

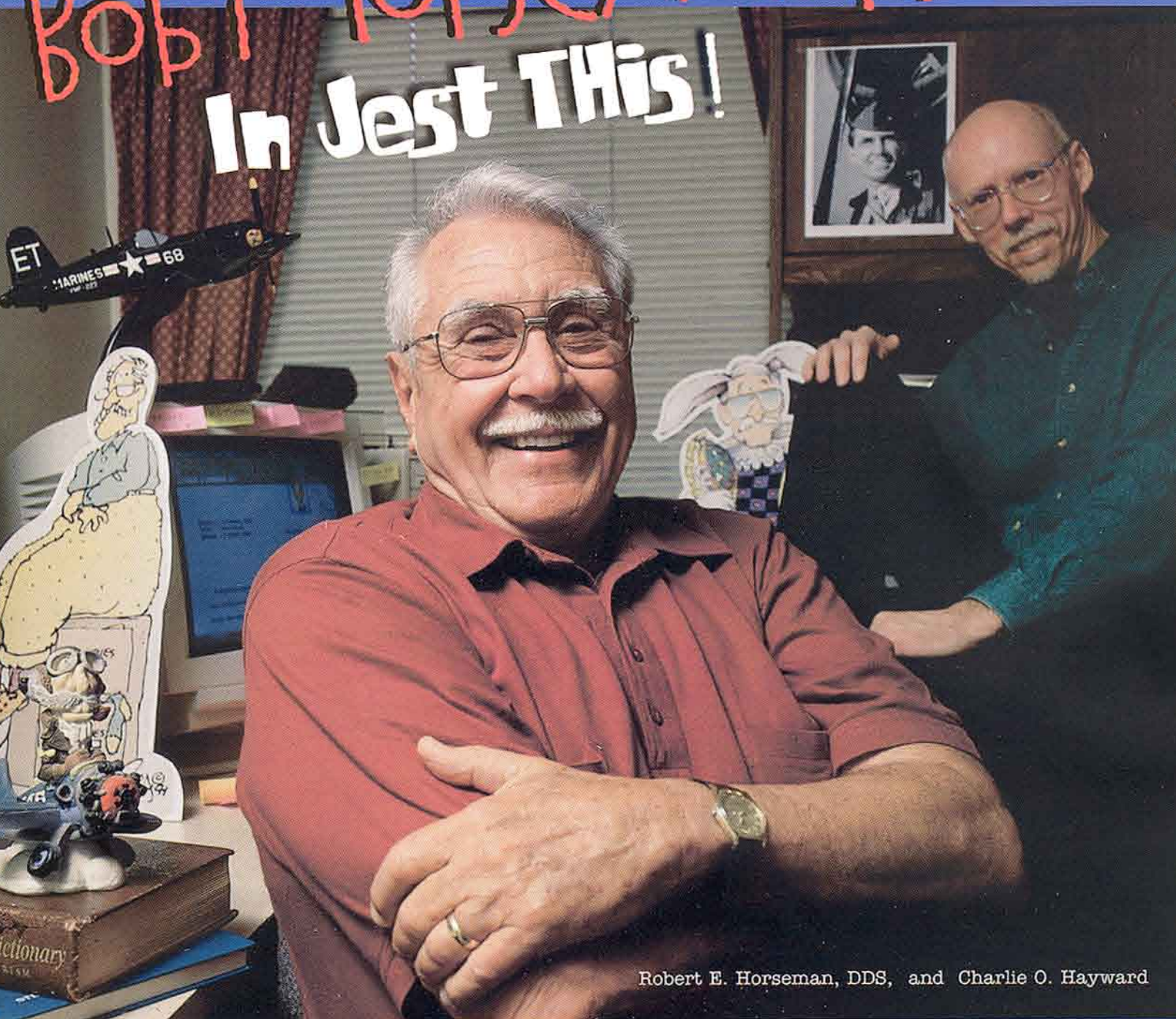
Reader Appreciation  
Cartoonist Sidekick  
Favorite Columns

# CDA

JOURNAL OF THE CALIFORNIA DENTAL ASSOCIATION VOL.27 NO.6

June 1999

## Bob Horsemann In Jest This!



Robert E. Horsemann, DDS, and Charlie O. Hayward



OF THE CALIFORNIA DENTAL ASSOCIATION

# Journal

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## Sound Science Times Three

JACK F. CONLEY, DDS

Recently we reviewed some of the key issues facing the American Dental Association and California Dental Association during the current year. We were not surprised to find that several controversial matters currently facing the dental profession require that our dental representatives or spokespeople carry an identical message to those who oppose our view. That message is succinct -- show us the sound science. We refer to allegations by regulators or other public-minded groups that materials or devices that are used or promoted by dentistry may present dangers to the safety or well-being of the public.

Too often in the past two decades, outside interests have challenged the scientific foundation upon which the profession has developed treatment techniques and dental health recommendations. Frivolous or unsubstantiated claims have created doubts in the minds of the public about the safety of the dental treatment environment and dental health issues.

Important benefits of membership in the dental profession include the continuing efforts by volunteer leaders and staff of our organizations to educate regulators and public servants about the valid scientific information central to these issues. We can only imagine what the increased requirements on the practice of dentistry might be if we did not possess the resources to defend practical, scientifically based treatment

protocols on our behalf.

The three current issues that will continue to grab the spotlight this year are water quality in dental unit waterlines, fluoridation, and latex allergy. The issue of water quality is very much on the California legislative agenda due to Assembly Bill 498, authored by Assemblyman John Longville. Despite the fact that serious health effects associated with exposure to water from dental units have not been documented, if AB 498 passes in its original form, it would be unprofessional conduct for dentists to allow water exiting a dental unit waterline to contain more than 200 colony forming units, or cfu, per ml after January 1, 2001. On the surface, this seems to be an arbitrary, dentistry-specific mandate that would not be supported by current science. Without any doubt, biofilm exists in other environments that would not be addressed by this particular legislation. CDA will continue to support further research and any approach validated by sound scientific information leading to increased water quality.

Fluoridation of public water supplies in California, while not a dental office issue, has been a major goal of the profession in California for many years. While buoyed by the passage of state law in 1995 and, more recently, the decision by the city of Los Angeles to move forward to fluoridate the water for 3.3 million city residents, CDA and other proponents still have been facing an uphill battle against a vocal minority of public-minded individuals in efforts to

educate citizens in cities throughout the state about the benefits of fluoridation. Instead of presenting sound evidence against fluoridation, opponents cleverly focus discussion on peripheral matters such as “98 percent of European countries don’t fluoridate.” These tactics have undoubtedly contributed to safety concerns that have led to the adoption of bans against fluoridation by the city of Santa Cruz and a couple of communities in San Diego County. Dentistry will need to focus the attention of the public on sound scientific data on the effects of fluoride to continue to win converts such as Los Angeles, Sacramento, Mountain View, and Yuba City.

The American Dental Association continues to provide testimony to a House subcommittee on the matter of latex allergy and its effect on patients (the public) and health care professionals. This controversy is particularly interesting in that two federal agencies, the Food and Drug Administration and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, have taken positions that seem to be in conflict, resulting in the potential to alarm the public about the safety of gloves. The net effect, similar to that experienced by dentistry during the height of the AIDS dilemma, might be to heighten public fears resulting in a limitation of the barrier choices available to practitioners.

The last update on the latex issue reported that the ADA leans toward what they view as the more “reasonable” approach of the FDA. The ADA position on this matter should serve as the guiding principle for management of all three issues we have described:

“Organized dentistry is willing to support only recommendations based on sound science. For that reason, the ADA has supported the measured regulatory

actions taken by the FDA thus far.”

These three issues again confirm that sound science is dentistry’s best defense against such professional challenges as undesirable regulations and public health safety fears. Sound science also represents the best offense in the profession’s continuing efforts to improve dental health and the safety of dental care delivery methodologies.

## Prime Position

BY DAVID G. JONES

Dental professionals who ignore nagging neck pains or tingling fingers could be setting themselves up for some devastating changes in their lives, including the loss of their careers.

A pain in a dentist's neck or shoulder, for instance, could signal severe neck injuries caused by repeatedly bending over a patient or otherwise maintaining a stressful position for long periods. A dentist or an auxiliary using repeated hand movements to control instruments can also suffer lower arm and hand numbness and loss of tactile control. The pain of those injuries, coupled with the emotional pain of being forced to leave a fulfilling dental career, is a catastrophic combination. Sigmund H. Abelson, DDS, CDA's speaker of the house, fell victim to both last fall.

"I had been experiencing increasing pain in the back of my neck, predominantly when bending over a patient," Abelson said, "so I'd have to stop working frequently."

By November, the symptoms grew worse, including numbness in his left forearm and hand, and he started to lose some tactile sensitivity that caused him to begin dropping things. When that happened, he knew he had to have it checked. A neurologist confirmed through an MRI that three cervical discs were "severely degenerated." He finally had to admit that his dental career was over.

"When I was told my neck problem was not curable, I knew this wouldn't be fair to my patients," Abelson said. "In my case, it was a very traumatic thing to happen. I realized that being a dentist wasn't a job, it was an identity. It's who I am."

For Harvey J. Barish, DDS, severe shoulder pain signaled a problem, but he initially shrugged it off.

"I had no idea it was actually my neck," he said. "I thought it was some activity I had done that had strained my shoulder."

