



## Home to the masters



2005 will be remembered as the year in which numerous natural disasters occurred, leaving incredible devastation in their wake. Hurricane Katrina, which ravaged the Gulf coast region of the US, is one of those disasters of historic proportions we will not soon forget.

Among the multitudes affected by Katrina are our colleagues and friends at Louisiana State University School of Dentistry in New Orleans.

Most of those in our profession are well aware of the significant role this institution has played in the evolution of biomaterials and esthetic dentistry. The late Dean Jeansonne appointed John McLean as a visiting faculty member to the School of Dentistry in the 1970s. There McLean created a teaching curriculum for dental ceramics known as the LSU monographs. These monographs later became 2 of the most important books in dental materials, *The Science and Art of Dental Ceramics, Volumes I and II*. I feel comfortable stating, without reservation, that these books represent the most significant contributions ever made to dental ceramics. As I periodically return to read them, I am awed by the fact that all materials utilized today in dental ceramics were described and used by John McLean more than 25 years ago; it is only the technological evolution of the past 3 decades that has allowed these materials to pass into popular use. From leucite crystals to alumina beams and zirconia whiskers, McLean experimented with materials that are now the cornerstones of all-ceramic dentistry.

It is amazing that such revolutionary books were used at the time as an undergraduate curriculum, followed by the establishment of a dedicated dental ceramics laboratory. The enthusiasm and passion of McLean and his colleagues at LSU created a legacy and positioned the school as one of the most progressive institutions in the world in the field of dental ceramics. In 1982, the school played host to the First International Symposium on Ceramics.

The LSU dental laboratory program is one of the few in the US that is based in a dental school, and even more exceptionally, is an integral part of the Department of Prosthodontics. Such symbiosis between clinical dentistry and dental technology is a model for collaboration and professional growth. Gerard Chiche, one of McLean's students, has carried on the legacy with his knowledge of materials combined with clinical excellence. Thus the school has continued as one of the most stimulating and exciting environments in dental education.

Despite being one of the poorest states in the union, Louisiana has always enjoyed the highest retention rates of its residents. As such, the graduates of the LSU School of Dentistry seldom moved beyond the boundaries of their state and so perpetuated LSU as being one of the best-kept secrets in dental education. The outstanding level of clinical dentistry and dental technology performed by LSU graduates comes as no surprise to anyone who has ever had the chance to spend time at LSU.

It is natural that over time, media attention is being diverted to other current events, but by no means does this mean that the hardships are over. It is with great anticipation and confidence that I look forward to the rapid personal and professional recovery of fellow dentists, dental technicians, and educators, in the place where I spent some of the happiest and most influential years of my life—a place where clinical and technical excellence were second only to friendship, hospitality, and love of the good life.

I have no doubt that we will be able to "Laissez Le Bon Temps Rouler," let the good times roll, in New Orleans again; it could not come a day too soon.

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