

The Thrill of the Grill



“Because I want to see if your tongue is infected and secretly hope it hurts like hell and you can never find the hole again.”

K, let’s have a look.” New patient, female, age 19, no complaints, health history normal.

YIKES! Do you remember the first time you saw a pierced tongue? A combination of wonder, revulsion, curiosity, more revulsion, a dollop of anger and an instant evaluation of maxed-out stupidity — these flashed through my mind as I tried to keep the emotional kaleidoscope from registering on my face. I’m a professional — cool, detached.

She knows. It’s not the first time. Now comes the lecture, she’s thinking, another sanctimonious adult out of the loop.

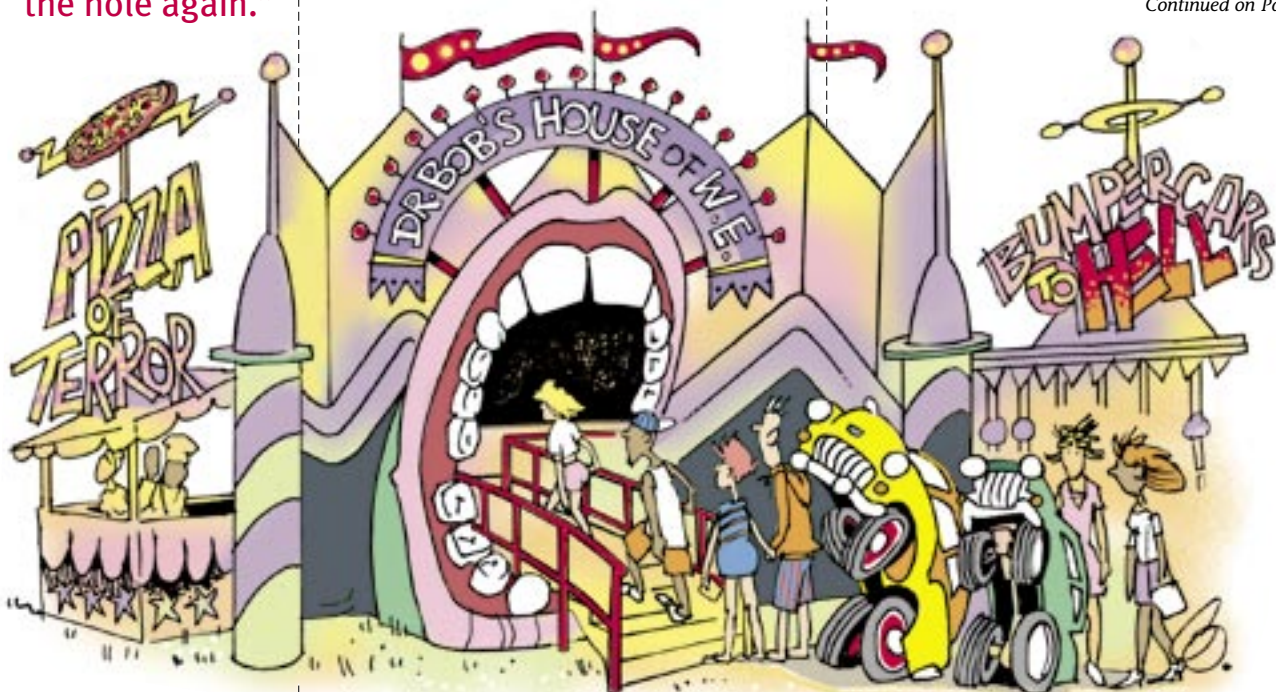
No lecture — not yet, anyway. “You want to take that thing out of your tongue?” I asked in my cool, detached professional manner.

“Why?”

“Because I want to see if your tongue is infected and secretly hope it hurts like hell and you can never find the hole again.” I didn’t actually say this, but she complied eventually, deftly unscrewing the components with white, squared-off nails like little snow shovels.

Normal. Dang! No question, I’m out of the loop, a loop that has an impenetrable border through which no undocumented alien such as myself can ever cross. Dentists — unless they are in their 20s and devotees of the hip-hop phenomenon — will always be out of the loop. We never see these things coming. Tattooed lip and eye liners, trout lips with or without loops of their

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own. A different world and we don't have a passport.

That's why an article by Jillian Cohan reporting for Knight Ridder newspapers out of Wichita, Kansas, hardly ruffled my cool detachment at all, especially after the Zolofk kicked in. Jillian reported on the activities of one Earl "Cadillac" Hunter, owner and chief designer at Cadillac House. This is not a GMC facility, although Earl fancies a Cadillac as his own personal transport. It is Mr. Hunter's entrepreneurial baby catering to a gaggle of in-loop people who have a yen for "teeth jewelry" called "grills" and the pelf to indulge it. Not yet on the *Fortune* 500 list, Cadillac House is the Mecca for grill-seekers from all over the nation hoping to get in on the latest craze before it becomes passe.

You know of a hip-hop icon known as Nelly? Of course not, you're too old, been immured in your dental cubicle for too long and the real world is passing you by. But Google knows and thanks to Nelly (nee Cornell Iral Haynes, Jr., age 35) the dental aspect of Nelly's career peaked recently with the hit rap number "Grillz." The catchy lyrics urged kids across the country to "Smile for me daddy, let me see your grills."

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can have them
studded with
diamonds, rubies,
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forget it.

A technical note for dentists, CDTs, and other out-of-loop parties who couldn't care less: Grills are apparently removable castings of precious or nonprecious metal that snap on over one's teeth much like an orthodontic retainer, only more expensive. They are an expression of one's own unique

hipness, but unless you can have them studded with diamonds, rubies, or other gemstones, forget it, another Paul Wall or Lil' Flip you'll never be, not that there is anything wrong with that.

I am only revealing this phenomenon to you so that when you greet a patient sporting grills, rampant decalcification, TMJ problems and an attitude, your cool, detached demeanor won't vaporize just when it's most needed.

For those grillers eager to move on, visit Dr. Bob's House of Wretched Excess — No Request Too Stupid. I plan to have a demo full denture with "Down With Global Warming" etched in gold across the centrals, flanked by a couple of impressive cubic zirconiums on the laterals. A choice of religious symbols imbedded in the extra-length cuspids will be offered at no extra cost with a complimentary tube of Fixodent. I'll show 'em who's out of the loop! ■■■■