

**FAMILY TREES:** (From left) Dr. Peter Mutch; his wife, Nancy; and sons Nate and Andy. (Inset) Dr. Mutch with one Kris Kringle, whom he met (really!) in his operatory chair.



# CHRISTMAS VOCATION

THIS TIME OF YEAR, DR. PETER MUTCH MOVES FROM MOLAR ROOTS TO BLUE-SPRUCE ROOTS WITH EASE.

**“I’VE BEEN THINKING. . . .”**

When Dr. Peter Mutch utters this phrase, Nancy, his wife of 39 years, prepares for an adventure. So in 1993, when the good doctor suggested that the couple and their then-teenage sons move to 80 acres an hour north of Detroit and turn the family Christmas-tree tradition into a family business, the answer was yes.

Two decades later, what began as a restoration project on an old farmhouse and barn in Lapeer, Michigan, has grown into Mutch’s Hidden Pines, home to 60,000 trees of all varieties.

Dr. Mutch, 61 — a general dentist who practices with his younger son, Nate, at Lapeer Dental Centre, a group practice of four — finally opened the tree farm to the public in 2002 once his initial plantings had had adequate time to mature. “The first two hours, nobody showed up,” Dr. Mutch remembers. “My wife said, ‘This could’ve been the stupidest thing you ever did.’ Now, in four weekends we probably see about 5,000 people.”

Those holiday revelers don’t come just for the firs. “The Santa House, hot cocoa, making wreaths, the gift barn — each year we add something,”

says the Mutches’ older son, Andy, 33, a Territory Representative for Benco Dental.

Dr. Mutch’s two passions often overlap in surprising ways: “I’ll be doing a root canal and somebody will ask me why their blue-spruce needles drop.” His *joie de vivre* and diligence, meanwhile, have been passed down to his sons. “He taught us to enjoy your work,” says his other son, Nate, a 32-year-old general dentist at Lapeer Dental. “That mentality keeps me progressing.”

Andy concurs. “My dad loves dentistry. It was neat being exposed to that — your dad loved his job and looked forward to going to work.”

For now, Mutch’s Hidden Pines and Lapeer Dental keep the family patriarch plenty busy — and that’s just how he likes it. “My dad is one of those people who will never retire,” Nate says. “He jokes that after spending a weekend trimming Christmas trees, there’s nothing better than doing a relaxing molar root canal on Monday.”

Writer: Kristie Ceruti. Photographs courtesy of Dr. Peter Mutch