

# She keeps her patients smiling!

by Lois Levihn

February is Children's Dental Health Month so I decided to drop by and chat with Dr. Anna Pogoncheff. Anna is a 2013 graduate of the University of Michigan School of Dentistry. Upon graduation she received the Comprehensive Care Award, given to the top clinical dentistry student, and named the National President of the Year for her leadership of the Alpha Chapter of the Xi Psi Phi International Dental Fraternity. She currently practices general dentistry with her father Metodi and brother John in Lansing, Michigan. She is an active member of several local, state and national dental associations, and mentions her current involvement as member of the Michigan Dental Association Committee on Continuing Education and Secretary of the Kingery Prosthodontics Study Club.

LL: Anna, tell us a bit about your Macedonian Roots.

AP: My Macedonian relatives immigrated to Lansing, Mich. from the Kastoria region of Aegean Macedonia between 1910 and 1920. My great-grandmother Baba Yanna Tarpoff Pogoncheff, her brother Archie Tarpoff and my great-grandfather Dedo Gligor Pogoncheff came from the village of Zagoricheni. My great-grandparents Baba Lenka (Maznikoff) and Dedo Tsvetko Lazarov were from Tursia.

LL: It is my understanding there were some famous pie-makers in the Pogoncheff Family. What kind of pies did they make and what was your favorite?

AP: Dedo Carl and Baba Olga (Lazaroff) Pogoncheff, along with Dedo's two brothers and their wives, operated a bakery in Lansing called Washington Foods, which specialized in pies and cakes. Baba and Dedo, Chicho Eatso (Chris) and Nina Ruth (Markoff) Pogoncheff, and Chicho Goy (Blagoy) and Nina Mika (Mary Couzoff) Pogoncheff developed Washington Foods as a top bakery in Lansing. They made and delivered hundreds of fresh pies and cakes daily to restaurants all around the area. They had retired and closed the bakery by the time I was born, so I only remember my Baba Olga making pies for fun. I loved her key lime pie and coconut crème. I still have

many patients that remember the bakery fondly. I guess working together as a family is in our DNA. Ironically, given the topic of this article, it was when I was a dental student on Pediatric Dentistry rotation in summer 2011 that we were inspired to start attending the MPO Conventions. In June 2011, Nina Ruth and Dedo Carl passed away within 10 days of each other. They were the last of the older generation and their passing prompted us to attend our first MPO Convention in 2011 as a way to honor their memories.

LL: Your father has been a dentist for how many years? Did he want you and your brothers to follow in his footsteps?

AP: My father is a 1976 graduate of the University of Michigan School of Dentistry and has been practicing general dentistry in Lansing for 42 years. My mother Marcia is a graduate of Western Michigan University with a Masters in Library Science and continues to work as a librarian in the Grand Ledge Public Schools. Together they also operate an evergreen tree farm on the west side of Lansing. My parents taught us from a young age that any goal can be achieved if you work hard and never give up. Both are thrilled we all became dentists, but are mainly concerned that we are happy and have pride in our work. My brother John is a 2011 graduate of the University of Michigan School of Dentistry. I am thankful every day to have my family as my practice partners. The support of my brother Carl, who operates his Prosthodontics practice next door is also very important to all of us. Carl, also a dentist, and UM graduate, finished his DDS degree (UM 2009) and went on to pursue a specialty degree in Prosthodontics (implants, dentures, and full mouth reconstruction) UM 2012. Carl is the youngest Prosthodontist in the country to achieve the distinction of Board Certified Diplomate of the American College of Prosthodontists, a very prestigious and difficult to attain title. He is also a clinical professor at the University of Michigan.



*Dr. Anna Pogoncheff uses the digital panoramic X-ray machine to assist her in keeping her patient's teeth healthy.*

LL: At what age do you typically see children for the first time and if they are fearful, what do you do to put them at ease?

AP: I typically see children for their first appointment between ages 1.5-2 years old when most of the baby teeth have come in. Many children are fearful at first, but patience and having fun is key to a successful appointment.

LL: What have been the most significant advances in dentistry over the past ten years?

AP: Dentistry and medicine are always evolving as technology changes. Digital impressions, intraoral cameras, and 3D printing are rapidly becoming common tools in dentistry for fabrication of dental prostheses a.k.a. crowns, bridges, partials and dentures. Technological advances in dentistry are aimed at making procedures more efficient and comfortable for patients. One of the main areas of research at the University of Michigan School of Dentistry is tissue regeneration, or growing tissue in the laboratory. Who knows, maybe one day in the future we will be replacing missing teeth with teeth 3D printed out of real tissue or "grown" in a lab!

LL: When you aren't practicing dentistry, what do you like to do with your free time?

AP: My main interests involve staying active. I enjoy swimming, working outside on our family evergreen tree farm, and I love to dance! I am an avid Michigan basketball fan, and am very active in the Lansing Holy Trinity Orthodox Church. I do a lot of traveling, too. John, my Teta Elaine Pogoncheff and I travel all over the country attending Macedonian and Balkan folk dances, however the most special event to us is our Pogoncheff Barn Dance every fall. If you see us at your local dance be sure to say hello!

LL: I don't have to go to the Fort Wayne St. Nicholas Orthodox Church Macedonian Ball to see your brother John: He tags along with Marvin Moehle to visit Born Again Quilts my restoration studio the first Saturday of November before heading out to the ball. It's always a pleasure to read what humorous card they picked out for my birthday. Let's make a deal: I've been invited to the 2018 Pogoncheff Barn Dance and you can tag along with them and visit my studio!

Do you know someone who should be interviewed for this column?  
If so send their contact information to [mtfw@macedonian.org](mailto:mtfw@macedonian.org)