Later, an MRI found the problem; two cervical discs had degenerated. After working with the pain for two years, Barish was forced to retire in October 1993. Currently chairman of CDA's Council on Scientific Sessions, Barish said the pain of leaving dentistry was almost worse than the physical pain he suffered.

"The first year was devastating," he admitted. "I had lived with the problem for two years and finally concluded I couldn't do it any more, but I still couldn't make the break from dentistry. Finally, I learned to deal with it."

Dental auxiliaries can also suffer the consequences of working in an ergonomically challenging career. Former registered dental hygienist Tammie Bissa, like Abelson and Barish, had to give up a career she loved. Her ordeal with pain began two years before she finally had to quit work in 1993.

"I was having aching pain in my arms and hands," Bissa said. "I was having a difficult time holding instruments. When that started, I really became concerned."

Since her problem turned out to be repetitive strain injury, not carpal tunnel syndrome, surgery was not an option. Physical therapy and anti-inflammatory medications didn't work, either.

"It was very hard to deal with quitting work," Bissa said. "I was battling with myself, wondering if this was something I was going to be able to contend with, but I had to leave."

Maintaining good posture is the key to minimizing injuries. Abelson, for instance, used surgical telescopic lenses for years, causing him to bend his head downward for long periods. He discovered too late that the focal distance was set too short, requiring him to bend his neck un-

naturally. An ergonomics expert advises dentists who use magnification to have the focal length adjusted to allow better posture.

"The further back the focal distance is set, the better lumbar support and spinal alignment will be," said Risa Pollack-Simon, a Certified Management Consultant in Scottsdale, Ariz.. She teaches ergonomics and OSHA compliance continuing education courses at CDA Scientific Sessions and at other major dental meetings nationwide. "To me, magnification and illumination are a key part of supporting the spine and minimizing musculoskeletal disorders."

From a liability viewpoint, Pollack-Simon said dentists or auxiliaries who qualify should carry disability insurance and check with their doctors to see if they have a problem as soon as any symptoms appear.

"Most people wait until the pain is debilitating," she says.

To help prevent debilitating injuries, Tim Caruso, MBA, a physical therapist working at the University of Illinois and at Shriners Hospital in Chicago, says his approach is to teach dentists and auxiliaries how to help themselves.

"There are exercise programs they can do throughout the day to alleviate stresses they feel," says Caruso, who also speaks on ergonomics at CDA and ADA meetings. "These can be done chairside to change position and recover a bit. The key is to balance stress with recovery. That's where success lies."

Abelson admonished dentists and auxiliaries alike to do everything they can to protect themselves so they can have a long and fulfilling career.

"Just like with masks and gloves, protect your body with proper positioning at the chair," he said. "This is using universal precautions for your musculoskeletal system."

## Aussies Turn To Prevention

Dentistry in Australia is shifting from restorative and prosthodontic toward diagnostic and preventive, according to a study published in the Australian Dental Journal.

While the number of children and young adults is remaining fairly constant in Australia, the number of middle-aged and older adults is increasing. Those demographic changes, along with a decrease in edentulism, are leading to changing dental service patterns.

More services are being provided per visit, with the emphasis moving away from restorative and prosthodontic services, and more patients are receiving diagnostic, preventive, endodontic, and crown and bridge services, according to the study.

## Violence Toward Women Found in Dental Survey

Twelve percent of women surveyed during a study of patients at University of California, San Francisco, School of Dentistry dental clinics had visited their dentist seeking care for a problem that was a direct result of a violent incident. Nineteen percent had injuries in the head and neck region as a result of partner abuse.

UCSF researchers conducted the study to determine the prevalence of domestic violence in a female dental population and possible behaviors that may increase a woman's risk of falling victim to domestic violence.

All female patients who presented during a number of randomly selected clinic sessions were asked to participate. Sixty-eight percent completed the questionnaire.

Researchers found no association between domestic violence and marital status, level of education, utilization of dental services, or risk of alcohol abuse.

## It's a Matter of Taste

Genes probably responsible for the sense of taste have been identified.

Researchers from a collaborative effort between the University of California at San Diego and the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research write in the journal *Cell* that the genes that are expressed in cells specifically geared to taste.

Isolation of the possible taste receptor genes lays groundwork for manipulating the perception of taste and stimulating or blocking taste cell function. The identification also sets the stage for mapping how taste is "wired" from the mouth to the brain.

"The identity of the receptor molecules for the different sensory modalities -- like vision, smell and taste -- represents the Holy Grail of the sensory field," says UCSD professor Charles Zuker, principal co-author of the report. "These receptor molecules provide the unique specificity and selectivity of each sensory system. The color receptors in our retinas allow us to see in color, and the receptors in our nose endow us with great discrimination for smell. In the case of taste, they are what make sweet cells respond to sweet substances, bitter cells to bitter compounds, and so on."

"These two molecules have the hallmarks we expect of taste receptors," says Nicholas Ryba of NIDCR. "They may be the key to unlocking our understanding of how we detect taste, which is unclear at the moment. We must now demonstrate that functionally they can do the job."

With the new information, scientists could one day be able to manipulate taste receptors, thereby conceivably "eliminating" bitter and sour tastes from important products, such as children's medicine.

However, subjects at risk for drug abuse were 2.5 times more likely to have experienced partner violence in the preceding year. Other findings:

- Thirty-seven percent of the respondents had experienced partner violence in the preceding year.
- Sixty-nine percent reported having experienced partner violence during their lifetime.
- Ten percent had experienced severe violence -- such as being choked, punched, or hit with an object -- in the preceding year.
- At least 25 percent had been seriously hurt by a partner during their lifetime.

## Getting the Big Brush-Off

A "brush-off" involving 1,367 people has set a record for simultaneous tooth brushing.

The Arizona event was sponsored by the Healthy Smiles Partnership as a kick-

off for its "Life's a Lot More Fun With Teeth" oral health awareness campaign aimed at Arizona children.

The event was April 19 at a school in Phoenix. Arranged in a toothbrush formation while simultaneously brushing their teeth for 3 minutes, 3 seconds, 1,367 participants (mostly elementary school students) broke the 1998 record set in Massachusetts by 1,180 participants.

In February, 996 children simultaneously brushed during an event sponsored by the San Diego Dental Health Coalition to mark Children's Dental Health Month.

## Containing Costs -- and Charity Work

Competitive market pressures may hold down the amount of charity work performed by physicians, according to articles in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*.

Peter J. Cunningham, PhD, of the Center for Studying Health System

Change in Washington, D.C., and colleagues studied the results of a 1996-1997 national survey of 10,881 physicians from 60 communities about the number of hours of charity care they provided in the month before being interviewed.

Charity care was defined as free care or care provided at reduced costs because of the financial need of the patient.

Physicians with more revenue derived from managed care provided less charity care than physicians with less revenue from managed care. In addition, physicians who practice in areas with high managed care penetration tended to provide less charity care.

The researchers found that while 77.3 percent of the physicians interviewed provided an average of 10.3 hours of charity care per week, physicians who derived at least 85 percent of their practice revenue from managed care plans were considerably less likely to provide charity care and tend to spend fewer hours providing charity care than physicians with little involvement in managed care plans.

More charity care occurred in smaller practice settings (solo practices and two-physician practices).

“Charity care provision tends to be greater in solo practices or small groups where physicians own all or part of their practice,” the authors write. “It is possible that physicians in larger group practices provide less charity care because the larger and more formal structures of these settings intentionally or unintentionally result in greater organizational barriers. In addition, ‘employed’ physicians may have less autonomy and discretion in treating medically indigent patients.”

The articles appeared in the March 24/31 JAMA.

## Honors

David W. Chambers, PhD, MBA, and Kenneth Fat, DDS, each have been awarded the Medallion of Distinction University of the Pacific School of Dentistry. Chambers is the school’s associate dean for academic affairs.

John C. Greene, DMD, MPH, has been awarded the UCSF Medal. Dr. Greene is dean emeritus of the UCSF School of Dentistry.

# The Humor of Horseman

JACK F. CONLEY, DDS, EDITOR

"There has not been a single recorded instance  
of dental humor since 1917."

– Robert E. Horseman, DDS, 1994

"We disagree."

– CDA Journal staff, and many happy followers of Dr. Bob, 1999

**T**he *Journal of the California Dental Association*, its editor, and readers have been blessed with the presence of Robert Horseman's special literary creations since 1979. Thus, it is fitting, in the 20th anniversary year of his first submissions to the *Journal*, to recognize Bob's contributions to his profession in what we believe you, the reader, will agree is a well-deserved tribute. Make no mistake, Bob has not announced any intent to step away from crafting his marvelous pieces of humor. There is a gang of five, however, that decided some time ago that such a tribute issue was appropriate at this time, if not long overdue.

This issue has been an exciting and fun project for Publications Director Brian Blomster, Managing Editor Jeanne Marie Tokunaga, CDA Treasurer Steve Chan (acting as contributing editor), Former Publications Director Doug Curley, and yours truly.

There is another accolade we must offer. The creative work supplied by our art director Charlie Hayward has been helping Bob's columns literally "jump off" the page since 1989. We already know that Bob is Charlie's No. 1 fan. Charlie has that special knack that captures Bob, his persona, and his story, in an interesting, attention-getting style every month. Charlie, we salute you too.

