

## BONDS & BRIDGES

*a newsletter from UTSD Alumni Association, Summer 2025*

# Separated by 50 Years, United By Service Through Dentistry



[utsdalumni.com](http://utsdalumni.com)

## INSIDE:

***Meet the family of dentists who love their work, their music, and occasionally a bit of macabre fun.***

# Sierra Smiles: A Harmonious Blend of Work and Play



Whether with medical or musical instruments, the Sierra family dentists proudly develop their finely tuned talents. Dr. Linda Sierra, DDS, and her sons, Dr. James "Tommy" Sierra, DDS, FAGD, DABDSM, and Dr. Christopher "Chris" Sierra, DDS, all accomplished musicians, find a harmonious blend of work and play.

Dr. Linda, a Corpus Christi native, started playing piano in second grade. Her grand piano—a family heirloom from the 1920s—is featured prominently in a specially designed location in her home. It is where she and Drs. Tommy and Chris, have performed duets and recitals. Both sons also have mastered the trumpet, and all three play in weddings and churches.

It was during Dr. Linda's freshman year of junior college when a chemistry instructor encouraged her to pursue a future in medicine. "I knew that I liked working with my hands and helping others," she shares. "So I took pre-med requirements the following semester and did great. I went on to UT Austin in 1969, majoring in biology and minoring in chemistry."

Dr. Linda's plans shifted in her senior year when she met Angel, her future husband. She postponed medical school, married Angel the following year, and moved to Venezuela. While abroad for three years, she observed many women in foreign countries pursuing dentistry careers. Previously, she believed the profession to be strictly for men. She decided to explore the field, realizing it would be a good fit.

The young couple, along with the eldest of their four sons, Louis, returned to the USA. Angel found a job with NASA and Dr. Linda started a three-year, self-paced program at UTDB, graduating in September 1978. "I gave birth to Tommy, my second child, between my second and third semester. I always say that he went to dental school twice—first at my Alma mater and then at UTSD in San Antonio," she chuckles.

Soon after, searching for an associateship in LaPorte, Dr. Linda discovered a recently vacated dental office. She purchased equipment and furniture and opened her practice close to Christmas. Nearby dentists, vacationing during the holidays, referred patients to Dr. Linda. Within five years, she was flourishing.

"I next found it challenging to expand and build an office in Pasadena, yet a woman banker took a chance on me," Dr. Linda admitted.

Dr. Linda reminisces about a memorable patient experience there. "I could look out of the second floor of my office and see the famous honky tonk, Gilley's, where they were filming the movie "Urban Cowboy." Mickey Gilley lived down the street from our office. One day I actually got to see him as a patient. We all took pictures with him and received an autographed photo. That office has grown over time and is where I have been blessed to practice with Tommy and Chris," Dr. Linda continues.



All three of the Sierra dentists agree that their positive work environment supports education and personal growth. Dr. Linda comments, "We ended up having a house built near my new office in Pasadena. Since we lived so close, my sons came to the office from the school next door and helped in doing tasks. I always encouraged them to seek my profession. They saw that I was happy in what I did."

Now in the summer of 2025, Dr. Tommy, accompanied by his mother, is returning from Canada, where



Dr. Chris with a young patient he cared for during a Guatemalan mission trip.

he recently received the prestigious Masters of the Academy of General Dentistry honor on July 12 in the Palais des Congres de Montreal. Dr. Tommy has acquired the distinction of being in a select two percent of dentists in the USA and Canada to wear the esteemed title.

Dr. Tommy joined the Pasadena family dental office in 2004. He obtained his undergraduate degree from Austin College and earned his Doctor of Dental Surgery from the UT Health Science Center in San Antonio with research interests in implantology. Today he runs the Friendswood Dental Group. A strong supporter of continuing education, Dr. Tommy has logged more than 1,200 hours of additional training. He holds many distinguished titles, including a Diplomate of the American Board of Dental Sleep Medicine, Fellow of the Academy of General Dentistry, and Fellow of the International Congress of Oral Implantology. He is passionate about aesthetic and restorative dentistry, using 3D technology and serving as a mentor in the Scottsdale Center and trainer/beta tester for CEREC CAD/CAM dental crowns and porcelain veneers.

