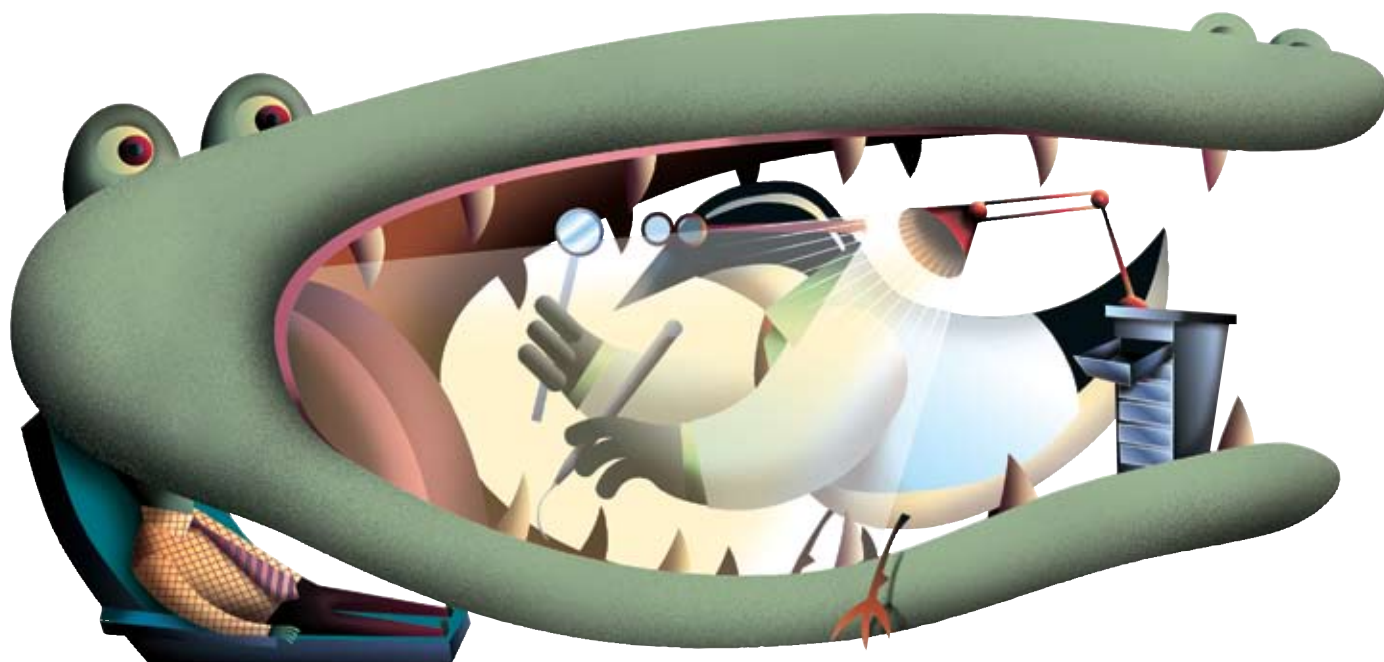


Doctor Fish



Fork over \$8.75 (U.S.) and your tootsies will get the best pedicure ever, gush the tickled patrons.

→ Robert E. Horseman, DDS

ILLUSTRATION BY DAN HUBIG

I was going to tell you about the *garra rufa* this month then cleverly segue into a story about the Egyptian plover (*pluvianus aegyptius*), but I remembered none of this would make sense until I recounted the work of Herodotus, the father of history. You will recall Hysteria, the mother of History when she left in a huff with the two children of History, Fortunata and Ralph in 433 B.C. to return to the family home on the shore of the Aegean Sea. It was here at Halicarnassus she sought refuge with Grandmapola, the mother-in-law of History. Several years passed during which a lot more history happened.

Meanwhile in Ooeda-Onsen Monogatari, a hot springs spa outside Tokyo, sushi is getting its revenge. The owners have shrewdly imported from Turkey a school of *garra rufa*, popularly known in piscatorial circles as the doctor fish. These fish — and I'm sure if you check with Herodotus — are not a new idea,

but it seems they have a thing for dead human flesh. Offer them a nice, live worm, or a tasty salmon egg and they laugh in your face. Ha, ha. They want your feet! In a pinch, your leg or hand will do but feet are the *pièce de résistance* to a doctor fish. Fork over \$8.75 (U.S.) and your tootsies will get the best pedicure ever, gush the tickled patrons. They swarm over your toes and with delicate little nibbles, eat calluses, cuticles, and anything else that make feet the ugly things they are. Isn't that the grossest thing you ever heard?