Month after month, year after year, whether the column has been labeled "Your Turn," "Dr. Horseman," or "Dr. Bob," it has always been the most anticipated piece of journalism in the *Journal*, or any dental publication for that matter. We are grateful for the presence of Bob and Charlie on these pages each month. This month, let's relive some of the highlights of this creative duo. Keep this issue handy. On a future day when dental practice has been particularly stressful, reach for it, and allow it to disconnect you from the harsh realities of the day just past.

# Nobody's Straight Man: The Life and Times of a Pocket Knife Advocate

DOUGLAS K. CURLEY

Doug:

Assuming you intend to come into LAX and not John Wayne or Ontario, you need to get on one of the freeways ... and get off at Harbor Boulevard. ... You will pass approximately 15,000 streets (I'm trying to keep this as accurate as possible). You will pass Imperial Highway, then Lambert. A couple blocks or so beyond that ... turn left. A couple hundred feet going left ... you will see a defunct gas station on the corner where you turned, next to that a ... fast food joint and then a condo complex. Plunge recklessly into the narrow driveway and drive straight back (down), taking any open parking space you can find.

Wander back (to your right), pass through a narrow underpass and our unit is immediately on your left. As long you are not an Amway representative, a Jehovah's Witness or an Avon Lady, chances are you will be allowed entrance.

If you get lost, call me and I'll come with a brandy flask and rescue you.

--REH

After following the above instructions, on the morning of March 12, 1999, the day after Robert E. Horseman, BS, DDS, celebrated his 79th birthday, I sat at the kitchen table with the author of more than 200 dental humor columns. The interview was off to a dreadfully slow start. He has no idea why anybody would want to read an article about him. He isn't sure why anybody wants to read articles by him.

"Whoever got you to do this owes you big time," he said. "I'll bet it was (Editor) Jack (Conley). He can be pretty persuasive."

Dr. Horseman and I had met on a half-dozen occasions during the past 10 years. We even shared the lecture podium at a dental editors conference in Orlando. But despite this familiarity, getting the dean of dental columnists to open up about his art of dry humor and biting wit was, well, like pulling teeth. I thought I was going to have to threaten him with his oft-mentioned "Heavy Black Dogs" to urge him to provide insight into his singular thought process.

"I don't have a mission statement. There's no organized approach to what I do," he said, providing none of the insight being sought. "That's like Barbara Walters asking 'If you were a tree, what kind of a tree would you be?' I write humorously because it's the only way I know how to write. I write about teeth because it's the only thing I know very much about."

"The fact that my column has been accepted over the years tells me that people need a little variety from the straight diet of technical, scientific and political material," he continued. "I've got an article that probably never will be published because it kind of states my views on dental publications. I list five things (see related chart) that are pretty common in

dental publications, and humor isn't one of them. I say it should be because it gives you something else to read."

While Dr. Horseman's view of the state of dentistry and all things related has been a staple in the *Journal of the California Dental Association* since 1982, he has attempted many times to take his meandering thoughts national. Successes have been few and far between, a fact he blames on editors and publishers who lack a sense of humor.

"I tried to get this guy that runs Dental Economics to accept a humor article once in a while," he said. "I never even got an answer from him. To me that magazine is just pure boredom. They're telling you what kinds of stocks to buy and have these articles telling you to be nice to patients. We know all that, but that's what they publish."

Once he starts rolling, Horseman is nothing if not glib.

\*\*\*\*\*

Born in Kansas City, Kan., in 1920, young Horseman beat the Grapes of Wrath westward rush when he and his family loaded up in a 1919 Dodge and drove to southern California in 1926. His father, who always wanted to be a dentist, opened a small clothing store in Whittier. The family then moved to Santa Ana, where Robert attended high school and junior college. He then attended USC.

"I was into Ham radio, but as I got further into math and physics and chemistry in high school, I found out I wasn't all that good at it," he said. "Finally, in college, dentistry seemed like a better way to go. We had a family dentist that was a heck of a nice guy in Santa Ana. He kind of steered me toward dentistry."

Horseman graduated from the USC School of Dentistry in 1943. Unattached, he planned to launch a lifelong career as

a Navy dentist. But a hobby -- not Ham radios but flying -- took him in a different direction: up.

"Somehow during my sophomore and junior years of dental school, I took some flying lessons," he said. "A good friend of mine was a pilot. He joined the Marines and quickly became a major. The war started in 1941. I got out of school in March of 1943. For some reason, I thought it would be a good idea to become a pilot instead of a dentist, which was a crazy, crazy idea. They needed dentists a lot more than they needed pilots. They had millions of cadets that needed dental care."

So instead of picking up a handpiece at the San Diego Naval Recruit Depot, Horseman enlisted in the aviation cadet program. During the next three years, he trained at bases in Illinois, Oregon, Texas and California. His flying mentor was then able to get him a position in the Marine Corps.

Besides having a friend in the Marines, the other reason Horseman says he pursued the Corps was because he "wasn't too crazy about flying off aircraft carriers."

"I figured the Marines flew off islands and large continents," he said. "After I got into the Marine Corps, they sent us to someplace south of Jacksonville, Fla. We flew off of carriers there. I felt like I was double-crossed."

Soon thereafter, the war ended with Horseman never having been shot at in anger. The only thing he ever bombed was San Clemente Island. He toyed with the idea of staying in the military.

"The movies were cheap. The food was good. I was flying any kind of plane I wanted to, almost anywhere I wanted. After the war, everything was mass confusion in the military, which was actually kind of fun."

But, just as quickly, things got serious.

"They wanted us to go to Santa Barbara to do night carrier qualifications. This is a bad thing," he said. "Then they wanted us to go to China. That is a worse thing. I decided it was time to get out."

\*\*\*\*

Back at the La Habra kitchen table, I asked Bob where he gets ideas for column topics.

"I was afraid you'd ask me that. I have no idea," he said. "Sometimes I'll read an article. It's a straight article, but it has a wacky, skewed element to it that seems like it needs to be attacked from another direction. If I think about it long enough, sometimes I come up with something."

"The weird part is that most of these ideas come to me in the middle of the night, when I'm asleep. I come up with the opening sentence and maybe the first paragraph. I roll over and go back to sleep thinking I have a lock on the next best thing I've ever written. I wake up in the morning knowing I had a great idea, but what the heck was it?"

To address this nocturnal creative syndrome, Horseman tried what many writers have tried -- placing a notepad on the nightstand next to the bed.

"But then I had to turn on the light, wake up my wife. It didn't work," he said. "Sometimes I remember (story ideas), sometimes I don't."

For years, Horseman's wife, Claire, sought to know why he wrote only about teeth. He would respond that teeth were what he knew best. However, in the past couple of years, he has strayed a bit from a strictly dental course -- mostly through the creation of fictional history.

"I couldn't write a serious piece of journalism if my life depended on it, but I've found I do like writing about times, places and persons," he said. "I don't like researching facts, but if you just make it all up, it doesn't matter. If you make up history, nobody can challenge you."

Horseman's histrionics, while overwhelmingly applauded by the dental

community masses, have raised the ire of others on occasion. He keeps on file two "nasty" letters from individuals who took exception to his dry humor.

"I did this story about a product distributor and the program he was promoting, which I felt was a scam," he said. "I thought I had done a good job of disguising the whole thing, so that he wouldn't recognize himself. Apparently he did."

"What the company wanted to do," he continued, "was set up an Amway-type distributorship in your office. The dentist would then peddle a variety of products from the office, from shampoo to corn remover. Most products would have nothing to do with dentistry. Suddenly, you were going to make all this money by selling these things. Then even better, sticking with the pyramid-type thing, you'd get your friends to sell your products. You become a major distributor."

"Yeah right. This was so ridiculous that I had to write a column about it. I thought it was humorous. The president of the company didn't."

Horseman also managed to ruffle the feathers and fur of the state Board of Veterinary Medicine when he suggested, in a column, that dentists could make a little sideline money by cleaning the teeth of animals. He said the only challenge would be getting the animal to sit still long enough to complete the task.

"I got a letter from the president of the board. He took me to task for not reading the Dental Act of 1926, or whatever the heck it was, where it states dentists are not allowed to work on anything but human teeth. I was just facetiously suggesting that dentists could do this. He didn't think it was funny. I wrote him a little apology."

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Once Horseman got out of the military, he went back to Whittier, borrowed some money and started private practice. A year later, in 1947,

he met Claire. They soon married and had three children, Julie, Jill and Jeff. Like many of his generation, Horseman became a little apprehensive about the world around him and the change in attitudes in the United States during the 1960s. That apprehension coupled with a glowing report and great slide show about Australia got Bob and Claire thinking about moving the family Down Under.

"My folks had gone on a cruise someplace and ended up in Perth, Australia," he said. "They brought back a bunch of slides depicting a beautiful city on the banks of the Swan River. It seemed ideal. We kept reading articles about how Australia was 25 years behind the U.S. There was less crime, less turmoil. The people were fine and easy to get along with. It seemed like a nice climate to raise kids."

To check it out on their own, Bob and Claire attended the World Dental Conference in Brisbane in 1969. They visited Brisbane and Perth and fell in love with the idea of moving to Australia. Horseman met with officials at the Perth dental school, where he learned the country was very open to welcoming American dentists.

"I was told the best place to start working would be the Royal Perth Dental Hospital," he said. "I thought, 'What the heck? I'm 50 years old; might as well give it a whirl.' We applied for some sort of immigrant status. The Australian consulate in Los Angeles interviewed us. Everybody and their brother investigated us. Finally, they notified us that we were official Australian immigrants."

