

It's Not Ruff Detecting Caries



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You'll never guess what Philip Davoyd is doing now.

"Flip," as he came to be known early in his freshman year when he dared to continually challenge existing shibboleths of the Operative Department, was the environmentalists' poster boy. But that came later. When he expressed his opinion in class that "extension for prevention" was a blight on humanity and that G.V. Black was, at best, an impoverished charlatan, we thought he had *flipped*, thus the sobriquet.

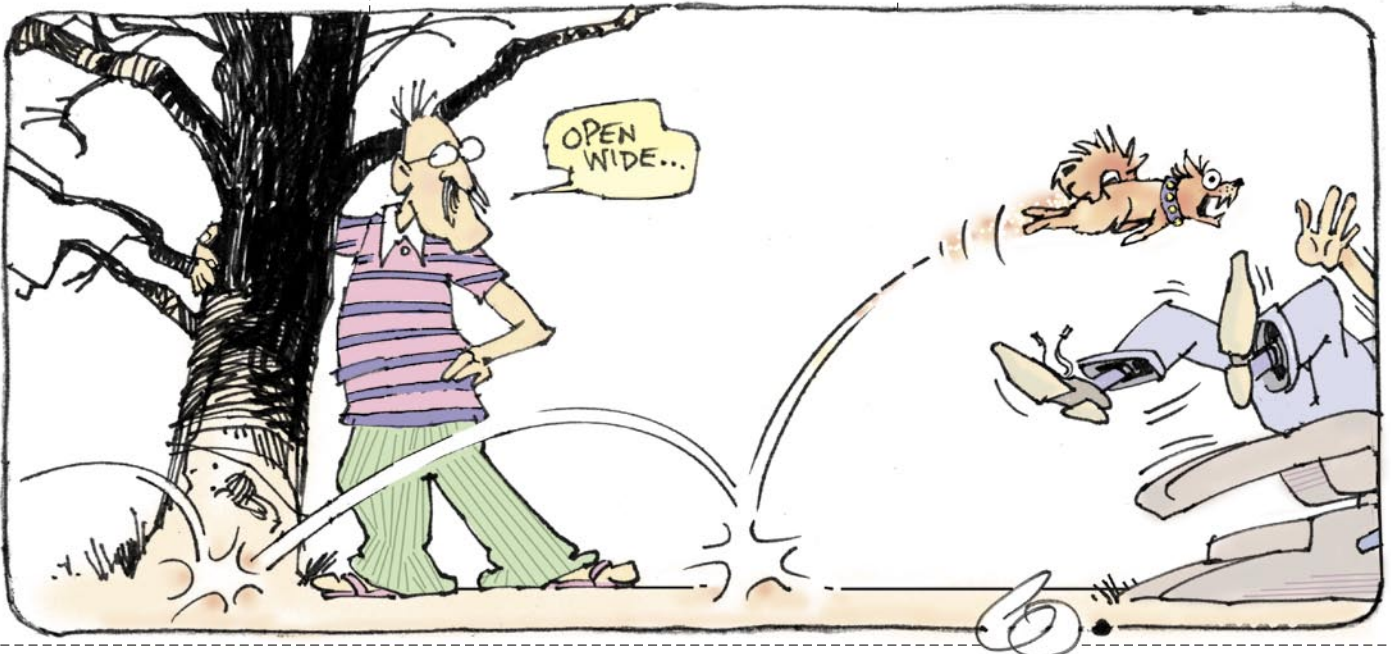
Flip somehow managed to graduate, having intimidated the faculty with threats of discrimination lawsuits, and went on to establish new landmarks in innovative dentistry. You will recall his failed attempt to operate in a vacuum, and the time when he unsuccessfully sued the Edison Company for what he perceived as "contaminated electricity."

His refusal to pay his bill unless he was supplied with "direct" current, maintaining that "alternating" current was the company's illegal scheme for sending out and rapidly retrieving the same electricity over and over, charging for it each time. He lost in federal court where the presiding judge characterized it as a classic example of "gaudiamus igatur loco cabasa" (literally, a frivolous nut case).

Undeterred, he joined a group of militant tree-huggers and had a series of monogamous relationships with a sequoia gigantia, a larch, and a pair of Monterey pines. He finally settled down with a stunning Morton fig tree, finalizing the union with a somber ceremony officiated by a Druid priest operating a mail-order chapel out of Stonehenge, England.

News from Flip's world has been con-

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spicuous by its absence until just the other day. Apparently, he has become obsessed with the idea that radiation, particularly dental X-ray radiation, is going to be our undoing. Flip is convinced that X-rays, once they have passed through cheek, tooth and bone, do not obligingly disappear. They are still out there, he maintains, and they are accumulative. This means that every single one since Roentgen's early experiments is milling around in the atmosphere, and they are the culprits responsible for destroying the ozone layer, not the aerosol in your hairspray.

Not one to sit idly by awaiting certain doom with bovine placidity, Flip has junked his dental X-ray and replaced it with Achtung. Achtung is a retired German shepherd, formerly employed by the Drug Enforcement Administration. As a drug-sniffing agent, Achtung had no peer until he developed an allergy to Samsonite, whereupon his career had to be terminated. That's where Flip found him, in a holding pen at the local pound boring the dewclaws off the other dogs with tales of his derring-do in south Florida drug busts.

Flip's reasoning — and this is hard to dispute — is that if a dog can be trained to detect minute amounts of cocaine, heroin and pot, he can be taught to detect caries. Even a dental student can be taught to recognize caries, although it takes four years and confusion often results with artifacts such as the mental foramen.

Not so with Achtung. As we un-

derstand it, he places his paws on the patient's chest, thrusts his nose directly into the open mouth and announces his findings in no uncertain terms with violent tail wagging and enthusiastic salivating. Since Achtung's muzzle is large enough to cover an entire quadrant, Flip quickly discerned the need to get a more specific diagnosis as well as placate those few patients who bristled at having a 150-pound animal astride them.

Enter "Archie" (full name Archie Wawa), the office auxiliary and emergency backup dog. Archie is 16 ounces of caries-detecting precision. On the command "Yo quiero caries?" he will quickly conduct a full-mouth examination, pausing briefly at each tooth to wag his tail twice for "si" and once for "no." Unfortunately, as with many small dogs, Archie can sometimes lapse into what has been termed the "Excitement Dance of Wee-wee" during the drama of the examination. Once Flip has convinced Archie there will be no big payoff for finding cavities beyond the obligatory half a Milk-Bone, he feels his canine X-ray replacement will outgrow his excitement phase like the rest of us did, and all will be well.

Philip Davoyd, alongside of whom Prince Charming is an ignatz, is not resting on his laurels, or his maples, or oaks for that matter. Do not be surprised if sometime soon he has manipulated genetic engineering to the point where we can eliminate the patient altogether. CDA