Yes, but what about Herodotus, you ask? I'll get back to him when I tell you why dental hygienists are in big trouble. But first, let me introduce you to John Ho who runs the Yvonne Hair and Nails Salon with his wife Yvonne in Alexandria, Va. Not much that goes on in Tokyo gets past John, so it wasn't long after the fish pedicure thing appeared

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on page 3 of the *Hair, Nails & Extensions Gazette* that John and Yvonne's place featured a tank full of toothless finny pedicurists swirling around the little fake diver, chanting, "We want toes, we want toes, bring 'em on!"

Cautiously at first, the ladies of Alexandria (men are not into pretty feet so much) were quickly hooked in spite of the price hike to \$50 for 30 minutes. Who knew? Herodotus had a clue because it was he, back in the middle 400s B.C., who first observed the Egyptian plover hard at work cleaning the teeth of torpid crocodiles along the banks of the Nile. Right on the spot, he coined the word "symbiosis" that, roughly translated, means "You clean my teeth and I'll refrain from eating you."

There are those — Cicero the Pooh-pooher, for one — who claim Herodotus had been hitting the Cairo equivalent of Plonk-in-a-Box a little heavy and there was no such thing as a "crocodile bird." Cicero called him "The Father of Lies," but never to his face since Cicero wasn't born until 106 B.C. This was why taunting his memory with "Liar, liar, your toga's on fire" was largely ineffective. Cicero made a habit out of irritating just about everybody until he finally popped off once too often and was executed Dec. 7, 43 B.C., a day that would go down in infamy. Still, Wikipedia has a full description of the avian hygienists online. Who are you going to believe?

The symbiosis between humans and animals seems to be evolving with gathering speed. Ant farms in third-grade classrooms thrive for upward of a week, bosom-nestling Chihuahuas are all the rage in Hollywood, and silver fox fur neck pieces will stage a comeback as soon as the foxes agree to stop squirming for an evening in exchange for a rodent treat. The foxes also ask PETA to refrain from christening them with red paint. They are getting union scale, but dry cleaning is not a covered benefit.

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It is not too big a leap of reason to see why dental hygiene may be next. The pluvianus aegyptia I've contacted seem to feel that, careerwise, a move to human dentition is a step up. Cranky crocs have made them aware of the fact there are better and safer ways of getting a meal available.

The ball is now in Tokyo's court. With

spas expanding their services faster than a GMC dealer's unsold SUV inventory, it is only a matter of time before the Oeodo-Onsen Monogatari spa offers a complete foot and mouth menu. If the patrons will buy bird's nest soup, they will love a plover prophylaxis. If so, those friendly folks back at John and Yvonne's salon in Virginia will have little trouble convincing the 5,000 people who have already gone the fish pedicure route to open wide in the sequel to Hitchcock's *The Birds*.

Perhaps the officials of the ADHA combining forces with the Audubon Society can come up with an answer to protect the profession, otherwise, as Honda said to Ford, "Tough noogies!" ■■■■

CHARLIE O. HAYWARD, 1945-2009

Charlie O. Hayward graduated from the Art Center College of Design in Los Angeles. He created his own animated films and worked on projects for The Pink Panther, Sesame Street and Electric Company. He combined his love of cars with his career by art directing Car Craft, Rod & Custom and Hot Rod magazines. For the last five years, he had been creating Tribal Totems of California Hot Rod Culture, sculptures made from hot rod parts. They can be viewed at flickr.com/photos/hot_art_studio.



Nathan Root

His first of many cover designs for the Journal of the California Dental Association appeared in March 1989; the following month, he began illustrating Dr. Bob Horseman's column. Though they met face-to-face only twice, their collaboration produced an iconic feature, familiar to and beloved by thousands of members of the CDA family over two decades. It was with great sadness that we received the news of Charlie's passing. We send our gratitude for sharing their father with us and our deepest sympathy to his daughter, Carrie, and son, Casey. Donations may be sent to the Christian Science Monitor Operating Fund.