At the time of the migration, Horseman's son, Jeff, was finishing his pre-dental studies at Occidental College. Julie was in her second year at Chapman College and the youngest, Jill, was still in high school. They all went to Australia.

"Jeff immediately applied for dental school at Western Australia and was accepted. So instead of having a \$30,000 tuition at USC, it was free, which was a big plus for me," Horseman said. "In fact,

since he was living away from home and was of a certain age, they gave him \$1,700 a year in living expenses. I loved this place already.”

Meanwhile, Horseman was attached to the hospital and also got a teaching position with the University of Western Australia. About a year into the Australian adventure, he opened his own practice.

“If I’d known then what I know now, I would have never had enough guts to do it,” he said. “I found this empty, brand-new building in the nice part of West Perth. We laid the place out, got the equipment and started from scratch. We gradually built the practice up, and when Jeff got his dental degree in 1975, he immediately came to work with me.”

During the first year as an associate for his dad, Jeff shuffled the patient assignment in order to meet a pretty woman he spied in the waiting room.

“This young lady, Carmel, was scheduled to see me,” Horseman said. “Jeff had taken one look at her and said ‘Dad, can I have her?’ That’s when the romance started. I wasn’t even aware of it.” They eventually married.

By 1976, Bob and Claire were getting a little homesick. Horseman says if they had just taken a trip back to the States for a visit they might still be in Australia. But instead, opportunity knocked.

“A guy I knew in Whittier had some back surgery. He needed somebody to take over his practice,” he said. “So Claire and I looked at each other again and said, We did this; let’s go do that.”

\*\*\*\*\*

*When I joined the staff of the California Dental Association in January of 1989 as the director of Publications, I was immediately informed about this quirky Horseman guy. Bob Ingle, the Communications director at the time, told me “This guy is funny. His column makes you think even dentists have a sense of humor. It’s the only thing worth reading in the Journal.” Cissy Cooper, the Scientific Sessions director and acting*

*Publications director until I came on, told me that she had looked in the file and found there were only a couple Horseman articles remaining. So she gave this dental humorist a call. Within a couple of weeks, she received a year’s worth of material.*

Back at the kitchen table, Horseman laughed at the story.

“That’s funny. Right now I have 37 unpublished articles on file with CDA. Some of them date way back to the early 90s, so obviously they’re not ever going to be published,” he said. “They’re that bad. As I look at them, I can see why they wouldn’t be. But every once in awhile (managing editor) Jeanne Marie (Tokunaga), or Susan (Lovelace) before her, picks out one of these older ones and publishes it.”

Horseman’s first writing effort came in response to a contest sponsored by Dental Management magazine. He wrote a mostly straight but somewhat humorous piece about his dental experience in Australia.

“It was a documentary, but of course it had some dry humor in it. I won first prize, a week in Grand Cayman Island and \$300 in cash. That’s the first and last time I got paid that much for writing.”

His first piece for the CDA Journal appeared in 1979. By the end of 1982, the Horseman byline was the only one to appear in the “Your Turn” guest column. In 1991, the column moved to the back page and became simply “Dr. Horseman.” Today it is “Dr. Bob.” Twice CDA has honored Horseman at a Scientific Session. Most recently, Horseman earned fellowship with the American College of Dentists.

Horseman now works for his son three days a week. He figures four days at home is about enough to make him want to get back to work, and three days at work is enough to make him want to go home. He says he’ll continue to practice dentistry and write columns as long as the eyes and hands are capable. He also says he’ll continue to do both with a sense of humor.

*Just before leaving the Horseman La Habra abode, I share with Bob my favorite Horseman. It features a Charlie Hayward illustration showing Bob being confronted by two comic book dinosaur-type creations as he walks around a corner. From the word balloon, we learn Bob is thinking, “It’s OK, everything is OK. I’m a dentist, and dentists carry pocket knives.”*

“What’s up with that, Bob?”

“You’d have to ask my freshmen dental instructor,” Horseman said. “I don’t know why, but it was drilled into us that you must have a pocket knife on you at all times. You can clean your fingernails, open packages, and do delicate little operations with it. I’d feel naked without my knife.”

Having shared another bit of that which animates him, Horseman turned to the original question: Why look at dentistry and life in general from their oblique angles and with a gently cocked eyebrow?

“Life is too long to do it straight,” he said.

# Heavy Black Dogs and Rumba Pencils

DOUGLAS K. CURLEY

Sitting at my dining room table on a cool spring afternoon in East Sacramento, Charlie O. Hayward, the man who illustrates the wacky world of Dr. Bob Horseman, shuffled through a stack of 40 or more of his drawings and sorted out his thoughts.

"It's like I'm playing tennis with him," Hayward said of the double-edged creative process. "We keep hitting the ball back and forth to each other. There's a kind of interplay between the illustrator and the writer. There will be something he adds to the story knowing that I will draw it. It's almost like he's betting that he's going to get Charlie to put that in the drawing if he puts in this line."

A line such as "heavy black dogs"?

"Exactly. As I collected my favorite drawings for (this issue), I made a note of when I did the drawing and why I selected it," Hayward said. "Well, I selected three columns with heavy black dog references. In the first appearance, Bob writes, 'Large parties accompanied by heavy black dogs might burst through my doors and seize my receivables.' So I did this deal with the dogs. Pretty soon they show up again and again. It was like he knew if he put heavy black dogs in his column, I was going to pick up on it. And I have, at least five times."

Hayward has illustrated Horseman's humorous offerings for 10 years. During that span, he has also redesigned the look of the *Journal of the California Dental Association* twice. He continues to design the Journal's cover each month; and his illustrations, graphs and cartoons are featured regularly. Some believe his artistic crown sits -- slightly askew -- on Horseman's monthly column.

But it didn't initially come easy.

"When I was approached to illustrate Horseman, my first thought was 'How am I going to do this? I know nothing about dentistry,'" Hayward said. "I was having exactly the same problem with the magazine covers. But we worked our way through it. We discovered a cover was a cover. We had to get ideas across, and we did it. It's the same thing with Horseman. I read this stuff and I'm laughing, and I don't know dentistry. He's a really funny writer. He talks about things that are at a human level. Anybody can read this stuff and laugh."

Just as Horseman's wit has become a cornerstone of the Journal, so have the artistic offerings of Hayward. His first cover design debuted in March 1989. In April of that year, his first illustrative view of what Horseman was writing about appeared. The simple black-and-white drawing included Oliver North and other celeb-types who sported gap-tooth

smiles. One hundred and twenty drawings later, Hayward still enjoys the mental tennis match.

"It's an interesting little creative thing," he said. "He's indulging in a creative process in writing it. Then I have to read it and react to it, and somehow I have to be sure not to overpower his writing. I want to support it and add to it. We've achieved this balance by tempering the size of the illustration. It's not huge. It's a spot illustration. And maybe, just maybe, if somebody is not familiar with Horseman, if they saw the humorous drawing, it might pull them in. That's the point, to decorate the page.

"It was a stroke of genius when the column's name was changed to 'Dr. Horseman' and placed at the back of the book," Hayward continued. "That instantly made it an institution. Everybody knew where to find it. How often have we heard that Horseman is the first thing anybody reads in the Journal? Having the column in the back of the book is what made that happen."

Hayward has been cartooning since he was able to hold a pencil. He attended the Art Center College of Design in Los Angeles, where he was preparing to be an advertising agency art director. But the Art Center likes to produce well-rounded students, so Charlie was exposed to a wide spectrum of subject from illustration to package design and photograph. One of them – filmmaking – became his new love. But, while his fellow students were creating live action films for their classes, he would do animated films. "I'd create the concept, draw the characters and animate them." Nobody taught me how to do it. I taught myself. I bought an 8 mm camera, tacked my drawings on the wall and popped off two or three frames at a time. I didn't even know you were supposed to shoot everything on the table, so that

gravity was working for you."

Following graduation, instead of pursuing a high-paying advertising agency gig in Chicago or New York, Charlie went to Hollywood seeking animation work. He worked at DePatie-Freleng on "Pink Panther," "Flip Wilson," afterschool TV specials, and Saturday morning kid's fare. But he particularly enjoyed his work for Bosustow Productions, a small Santa Monica film company that worked on "Sesame Street" and "Electric Company" projects.

"That was cool," he said. "The Children's Television Workshop would come to us and say they needed animated imagery that they could cut into their program. That's all they'd say. Here I was just at the start of my career, and I was the artist, the writer, and the director. We were a small company, maybe 10 employees. We would just brainstorm ideas and then individually take off with them."

One of Hayward's first Sesame Street successes was called "Rumba Pencils."

"I animated these three pencils with goofy faces and they came out in a line doing the rumba," he said. "The lesson for the kids was the concept of 'first' and 'last,' so the first one says, 'I'm first' and the third one says 'I'm last.' Well, they rumba a bit more and finally the middle pencil, feeling kinda insecure, blurts out, 'I'm Crazy Melvin!'"

When the film work got too seasonal, Hayward shifted directions and went to Petersen Publishing, the well-known publisher of automotive magazines. As an art director there, he was able to combine his love for cars, graphic design, and cartooning.

"The idea of hiring on there was kind of neat. I got totally into the car thing again. Here I was in my early 30s art directing Car Craft, Rod & Custom and

Hot Rod magazines. I hadn't worked on a car since high school, but I bought a 37 Chevy and fixed it up. I currently have a 39 Ford hot rod. I can't seem to shake the car deal. I just love it."

