

Picture-Perfect Pearlies



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ILLUSTRATION
BY CHARLIE O.
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I have an average practice in an average town, and my patients are — well, arguably the same. I also believe in the Law of Averages or, at least I did until recently, when it finally dawned on me that it had either been repealed or declared unconstitutional at some time when my attention was diverted.

If it were still on the books or enforced, I would have in my patient base at least one person who resembled the young women who grace the monthly pages of *Vogue*, *Mirabella*, *Glamour*, et al. These are the publications featuring, in addition to impossibly robo-perfect women, powerful, olfactory-intensive perfumes at \$75 bucks a quarter-ounce impregnated in a foldout section of the pages.

In immediate danger of hyperventilating to the point of requiring medical intervention is any testosterone-heavy male who accidentally wanders through these publications because *Field and Stream* isn't available. Should he succumb to curiosity

and rub a little of the page on his wrist when he thought nobody was looking, he could only conclude that all the brands smell exactly the same. Only highly trained drug-sniffing dogs or any female over the age of 10 can tell the difference.

Of interest to dentists are the featured women of the magazines who appear to be of an indeterminate age somewhere between puberty and 30. Although not participating in the scratch-and-sniff advertisements, they all have one thing in common: perfect dentition. Whether this is the result of selective breeding, cosmetic augmentation, or an impossibly good orthodontic result, it poses a diagnostic puzzle.

I find it difficult to accept all these teeth erupted into perfect arch forms naturally. Not a single lateral overlaps a central, no bicuspid is grayed-out from multiple-surfaced amalgams. Lower anteriors are in impeccable alignment. **Who are these people?** More importantly, who

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are their dentists? And why, in 65 years, has one of these dental masterpieces never crossed my threshold?

Average, I've got — the diastema-plagued anteriors in shade C4, the rotated centrals in lingual version, the picket fence grins and missing bicuspid. But where are these Lumin B1 ravers who could put a typodont to shame, who have never known the 3 ½ hour sensory loss of a mandibular block or tried to reapply gloss to an infiltrated lip?

Dentists have needs, too. Think what it would do for your morale if one of these gifted ladies waltzed into your daily schedule once in a while. Even if you never made a dime from her visit, the sheer lift would be incalculable. "Mama mia!" you'd exult. "That'sa whatta teeth are all about — I'd almost forgotten."

Promoting everything today from panty girdles to milk, teeth are framed with suitably enhanced lips frequently the size of small sofa pillows. Grateful for all the attention to their profession, dentists are forced to speculate that in spite of the fact at least 10 women's magazines each devote a minimum of six pages every issue to the display of oral perfection, the owners of the smiles will eventually be revealed to be just one woman.

Yes! A busy woman to be sure, flitting from coast to coast like a demented butterfly, changing contact lenses and wigs between photo shoots with practiced skill. It would account for why she's yet to show up in my office and the best I can hope for is showing her likeness in the "After" section of my "Before and After" album.

I hope I never hear a rumor confirmed that those teeth are right out of a Bioform mold guide, even though it might offer a reasonable explanation of why they are so perfect. I don't think I could ever recover if all she ever needed was an adjustment and a little Benzo-dent dabbed on a sore spot.

Yes, I know the guys in *GQ* magazine exhibit much the same kind of flawless dentition, but the emphasis is more on tonsorial scruffiness and hip apparel appropriate to rich movie stars and homeless people.

In the meanwhile, if anybody has proof that the phantom lady with the perfect teeth is just the product of an Adobe Photoshop high-tech imaging system, I'd like to know so I can stop waiting. ■■■■