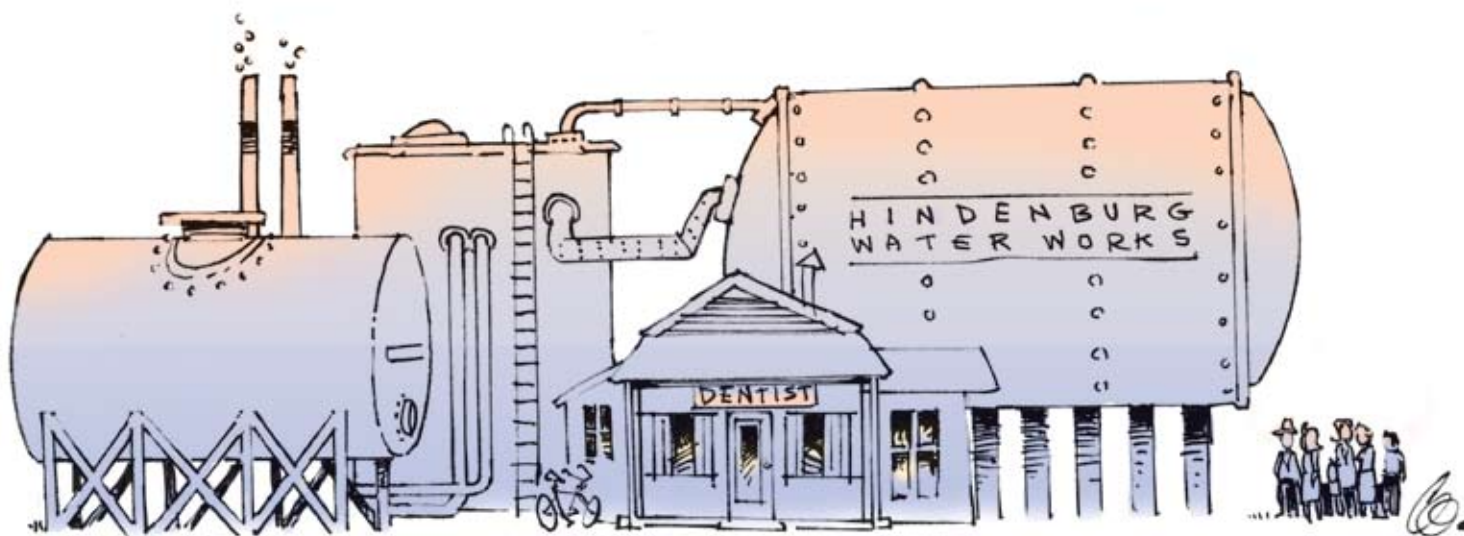


# H<sub>2</sub>O h h h h h h h h h h h h



A press release at the conclusion of the meeting revealed to the world that the one inescapable fact on which all attendees agreed: Water is wet.

→ Robert E. Horseman, DDS

ILLUSTRATION  
BY CHARLIE O.  
HAYWARD

At a meeting held in Brussels in 1978, several hundred of the world's leading health authorities gathered to discuss water. Their goal was to formulate standards of purity that would be "absolute in every nation in every corner of the globe." No water was served during the week-long convocation to prevent provincial arguments, but an open bar was available where single-malt libations were served without dilution.

At the end of the week, after heated scientific discussions mixed with some old water-based drinking songs like "Knees Up, Mother Brown" and "See What the Boys in the Back Room Will Have," delegates voted (8 to 6, 213 abstaining) to strike "corner of the globe" from the records when it was pointed out that, technically, globes had no corners. In a unanimous tally, however, they agreed to gather next year in some mutually acceptable venue like St. Tropez to continue with their deliberations. A press release at the conclusion of the meeting revealed to the world that the one inescapable fact on which all attendees agreed: Water is wet.

Water covers 141,600,000 square miles, or 72 percent of the earth's surface. Without an abundant intake of healthy, chemical-free water, virtually every other wellness effort by man is in vain. There are 6.7 billion people on the planet and each of them is about 70 percent water. One would think by now we would have figured all this out and standardized some water criteria, especially since it was announced in 2006 that Americans drank more bottled water than either milk or beer.