After a nice run at Petersen, Hayward and his wife, Bev, began to think it might be time to move the family north. With two children, Carrie and Casey, the Haywards landed in the foothill community of Grass Valley, east of Sacramento. After commuting to Sacramento daily for several years, working as an art director for a business magazine publishing company, in 1989 Hayward set up his own graphic design business in Grass Valley – Hot Art.

And just about that time he was introduced to the Horseman guy.

"My gosh; it's been 10 years, 12 times a year. That's 120 blasts at this thing. I can't even believe it," Hayward said. "A lot of it is good enough that I have it in my portfolio. I'm sure Bob looks at it the same way. Some of them he looks back at and says 'That's just OK,' and others are his favorites."

Hayward and Horseman have only met twice, most recently for a photo session. Their common mode of communication is the fax machine.

"I guess you would call us fax pals," Hayward said. "But we really are on the same wavelength. He gets a kick out of what I do, and I get a kick of what he does. I look forward to reading his columns, and he says he looks forward to what I draw for them."

And so do the 20,000 readers of the Journal.

# Dr. Bob — a Legend in Our Time

JACK F. CONLEY, DDS

I suspect that our honoree this month, Robert Horseman -- being a quiet, unselfish, professional -- might be a bit uncomfortable with the above refrain.

But it is difficult for me to remove it from my consciousness because I believe it to be true.

How did Bob Horseman become a legend in OUR time? We would like to offer some personal insights into why we believe Bob and his contributions are legendary to practicing dentists everywhere who have had the opportunity to read his work.

For me, it really started in July 1983, when I attended my first Dental Editor's Workshop. I had been appointed in April; and my first issue, complete with an editorial, would not appear until September 1983, the same time the California Dental Association would open its doors in Sacramento. The Editor's Workshop, which was sponsored by the American Dental Association, was conducted by faculty at the University of Missouri School of Journalism. It was an excellent time for a new editor to learn important basics about writing styles and techniques for developing a good publication. The faculty of the J school had requested copies of previous issues of the publications represented by editor attendees at the workshop. These journalists had "dissected" each publication prior to the meeting and had prepared critiques and slides of various portions

of each publication for presentation and discussion in small groups.

I can well remember the situation and environment. It was a warm, darkened room with a slide projector humming. The session had been under way for about 30 minutes, with a continuing series of slide examples filling the screen, leading to critique and discussion. Suddenly, the tempo changed. The professor asked, in a very direct fashion, "Whoooo does this belong to?" I was momentarily startled. Again, he exclaimed, "Who does this belong to?" as he pointed to the image on the screen. I settled into the present to focus my eyes on the upper left corner of the photo, where a column heading read "Your Turn." Instantly, I realized that it was a page from a recent issue of the CDA Journal. Somewhat timidly, I raised my hand. Even in the darkened room, with only the light from the screen's image backlighting the professor, I could see him staring directly at me. Then he continued, "Don't ever ... I repeat, don't ever let this writer get away from writing for your publications." Superlative descriptions on Bob Horseman's piece then flowed. He asked, "Is he a dentist? Dentists typically can't write with this skill!" He appeared even more in awe when I responded that yes, Bob Horseman is indeed, a practicing dentist. He proceeded to describe the skill, styles, and techniques that made this column a meritorious piece of journalism.

Bob Horseman started service as a

rotating contributing editor for the CDA Journal in 1979, meaning that he had three or four articles published each year. I had yet to publish my first editorial. I already knew that Journal readers had been starting to recognize that Bob's columns were something special. Now, in an outpouring of unreserved praise, a respected journalism professor had confirmed it. The Journal had a treasure, who to this day has no peer in the world of dental publications.

As most longtime Journal readers know, Bob's humor reaches more than 19,000 potential readers every month, and even more nationally and internationally via reprint requests from other publications. Year after year, his column brings countless requests for reprint approval.

Why is Bob a legend in OUR time? He possesses the special talent of taking the everyday challenges of being a dentist -- from the stresses of practice, to the requirements and regulations imposed by the society in which we live and operate -- and infuses them with sharp wit and colorful characters such as "Waldo Braunsweiler," "Dr. Bobby Jo Fallopien," or, when referencing a patient, not a "Mrs. Brown," but a "Mrs. Dudley Krautzmeyer." Simply stated, it gives the dentist reader enjoyment and a much-needed temporary lift out of the serious world of dental practice.

To know him is to know that he is quiet, professional, and serious about his work, despite his obvious ability to weave his clever word pictures into a humorous satire. In a profession that is formal and technique-sensitive, Bob Horseman is able to provide welcome relief to his readers with his humor about things and themes that are dental, because he, too, is a dentist.

Bob has been unselfishly providing a

service of humor and entertainment that is of great value to his colleagues. With a master's touch, he takes the everyday frustrations and musings of the average dentist and turns them into a textual canvas that evokes laughter ... and, along the way, provides insights and relief from the very frustrations that gave it rise. By being exposed to the humor ever present in the dental practice world, the dentist is able to proceed with a lighter load.

Bob Horseman is a unique leader in dentistry. He has achieved his place not by numbers of meetings attended, wisdom of spoken words, nor by a list of positions held, but rather, by impact of the written word. He possesses a quiet and unassuming demeanor and is highly respected by those who know him.

Finally, he is devoted to his profession. The substantial, long-term time commitment to write his monthly columns and the messages they convey is proof of his dedication. A person such as Bob, who concentrates on contributing his skills solely for the enjoyment of his colleagues, is to be admired. Verbal testimonials of appreciation from readers continually attest to the esteem in which Bob Horseman's contributions are held.

Dr. Bob, you and your monthly creations are legendary. You are without a doubt, "The Dental Profession's Wittiest Fiction Humor Writer." A grateful readership salutes you, and THANKS you.

# Highlights of Horseman

ROBERT E. HORSEMAN, DDS

## Dr. Bob's Favorite

I have been unjustly accused of frivolously addressing the many problems confronting dentistry today. That's why I wrote "Dental Engineering." This scientific-intensive report is the culmination of in-depth interviews I conducted over a period of days with many scientific individuals, several of whom had teeth of their own. That their opinions coincided with my own only confirmed the validity of the survey, the conclusion of which is that human dentition is a flawed design, but better than nothing. Or maybe not.

*Following is a collection of favorite Dr. Bob columns, a mere sampling of his 20 years of work. They were selected by many of the people who put this issue together, with some help from Journal readers Frank and Ruth Blair and Dr. Horseman himself. We hope you enjoy reading (or re-reading) these timeless classics as much as we enjoyed picking them out.*

## Dental Engineering

*April 1991*

There is not a dentist throughout the world who, at one time or another, has not considered the human dentition to be a huge design error, a sort of oral Edsel. Had he been consulted during the initial stages of design, he is quite certain he could have come up with a much more practical production model. Meaning no disrespect, but teeth seem to have been an afterthought, perhaps near the end of the sixth day when, along with broccoli

and fire ants, things were being created in haste without enough research and development or prototypes in order to meet a Sabbath deadline.

Take deciduous teeth for example. Every child gets 20 teeth. Along about 5 or 6 years of age, the teeth start migrating to a place under the child's pillow until by 12 or so the supply is exhausted, the parents having bought back the originals from the Tooth Fairy for an amount equal to the kid's first semester at Yale. The loss of these first teeth may seem a good thing, bathed as they have been by daily applications of Popsicles and Gummi Bears for a decade, but is it really? Why didn't these teeth grow bigger along with the jaws? The kid's arm didn't exfoliate at age 11, to be replaced by a bigger arm whose fingers reached beyond the top of his head when fully extended. You never hear of the Foot Fairy leaving cash under the covers in exchange for a foot that has

outgrown a pair of \$35 shoes every three months for the last 10 years.

So the 20 baby teeth are now replaced by what? -- 32 new and bigger ones, which as we all know is way too many. Does anybody really need 12 molars? I think not. We have been told by anthropologists that Paleolithic man required all these teeth for the diet he enjoyed, mainly roots and dinosaur steaks and the occasional pterodactyl in the original recipe with 11 herbs and spices. Couldn't Divine Providence have foreseen that phasing out the dinosaurs in favor of mashed potatoes and Boston cream pies would most certainly lead to impacted third molars and \$3,000-a-week fat farms? Is this clear only to me?

Only the oral surgeons have benefited from this faulty design concept. They have also profited from the discovery by their colleagues, the orthodontists, that eight premolars are too many by half. There are those who maintain that if all these teeth were not necessary in the scheme of things, God would not have invented dentists, who in turn invented fluoride, which nearly put them out of business. It's a moot point.

The real tragedy, however, is that all this new dentition is wasted on prepubescent children who couldn't care less except as a Tooth Fairy extortion scam. I contend that by age 50, a third set of natural teeth would be embraced with open arms (or mouths) by the geriatric set, which is fed up with its old worn-out, patched-up teeth that dentists over the years have ground down to powder and rebuilt with whatever was in favor at the moment. I don't see how a benefit like this could possibly have been overlooked. I also fail to understand why a full head of hair can't be guaranteed up to age 85 or why it costs 15 cents to mail a penny postcard.

What's perfectly clear, however, is the fact that the incisors for *Homo sapiens* have fallen far short of the mark. Why the heck was this such a big problem? They are too thin for one thing. Eight times out of 10, the lower ones are crooked and they

break easily when the owner's face comes in contact with swings, baseball bats and fists. Animals have emerged with the long end of the stick in this regard. Have you ever seen a tiger or a lion with a six-unit bridge or a dopey-looking beaver with a missing central?

