be a valuable, no-brainer investment.

Dr. Wier acknowledges that this was the best advice he'd ever receive. Business thrived for decades with Dr. Wier and Linda working side by side in the acquired medical building. Dr. Wier attended conferences and conventions, building his professional network, skills, and list



On the far right, Leighton A. Wier, DDS, FICD, MICD, FACD; Past President, USA Section, International College of Dentists; Chair, Journalism Awards Subcommittee; Past Trustee, ICD Foundation. Pictured with Dr. Rusty Schlattman, Dr. Don Lutes, US Representative Dr. Brian Babin, and Dr. Jerry Long

he was up and going in less than a year. He even managed to walk his daughter up the aisle for her wedding. "It was an emotional moment, and it just about killed me," he shares. "The guests gave me a standing ovation."

After many successful years of dentistry, Dr. Wier retired in 2022. "I was tired yesterday, and I'm tired today," he quips. "I'm RETired." Nowadays he spends quality time with Linda, his three children, and two granddaughters. He participates in a Bible studies class, solves the American Dental Association's Dentle Puzzle (with a streak of solving 1215 in a row), collects arrowheads, and attends Friday Conopus Club meetings.

Dr. Wier's favorite hobby is photography. He's purchased top-of-the-line equipment and enjoys taking pictures of wildlife, mostly birds and deer. He also serves as photographer for his granddaughters' state-champion lacrosse team.

"Don't give up—that's my motto," quips Dr. Wier. "Make an impression." And so it is with Dr. Wier's continuing legacy. He considers his most outstanding accomplishment being elected the first Texas president of the USA Section of the International College of Dentists (ICD). He is one of only 23 living ICD Master Fellows in the USA. Dr. Wier has served as President of the Texas Academy of General Dentistry and the San Antonio Dental Society as well as Vice President

of achievements. Then, about twenty years ago, a jolt was about to hit.

It was a beautiful summer day when Dr. Wier faced a tremendous setback. The victim of a terrible auto-pedestrian accident, he was pinned against a wall by the vehicle, his legs crushed and broken in thirty places. Yet, while enduring excruciating pain and awaiting surgery, he itemized a checklist for the office and conjured the resolve to soon walk again. After several surgeries and despite the long healing timeline established by his specialists,



The Wier granddaughters have grown to become champion lacrosse players. Their proud grandparents are always there to support them.

as well as Vice President



UTSD Alumni Association Board of Directors

Dr. Keely Hunsaker, *President*
Dr. Carol Price Dupuis, *Secretary/Treasurer*

Dr. Liz Hunsaker,
Immediate Past President

Directors-at-Large

Dr. Matthew Franzen
Dr. Christina Noblett Thomas
Dr. Laura Santo Salvo
Dr. Karen Walters

Tricia Fullerton, *Executive Director*
Yvette Haas, *Assistant Executive Director*

LEGACY: Bonds and Bridges
is a publication of
The Alumni Association, UTSD
P.O. Box 56667
Houston, TX 77256



2026 Events

April 1

Take a Chance with Chance in Digital Dentistry
Dr. Chance Hunsaker
Via Zoom
(More details to follow)

April-May

Alumni Foundation-Houston
2nd Annual Friends Raising
(Details to follow)

May 7-9

Texas Meeting
San Antonio, Texas

Friday, May 8

UTSD Alumni & Friends Reception

May

UTSD Graduation
NRG
Date to be determined

August

CE Course
Date to be determined

September 17-20

TAGD Lone Star Conference
Texas Dentist of the Year
Texas Young Dentist of the Year

November

"Dinner with Friends"
Distinguished Alumnus Award
Houston, Texas
(Details to follow)

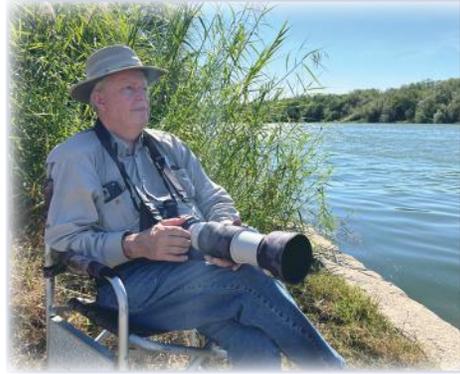
More events are being planned.
Check out our website: utsdalumni.com

Dr. Wier

continued from page 3...

of the Texas Dental Association. He was selected as Texas Dentist of the Year in 2000 and named UT School of Dentistry Alumnus of the Year in 2014. He was Supreme President of Xi Psi Phi Dental Fraternity and was Supreme Editor of the Xi Psi Phi Quarterly for 18 years, eventually becoming Supreme Editor Emeritus.

Dr. Leighton Wier is also a talented nature photographer as his portrait of a very handsome turkey proves.



In Memoriam

Class of 1965
Don W. Dawes

Class of 1969
David H. Smith

Class of 1972
Richard M. Smith

Class of 1973
Paul A. Marco

Class of 1975
Jay T. Gordon

Class of 2010
Justin C. Ramsey

Professor
Robert "Bob" Debes

Chew on This Fun Fact!



A Stained Past

The Japanese tradition of blackening teeth, called ohaguro, was a centuries-old practice to mark coming-of-age, health, status, and beauty. Made of tannins and iron filings, the solution used in ohaguro acted as a sealant, protecting teeth and preventing decay. Popular among samurai warriors and married noblewomen, the process was banned in 1870 by the Meiji government.



Houston, Texas 77256

P.O. Box 56667

association
ALUMNI
utsd