

Gold Fever



The saddest-looking old bridge or crown is offered to, and immediately accepted by, patients who believe they've got the makings of a Mercedes down payment.

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ILLUSTRATION
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To increase the value of gold, have it handled by a dentist.

— Anonymous

Gold is currently enjoying a world-wide bull market with the price hovering around \$1,000 an ounce. This phenomenon that places gold right up there with the per-ounce cost of women's antiaging petroleum-based cosmetics and the Olsen Twins' Halloween eye enhancements, is causing some concern in the dental profession.

Patient: All this gold you placed in my mouth 30 years ago? I want it replaced with that white stuff. Just put the gold in this little strong box here.

Dentist: No! Not a chance, forget it! Unh-uh. How about I replace it with white gold?

Patient: Nope, white gold is like white chocolate — it's not real! Upon my demise, I am requesting cremation. Who gets the gold then, huh?

Dentist: I've often wondered, but have been afraid to ask. Never see ads of

cremation societies offering attractive urns for your noncombustibles including whatever nuggets of precious metals that might show up, do you?

With interest in cashing in on the auriferous bull market at fever pitch and dental gold having no sentimental value compared to grandma's wedding ring, dentists experience very little salvaging themselves.

"I could never part with my gold crown. I just love the angulation of the buccal cusps, the fine detail of the occlusal anatomy and the undetectable margins. It and I have been through too many gourmet meals together. I'm having it made into a nose ring." Heart-warming, but unheard of. Instead, the smallest inlay, the saddest-looking old bridge or crown is offered to, and immediately accepted by, patients who believe they've got the makings of a Mercedes down payment transferred from their mouths to the little Ziploc bag in their hands.

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DR. BOB, CONTINUED FROM 638

Pawn shops are doing a gold rush business. Small knots of people will- ing to undergo a soft diet indefinitely, gather outside debating on how to divest themselves of their gold mines painlessly before the inevitable bear market returns. Members of gold restoration study clubs gear up with protest signs prepared to picket the insanity of such shenanigans.

The dental profession is not caught napping. The plan is to offer those pa- tients who value the properties of gold as a restorative material a measure of protec- tion. People are understandably paranoid walking about at night in dimly lit places where gold muggers are likely to lurk. Taking a leaf from General Motors that of- fers LoJack protection in most of its cars, dental suppliers are feverously working to provide patients with a dental equivalent.

It is supposed to work like this: Insert- ed into the matrix of all gold restorations from now on will be a small chip made of whatever small chips are usually made of, only smaller. You suddenly awaken at 3 a.m., the time nowadays when bad things are apparently scheduled. Heart pound- ing, stomach churning as if in response to bad clam dip, you discover a dark figure armed with a pair of Ford pliers and a small ball-peen hammer standing at the foot of the bed.

“Open wide!” Darth Vader demands, pretending to be a dentist with an au- thoritative chairside manner. Two things happen immediately — three, counting sphincter malfunction. The motion sensor in the gold, activated by the bad person’s demand and your own 180-decibel reac- tion, sends a message to LoJack whose

response mechanism will be conveniently outsourced in Bombay.

The company in turn, assuming you’ve paid your monthly subscription fee, alerts your local police department where a dispatcher familiar with Indian patois stands by. Should the perp make good his liberation of your gold, the intelligent chip obliges, transmitting a location finder that will appear automatically on all global positioning devices within 5,000 miles.

Your crown/onlay should be returned to you within 24 hours, ready for recemen- tation unless you elect to join the queue at the pawn shop, realizing that some pos- sessions are not really worth the hassle. In which case, we can offer a nice selection of porcelain or resin replacements in 26 shades of white with no salvageable value whatsoever. ■■■■