And whose idea was it that we needed 32 individual teeth? This led, of course, to interproximal cavities, 9 mm perio pockets and places to stock meat between meals and -- you guessed it -- orthodontists. What would have been wrong with one big tooth that ran from the distal of #2, clear around to the distal of #15 and another from the distal of #18 around to #31? Of course it would put a dent in a crown and bridge practice. I know that -- I didn't say my idea was perfect, but listen, no interproximals to worry about, no constantly nagging people about flossing and no problem with half a dozen systems of numbering teeth. We could have just called them #1 and #2, or if that would be confusing because of other bodily functions similarly named, simply A and B.

My ideal dentition, had I been asked for advice, would feature no pulps. Even to endodontists who get rid of them as fast as they can, nothing is more useless and causes more trouble than the pulp. Do we really need a pulp? Is this part of the punishment for the Original Sin? A compassionate endodontist took the pulp out of one of my molars years ago, replacing it with a much more sensible material, gutta percha. I have 27 other teeth with pulps, and if I hear one peep out of any of them, they get the same treatment. I say we have no more need of pulps than we do for genital warts or punk hairdos.

So there you have it -- my nomination for a trouble-free oral cavity. Two teeth, one upper, one lower, in either shade B1 or, for the more conservative, A2. No pulps, no endodontists, no gum problems, no periodontists, no individual teeth bargaining off on their own, no orthodontists and, I almost forgot, no

prosthodontists either. Just us GP guys and gals inlaying an occasional diamond or ruby for the flamboyant patient and doing prophys with a big rag wheel. But then, nobody asked me.

### *Managing Editor's Favorite*

*I start editing every issue of the Journal the same way many people begin reading it -- with Dr. Bob's column. Although satire about the intricacies of procedure codes, OSHA regs, and insurance coverage don't resonate much in my world, his humorous view, writing style and word choice are always entertaining. My favorite was easy to pick out; it's Dr. Bob's homage to those old Bogie detective movies from the 1940s. Imaging Bob as a hard-boiled, down-on-his-luck dentist and you've set the stage for "To Have and Fill Not."*

— Jeanne Marie Tokunaga

### **To Have and Fill Not**

#### *April 1996*

Monday, 10 a.m. My name is Krautzmeyer. Dudley Krautzmeyer, P.D. That's Private Dentist in case you've forgotten. This is my office. All this stuff is mine, mine and the bank's. I've just knocked back three fingers of sugar-free Swiss Mocha and am feeling no pain. Lonely, but no pain. The Maytag repair guy is a raving extroverted party boy compared to me. My Rockports are crossed at the ankle up on my desk, gown zipped down to the xiphoid process and mask hanging from one ear. I'm reading an article in Dental Economics about a guy in some little jerkwater town in Texas telling how he built his 12,000 square foot office with imported Italian marble and has a laser and imaging system in all 10 operatories. Oh sure, I could have a swankier place. Every day in the mail I get an offer I can hardly refuse. One hundred new patients a month, guaranteed. Sign here and I'm on Easy Street.

I take another slug of Swiss Mocha, straight, no creamer, wet my finger to pick up the last crumbs of the prune Danish I had for breakfast and wonder again if I'm

doing the right thing staying aloof from the PPO wars. Ophelia, my girl Friday, is here this Monday, busy filing. I know the routine --filing, filing, filing. One nail after the other. Then, squinting through two-inch Dynal lashes, carefully painting the frightening results with Watermelon or Firehouse, one of those 57 varieties of red. Every day it's the same. We're waiting for the phone to ring. The last time it rang, I think Carter was president.

"Did you pay the phone bill?" I call across to her.

"What with?" she snarls. "Cigar coupons?"

I ignore her. If she remembers cigar coupons, she's a lot older than she claims, and I don't want to start her up again. I owe her six weeks in back salary and she won't take any more Plax samples.

The phone rings, cutting through the quiet like a test of the Emergency Broadcast System. Ophelia fumbles with the Cutex and answers, "Dr. Krautmeyer's office, we cater to cowards. Visa, MasterCard, Discovery and American Express accepted. No reasonable offer refused."

"If it's a patient, tell em to come right in. Two chairs, no waiting."

Covering the mouthpiece with her fist, she hisses like a puff adder, "It's the lab. They want their check."

"Tell em I'm in the Seychelles, be back in three weeks."

"Ding-dong." Red alert! I spring to my feet. I mean foot -- the underneath one has gone to sleep and I fall flat on my kisser. I look up just in time to see a dame about 7 feet tall sashay through the door. She's dressed all in white and built like a brick restroom with every brick in place. Right out of Ascot or the runway at Christian Dior's. As she undulates in several planes toward the front desk, I think I hear a drumbeat, more like one might hear on the runway at Minsky's.

Ophelia is impressed too and swallows her Trident. "My name is Pamela Dianne Rockingham-Schwartz," the Amazon breathes, "and I'd like a second opinion from Dr. Krautmeyer."

"OK," I volunteer, noting that she looks like a million bucks in after-tax dollars. "What was the first opinion?"

"Nine thousand and sixty-three dollars," she says. "I've been to the offices of the Cosmic Spectrum Dental Group, and that's what they quoted me. Sixteen porcelain crowns, 11 root canals, 12 veneers and 38 composite fillings."

"Holey moley!" I gulp. I didn't know people had that many teeth. "Ophelia, look that up, OK? And call the lab. Tell em not to worry."

Adjusting the loupe I always wear to give patients the impression I know what I'm doing, I'm mentally calculating how much of that nine grand I can cut back to convince Ms. Rockingham-Schwartz that her dental future lies with me and not with those highbinders at Cosmic Spectrum. Fortunately, she has a mouth the dimensions of which would make Carly Simon and Julia Roberts writhe in envy. Hm, that could be fun to watch.

I usually use a No. 4 mirror. This is a case for a 7 or 8, if they make mirrors that size. But what's this? Pamela, my financial windfall, my burner of the mortgage, has a nearly perfect mouth. We take a full-mouth series, I sharpen my explorer, I put 30x images on my intraoral camera monitor. Nothing. I do it all again, probe, percuss, cuss. Still nothing.

"I'm terribly sorry, Pamela, you don't know how sorry I am," I choke. "I find nothing wrong with your teeth."

"Ms. Rockingham-Schwartz, please," she murmurs, rising from the chair in a kind of liquid motion that looks like a lava lamp.

"May we make you a cleaning appointment?" Ophelia hopefully offers the departing bonanza.

"I think not," she says. "Dr. Krautmeyer doesn't seem to be as experienced as the doctors at Cosmic Spectrum. Perhaps he should consult an ophthalmologist."

Monday, 5 p.m. Swiss Mocha dregs are not good cold, I conclude. "Another day, another dollar," I remark cheerfully to Ophelia, conscience intact and ethics polished.

"Not quite," she says. "Mrs. Grunge called to say the prophesy you did last month was no good. The stains are back and she wants the same for her money."

### Contributing Editor's Favorite

*Once upon a time, there was a minstrel of the latter 20th century named Horseman. We gaze into his mirror on the world of dentistry, see a bit of the ridiculous, and laugh at ourselves. Among the best of his verse is "The Good Toothe Faerie." His fractured fairy tale on the true story behind the tradition of the tooth fairy is a superb illustration of his stream-of-consciousness style. Written as a parody of Old English, we don't know where the narrator is taking us in his storytelling. That's the magic of Horseman. We are engaged, willing passengers on his monthly journey through his imagination. For awhile, we have been amused.*

— Steven D. Chan, DDS

### The Good Toothe Faerie

September 1992

As a member of the American Academy of the History of Dentistry, it is my sacred duty to be forever on the alert for some historical discovery, i.e., anything that predates George Burns, so I can pass it on to my colleagues, most of whom are getting pretty historical themselves.

So you can imagine my elation while browsing through a bibliotheca at the local library, to come across a dusty tome by Victor Appleton entitled *Tom Swift and His Electric Plaque Removal Instrument*.

Within this treasure chest of dental history, I chanced upon the origin of the Tooth Fairy myth as related by one Verdegris Gruenstik, a soothsayer in the court of King Ludwig the Ludicrous, Plenipotentiary and Supreme Muckimuk of the Sovereign State of Moronia. The soothsayer's tale went like this:

And it cameth to pass that Hard Tymes had descendeth upon the land of Moronia. The serfs were revolting in

some areas, especially those of personal hygiene and social graces. Many of the shoppes had already goneth down the Toobes withe piteous whimpers and those remaining did seeketh refuge in Chapter VII. Zut alors! Because the Court Scribe had yet to sendeth in the galley proofs for Chapter VI, there was no Chapter VII and it DID appeareth certain that Moronia, Home of the Indentured and Site of the IXth Interdenominational Witch Hunt, was Kaput.

Now there dwelleth in Moronia, a comely lass of 10 yeares, daughter of a poor but scurvy stableman, who because of his worke, had fewe companions withe clear nasal passages. He was wont to complain bitterly to no one in particular and imbibeth heavily from a flagon of bootlegge vanilla extract he tucketh in his vestments. One nighte after a veye vexing day, he lieth down, sousedeth to the gills, and Lo! There appeared to him in robes of golden brocade and stone-washed denim, a Vision who, like spake, “Tremulo, thou lowest of luses, when thy daughter’s first deciduous molar falleth out, place it under her pillow at nighte and in the lighte of daye there will be moola in its stead, placeth there by yores troolye, the Toothe Faerie, gratis, no charge.”