But no! Tap water versus bottled water is an ongoing discussion rivaled only by tabloid revelations of celebrity liaisons. Because nearly every female celebrity in the nation is photographed with a cell phone in one hand and a bottle of water in the other, you might assume that only untalented poor people or males with a lofty disregard for their health drank "unpure" tap water. Actually, it's the other way around with the states largely responsible for purity standards in tap water. Bottled water frequently fails to

CONTINUES ON 681

DR. BOB, CONTINUED FROM 682

meet the same criteria, whether it comes from a 2,000 year-old glacier, or is merely tap water run through some charcoal. However, with a cost-per-unit 200 percent higher than tap water, it easily meets the “you get what you pay for” mentality of alert consumers.

In the average dental office, water is encountered in large quantities, some of it in the form of saliva, the rest coursing through yards of tubing in dental units or just sitting there stagnating waiting for something to activate it. We tried beer as a substitute rinse/lavage, but patient approval was offset by the foaming action that clogged the three-way syringe and reduced intraoral visibility.

A consultation with a friend, Dr. Sal Ammoniac, professor emeritus in chemistry at the local tech school and part-time mixologist at the Dairy Queen gave me the solution.

A quick study, Sal states, “I see your problem and there’s only one way out.”

“And that is ...?”

“Water, by its very nature,” he says, “is wet.” (I knew that from researching the Brussels meeting.) “As such,” he continues, “it’s an ideal breeding ground for bugs of all persuasions.”

“So?”

“So, you’ve got to make your own water, combining the two necessary ingredients, hydrogen and oxygen at the last possible moment before use,” Sal explains.

“I see,” I reply, feigning comprehension. “Combining two gasses to make a liquid eliminates the wetness factor until it’s too late for the bugs to figure out they’ve been had. How much of this stuff does it take to make the water we’ll need?”

Sal muses for a moment, “Well, lessee, three operatories, cuspidors, sinks, handpieces, and syringes — uh, I’d say roughly

In the average dental office, water is encountered in large quantities, some of it in the form of saliva, the rest coursing through yards of tubing in dental units or just sitting there stagnating waiting for something to activate it.

20,000 gallons a day, give or take a quart, Plus a little more for coffee.”

I can see already that our office will be a leading influence in combating water pollution in dental offices. Sal is still calculating logistics. This is the kind of training you get at Dairy Queen.

“We’ll need twice as much hydrogen as oxygen and a big container to mix the two in,” he explains, wetting the tip of his felt tip pen, forgetting it isn’t a pencil.

“Sal, could I ask a question here? Wouldn’t the container have air already in it, thereby throwing the hydrogen/oxygen ratio out of kilter?”

“No problem,” he says, “we evacuate the air from the container first. Just means you’ll have to buy a big evacuator thing, OK?”

“There’s just one other little thing,” I offer carefully, deciding not to mention the black marks on his lip. “I seem to recall the Hindenburg, which was full of hydrogen, didn’t fare too well, and, although I am not a chemistry whiz like yourself, doesn’t oxygen support and encourage combustion?”

Sal is getting miffed. “Look,” he snaps, “you came to me for help with water contamination. If you’re going to get querulous about every little thing, let’s just forget it!”

“No, no, Sal, you’re right, let us proceed.”

A few weeks later, we have installed three tanks in the parking lot. They are in the parking lot because each one is the size of a school bus. I have taken out a second mortgage on my house to pay for the tanks, plumbing and accessories, and by the end of February we are ready to do the right thing by my patients — pure, unpolluted water.

By noon, a sizeable crowd has assembled as Sal, proudly wearing his Dairy Queen cap, eagerly turns the valves to mix our virgin water.

Nothing. I mean, nothing!

People get a little restless. A few giggles. Then a guy in a very high voice says, “Where’s the water, huh?” Sal counters in a chipmunk voice of his own, “Keep yer shirt on, it’ll come!”

It didn’t. Now I’m on the phone to the Industrial Gas and Simethicone Company and the guy booms, “Hydrogen! You can’t have hydrogen without special permission from everybody from the pope to the president. I gave you helium. I thought you were going into deep space exploration in a balloon.”

“No, you idiot! We’re making our own water.”

“Wassamatta, you don’t got a faucet like everybody else?”

Thus ended this noble experiment. But we’ve been lucky, not a single fatality so far from our tap water, just a couple of syncope incidents when patients were presented with their bill.

But did you hear about a new substance with some as yet undisclosed ingredients that, when taken 30 minutes before an appointment, will allow intraoral radiographs to be taken with just an ordinary disposable Kodak Instamatic, thereby eliminating harmful radiation? We’re hot on it! ■■■■