"Continuing education makes a huge difference for young dentists," exclaims Dr. Tommy. "By attending monthly meetings in organizations like the Houston Academy of General Dentistry, they can find mentors, establish friendships, and learn about changes in the industry." He then cites rapid development created by artificial intelligence.

Dr. Chris builds on his brother's comments. "AI is making our front office run more efficiently. For example, it cuts down on the time employees dedicate to insurance verification."

Dr. Chris practices alongside his mother in the Sierra Smiles Family Cosmetic & Implant Dentistry office in Pasadena. He graduated from St. Mary's University in San Antonio and received his Doctor of Dental Surgery from the UT School of Dentistry in Houston. He holds oral conscious sedation, Invisalign, and CEREC certifications and completed a year-long implant certification course including hands-on, complex surgeries. He maintains memberships in several esteemed dental organizations.

"Learning a second language also broadens work opportunities," Dr. Chris notes. Like his mother and brother, Dr.



Grandmother Linda, father Chris, and little brother Joey look on as Annabel Sierra gets her teeth cleaned.



Sierra Smiles has grown and thrived for nearly a half century. The Sierra family looks forward to serving the people of Pasadena and the surrounding area for many years to come.



### UTSD Alumni Association Board of Directors

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### 2025 Events

#### September 12

Texas AGD  
Texas Dentist of the Year  
Texas New Dentist of the Year  
Renaissance Austin Hotel  
Austin, Texas

#### September 29

UTSD Alumni Association Reception Social  
HK Art Studio  
7024 Mapleridge, Houston

#### October 2

Dollars of Scholars  
3rd Annual Taco & Tequila  
Contact GHDS

#### October 23-25

SmileCom  
Washington, DC  
Friday, October 24  
UTSD Alumni Reception & Friends  
Marriott Marquis  
Salon 4  
Liberty Salon JJ  
5:00 pm-6:30 pm

#### November 14

"Dinner with Friends"  
Distinguished Alumnus of the Year  
Petroleum Club  
Houston, Texas

### Saturday, January 10, 2026

White Coat Ceremony  
Class of 2028  
University of Houston

## In Memoriam

### *Class of 1953*

Robert F. Pichard, Sr.  
August Joseph (AJ) Sherman

### *Class of 1959*

James G. Price  
Earlon L. Payne

### *Class of 1961*

Charles R. Clark

### *Class of 1962*

Byron J. Hall, Sr.

### *Class of 1965*

Ernest D. Butler  
Willis E. Harrison  
Ronald Presswood  
Norman I. Schneidler

### *Class of 1967*

Marion E. Harrell  
Glenn (Doc) Walters

### *Class of 1973 & 1977*

James A. Woolum

### *Class of 1981*

Gary A. Hilsher  
Andrew H. Smith, III

Gene N. Barry-PG 1975

Jerry D. Black-PG 1975

## Sierra Smiles

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Chris serves Spanish-speaking patients. He values the benefit of global travel and mission projects in remote lands. "Immersion in other cultures deepens our understanding of others, strengthening bonds and communication."

The Sierras have composed a happy, fruitful lifestyle and pursue their hobbies both together and separately. In addition to family trips, Dr. Linda enjoys sailing the waters of Clear Lake and Galveston Bay. Dr. Tommy, an athlete, runs in annual marathons, and Dr. Chris competes in BBQ brisket competitions. The joy that they share is palpable. It's clear that their business name, "Sierra Smiles," is for dentists and patients alike.



The Brothers Sierra are serious about serving their patients but there's always time for a few laughs and lots of superhero fun.

## Chew on This Fun Fact!



### ***Villianous Grills***

***Kanye West, renowned for shocking audiences, is now sporting fixed prosthodontic grills made of titanium. The metal choppers, costing \$850,000, were inspired by a similar set worn by Jaws, the notorious James Bond villain.***



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