And it cameth to pass the daughter’s tooth DID falleth out and was slippeth under her pillow, whereupon in the morning there DID appear two pfennigs as promised by the Toothe Faerie, which was enough to buyeth four more drams of the sauce.

Word did spreadeth rapidly through Moronia, so that by eventide, a hundredfold younge teeth had dissociated themselves from their owner’s jaws and been placed under pillowes, to be replaced by pfennigs in the morn. Still, the Dow-Jones droppeth 88 pointes withe only Jujubes showing modeste gains in lighte to moderate trading, accounting for the sudden loss of the hundredfold teethe.

King Ludwig, adviseth by the Royal CPA that he sitteth upon a goldmine, decreed that henceforth and like, right

now, ALL subjects would placeth under their pillowes, their entire supplye of teethe and deliver the Toothe Faerie Loot to the Royal Treasurer by 9:30 A.M. sharpeth.

And so it cameth to pass that Moronia, the firste edentulous country on recorde, became prosperous again, especially the prosthodontists and purveyors of mashed potatoes, tofu and custardes.

As any history buff knows, The Good Toothe Faerie, facing a fiscal boo-boo of monumental proportions, enlisted the help of parents everywhere and was thus able to remain solvent and have some reconstructive plastic surgery, enabling her to get a job with Steven Spielberg.

### Former Publications Director’s Favorite

*Quite frankly, this probably isn’t the funniest Horseman I’ve ever read, but it was the tightest package. I thought at the time (and still do) that the combined efforts of Horseman and Hayward had jelled. On the one hand, Bob rambles on about how most everything he learned in dental school 40 years earlier is now useless (although at least it was a lot less expensive than the knowledge currently imparted there). On the other hand, Charlie illustrates the fact that Bob and others of that generation picked up on the idea that one could not go through life and be deemed much more than an ape unless he carried a pocket knife at all times.*

— Douglas K. Curley

### A Dentist’s Best Friend

#### August 1991

It seems to me that the only subject I took in dental school that retains its validity today, many years later, is anatomy. The bones, muscles and nerves all appear to have the same names and functions they have had for years. For that I am grateful, though mine are deteriorating at an alarming rate. I suppose I could stretch a point and admit that histology is probably still pretty much the same, but since I never

understood much of it to begin with, I’m not sure I’d recognize what changes have taken place, if any.

The gospel according to the perio department, circa 1940, was chromic acid or tincture of Meteghan delivered to pockets via the beaks of cotton pliers. Really. The instructors looked us straight in the face and told us this and we, innocent lambs all, believed it as if it were engraved on Ticonium. The operative department heads gave us a choice -- silicate or gold foil for class IIIs. The prosthetic department was reluctantly deciding that acrylic might eventually replace vulcanite, but we’d better go slow on this -- look what happened to Bakelite.

All of which makes me wonder if it was really necessary to spend all those years at school if today I am using so little of what I was taught. Of course, the tuition in those days was only about \$4,000 a year, so maybe with the current assessment of \$20,000 or so, you might expect to get a more permanent type of instruction. To be fair, some things I learned in school have stood me in good stead, like you never precipitate silver nitrate with eugenol on anterior teeth and you should always put cocoa butter on a new silicate. Unfortunately, nowadays anything with palm oils is suspect, so probably another axiom is about to bite the dust.

Despite the apparent transitory nature of dental education and the unsettling impermanence of what were supposed to be basic tenets, one thing stands out today as just as pertinent and trustworthy as it was 45 years ago. I remember it as clearly as if it were only four decades ago, that morning during the first week of the freshman year when the more astute of us were angling to get a seat in the rear of the room where we wouldn’t be noticed during the coming four years.

The lecturer, god-like in his white gown with the red stripes on the sleeves indicating his celestial authority, was delineating the attributes of a dentist in tones one might use in speaking to a not very bright gerbil.

"He must be immaculate," intoned this high priest of the lecture hall. "That means hair cut, shoes shined, clothing neat and clean, fingernails short and dirt-free."

Could he have but foreseen how everything except for the clean nails would be up for grabs in the Scruffy Sixties, he might have opted for hari-kari on the spot, but mercifully he was still under the illusion that he had the final word on everything.

"And," he concluded, "he must carry a pocket knife. No dentist can be a real dentist without a proper pocket knife always in his possession."

"Yes!" I cried with the fervor of a Moonie convert. "I want to be a real dentist. I will get a pocket knife forthwith."

And I did, little realizing how dependent I would become on that little piece of steel. One must wonder if that most important bit of advice is still being imparted to the dental students of today.

Consider that this indispensable tool not only cleans fingernails, but cuts, scrapes, opens, screws, smooths, roughens, tightens, loosens and can be fondled like a worry stone whenever the going gets rocky. Think of what 100,000 Egyptian slaves with pocket knives could have done when it came time to assemble the pyramids. They could have turned on their masters and stated, "This is the dumbest idea we ever heard of!" and made it stick, but that's beside the point. A knife's uses are only limited by your imagination. The smooth feel of it in your pocket with your change and keys is enough to keep you on the quiver right until bedtime.

There's not a man jack among us who wouldn't rather lose his wallet and all his credit cards than lose his knife. If anybody ever asks you whether you would rather suffer the loss of your wife or your knife, think carefully before you answer. Remember, you can always get another wife, but a good knife, one that fits your hand perfectly, one whose blade has been lovingly honed over the years

and whose dependability and loyalty is beyond question, is an enduring treasure. The dentist's knife is not an impressive one compared to, say, a Swiss Army Knife with its 72 functions weighing in at 2.75 pounds, or a hunting knife that has to be worn in a sheath on one's belt and lacks any dental function except perhaps to open a skylight in the operatory or disembowel a moose. No, the dental knife is smooth and flat so that it can always be carried in the left front pocket without making it appear that the owner has an inoperable tumor on his thigh. The blade should be forged of the finest steel and the housing lovingly crafted from some indestructible material that will last forever. You will not find this precision instrument in K-Mart nor will you pick it up for \$1.98 at a check-out stand. Get a loan if necessary, but get a good knife. Remember, this talisman is what separates you from other members of the healing professions.

This final plea to the ever-increasing numbers of women in our profession whose traditional way of fixing things has been with bobby pins and hairpins: Because one almost never sees a bobby pin or a hairpin anymore, it is imperative that you get yourself a good pocket knife and a pocket to keep it in. For heaven's sake, don't lose it in your purse with all that other stuff or it will never be accessible.

We can't let this valuable asset to our armamentaria and to our daily lives disappear like the buggy whip and the antimacassar. Like death and taxes, a good knife is forever.

### Editor's Favorite

*The early 1980s was a time of frustration for many dentists who noted a lack of "busyness" in their practices attributed to a surplus of dentist manpower. The October 1985 "Be a Dentist" piece provided a much needed shot in the arm to a profession in need of an image boost. In the warm, humorous fashion that has become his trademark, he gave dentists from their mid-20s through*

*their 60s an opportunity to reminisce about positive images and experiences associated with their profession.*

— Jack F. Conley, DDS

### "Be a Dentist" He Said

#### October 1985

*The early 1980s was a time of frustration for many dentists who noted a lack of "busyness" in their practices attributed to a surplus of dentist manpower. The October 1985 "Be a Dentist" piece provided a much needed shot in the arm to a profession in need of an image boost. In the warm, humorous fashion that has become his trademark, he gave dentists from their mid-20s through their 60s an opportunity to reminisce about positive images and experiences associated with their profession.*

— Jack F. Conley, DDS

"Be a dentist," he had advised me from my 10th year. "Everybody has 32 teeth, and at any given moment there's bound to be something wrong with 10 of them. You'll never run out of work."

Even at age 10 this made sense to me, although we agreed to little else thereafter until I was about 25.

Entering the service after dental school was an easy transition, like another three years of boot camp, but I found my father to be wrong on two counts -- everybody did not have 32 teeth and there was a lot wrong with more than 10 of the ones they did have.

He was right about the work, though -- we never ran out. My mother called me Doctor. It was a very good year when I was 23.

When I was 26, it was a fabulous year. Mustered out of the service, I found a suitable shingle, inscribed my name thereon and negotiated an impressive loan with an eager banker who called me Doctor.

I had a cream-colored Model E Ritter unit, a matching hydraulic chair with a head rest that articulated in nine planes, and a girl who answered the phone and called me Doctor.

When I was 26, I had a 32-inch waist, 20/20 vision and dated a girl whose mother thought that having a dentist in the family was probably the next best thing to having a “real” doctor.

When I was 35, it was a marvelous year. My three kids had 58 teeth among them, some coming, some going. My friendly banker, the same one who arranged the loan on my car and the mortgage on my house, insisted on giving me more money so I could have three operatories and a hygienist who called me Doctor.

My wife’s hair was an interesting shade of red when I was 35. I had a 34-inch waist and my patients paid their bills, when they paid them at all, with cash or check and I didn’t know a procedure code from a predetermination. I was planning to invent the high-speed handpiece and the diamond bur, but got busy developing flavored Vaseline to help mouth-breathers from dehydrating their silicates. It was an exciting year, so I grew a mustache.

When I was 46, it was an absolutely terrific year. I was wearing loupes that I thought made me look like I knew what I was doing, an illusion I encouraged. My wife had stunning ash-blond hair. My son’s hung down to here and my own was rapidly receding and was of a color quaintly referred to as “muckledun.”

My equipment had become obsolete because somebody else had taken my ideas for the high-speed handpiece and the diamond bur and marketed them while I was bogged down flavoring X-ray film with oil of wintergreen and working closely with the Rit Company for color-coding cotton rolls.

When I was 46, my banker called me “fella” and suggested I submit profit and loss statements for the past five years and keep my eye out for a co-signer.

Many of my patients had dental insurance and assured me they were covered 100 percent and asked not to be bothered with co-payments or money down. It was the year the “float” was discovered and the year in which the term “quantum leap” was first applied to college

tuition. A terrific year. I decided against a beard.

When I was 55, I got my first pair of size 36 pants and the IRS went into hysterics when I told them I had gone into cattle feed lots. It was an astonishing year. My equipment edged into obsolescence again, and 3,000 dentists graduated and came to practice in my town.

My banker said he’d call me back, but he didn’t and composite resins were invented in spite of the fact that, in my opinion, there existed absolutely no future for them. I traded my Porsche for a Chevy Nova and began wearing a tie again. The grandkids of my first patients came in and had no cavities.

When I was 65, it was the best of all. I knew the administrative staffs of 63 insurance companies by their first names and submitted my 38th request to kindly stop putting staples through my X-rays.

My waist was 38, but so was my chest, so the net effect was a nice solid appearance on the order of Fred Flintstone.

I called my banker, but he had been replaced by an ATM that was down at the moment, flashing a digital readout requesting me to try again later.

I raised my fees 15 percent to cover the 350 percent raise in my malpractice premium, a move overdue since my rent went up 25 percent. Several insurance companies wrote telling me that if I wanted to be one of their preferred providers and thus gain a mention on their list of other preferred providers, I could reduce my fees 25 percent and maybe we could play ball. I decided maybe we couldn’t.

My wife’s hair was white when I was 65, and I thought she would have looked great in a powder blue Mercedes coupe if we’d had one. I had a Medicare card and found I could get a 20 percent discount in certain restaurants during the week.

My son had entered the practice. “Be a dentist,” I had told him. “People have 32 teeth and there’s bound to be something wrong with at least one of them if you

wait long enough.”

Granddaddy was right, you’ll never run out of work, although it may seem that way now and then. What if you had become an eye, ear, nose and throat man? What kind of odds are those? There are only four things to go wrong. Or a proctologist?

When I had been in practice 42 years, I received a brochure from a dentist who had been in practice for six years. He offered to tell me how to make a million plus dollars a year like he did. I could have used this information 30 years ago, but he was only five then. I’ll bet he was a smart little rascal though.

## Reader Favorite

*We enjoy each of Dr. Bob’s columns because we usually can relate in some way. However, the column we will never forget is the one about the towel/rag used to wipe the tables in restaurants. When a busboy shows up to clear and clean a recently vacated table, our eyes are glued to him and his work. We wonder if the towel/rag is ever rinsed in clean water between chores or if ever a new towel has come into use. Our eyes meet across our table, and we know instantly what the other is thinking. If only Dr. Bob was with us to share our view of the hit-and-miss clean up. Keep writing, Dr. Bob. -*

*- Frank and Ruth Blair, Long Beach, Calif.*

## A Foolish Consistency

### February 1993

Ralph Waldo Emerson once revealed that “A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds.” Inasmuch as Emerson is considered the leading exponent of American Transcendentalism, I feel that those of us who understand transcendentalism (as well as those of us who haven’t a clue and couldn’t care less) should pay cover that “dental” is cryptically hidden in the word. As a firm proponent of several avenues of dentalism, some of which transcend others, I think Ralph was trying to tell us something about consistency,

although comparing it to a hobgoblin certainly dates this observation. The last recorded sighting of a hobgoblin was in 1832 in Haversham, Mass., by one Felton Bliesteft, who awoke the next morning in a cemetery, sorely besotted.

But I digress. As a dentist I am committed, either by inclination or government edict, to cleanliness and above all, sterility. Although I have never actually seen any, I know there are vicious pathogens of every stripe lurking on every surface, crack and fissure and behind even the most unlikely places. I pride myself on following all the barrier techniques to the letter, not wishing to be the instrument of transmission nor the hapless victim of these crazed viruses and bacteria rampant in the world today.

That's why, when I went into a restaurant recently, I did not think it a foolish consistency to expect the same attention given to asepsis there that I exercise in my office. This was an upscale eatery, somewhere between Denny's and the Ritz-Carlton. Upon being seated, however, I got my first inkling that the management and I were worlds apart in our concept of barrier techniques. Just opposite my table was a young man preparing a table for waiting guests. This was no spray/wipe, spray/wipe operation sanctified by the clean, sweet smell of Lysol. This chap, using a rag issued to him sometime during the Carter Administration, employed the single, looping swipe technique that took in both the table top and the seats, leaving behind an iridescent sheen on both. An instant later he was back, laying out the silverware. To my horror, he wore neither rubber gloves nor mask, and the cutlery was not encased in sterilization pouches as one could reasonably expect of things that would shortly go into someone's actual mouth. He then set out the water glasses, touching each with his bare hands. After standing back to briefly survey his work with satisfaction, he headed for the kitchen.

I followed him surreptitiously, hoping to catch a glimpse of the sterile area where the food was prepared and the dishes made ready. Shock upon shock! Not a single autoclave was visible, nor did I discover any ultrasonic units cleaning up used utensils. Instead, ungloved employees with heroic disregard for salsa- and gravy-borne pathogens, were milling about, perspiring like sumo wrestlers on a 10K run. Wearing formerly white T-shirts bearing the unmistakable evidence of home laundry, they were busily engaged in touching everything in sight, including those areas that itched.

There's more. When a waitress finally arrived, she confided to us "guys" (as in "Are you guys ready to order?") that her name was Tiffany and that she would be our server, at least until her break, when she would bring around Sherry who would be our backup server. Tiffany then, without benefit of gloves or suitable forceps, scooped up the bills and loose change left on the table by the previous occupants who, chances are, were the carriers of several diseases currently being considered for telethons. She then sashayed off to the kitchen to relay our order and to help touch things.

In slightly less time than it would take to read *The Iliad* in the original Greek, Tiffany was back with our meal, which she had balanced neatly on both forearms, nearly obscuring her tattoo. I don't know why I did this, I knew better, but I ate the entire meal without getting a spore count, a lab report on the pathogens in the salad, or a biopsy on the meat course.

Tiffany and Sherry finished their shifts and trotted off home wearing their uniforms with the multicolored stains of the four major food groups. The cooks, dishwashers and busboys, all blissfully unaware of the seething sepsis they labored in and shared with their customers, sweated their way through another batch of orders while visions of minimum wage bonanzas danced in their heads. They will undoubtedly marry and have 2.1 mutant children.

I, while waiting for the inevitable onset of some fatal and possibly inoperable disease, have had time before the paramedics arrive to ponder this: Dentists sometimes feel that the profession has been singled out for undue attention to our methodology and our ignorance and foot-dragging reluctance to face up to the fact that everything in our offices is a potential source of incurable pestilence. Just wait until the heat finally reaches the restaurant business. Hoo, boy! Just wait until that gloved, masked, full body-suited waitress brings the tab with the space for the gratuity and an even bigger one for "sterilization surcharge - \$50!" Us "guys" may have to give up eating out altogether and consider eating at home, a sanctuary we share with several generations of germ families. But at least they're our germs.

## The Language of Horseman

Colorful language is part of the fun of Dr. Horseman's writing. But sometimes, it's a little too colorful — that is, our intrepid editors have to look up a bunch of the words to make sure they're spelled and used correctly. Among the new words we've learned while editing Dr. Bob's column are:

Asafetida — the fetid gum resin of various oriental plants (genus *Ferula*) of the carrot family formerly used in medicine as an antispasmodic and in folk medicine as a general prophylactic against disease

Bagatelle — trifle

Bombazine — a silk fabric in twill weave dyed black

Brio — enthusiastic vigor

Bruit — 1 a: archaic NOISE, DIN b: REPORT, RUMOR 2: any of several generally abnormal sounds heard on auscultation

Chimera — an illusion or fabrication of the mind; esp. an unrealizable dream

Chockablock — full

Codswallop — Brit: Nonsense

Coterie — an intimate and often exclusive group of persons with a unifying common interest or purpose

Kibitz — to observe as a kibitzer; esp: to be a kibitzer at (kibitzer -- one who looks on and often offers unwanted advice or comment esp. at a card game; broadly one who offers opinions)

Kibosh — something that serves as a check or stop

Panoply — a magnificent or impressive array

Pastiche — a literary, artistic, musical, or architectural work that imitates the style of previous work; also: such stylistic imitation 2 a: a musical, literary, or artistic composition made up of selections from different works: POTPOURRI b: HODGEPODGE

Patois — 1 a: a dialect other than the standard or literary dialect b: uneducated or provincial speech 2: the characteristic special language of an occupational or social group: JARGON

Pellucid — 1: admitting maximum passage of light without diffusion or distortion 2: reflecting light evenly from all surfaces 3: easy to understand

Penumbra — a surrounding or adjoining region in which something exists to a lesser degree

Plummy — rich and mellow often to the point of affectation

Proselytizing — recruiting someone to join one's party, institution, or cause

Puce — a dark red

Riposte — a retaliatory verbal sally

Sang-froid — self-possession or imperturbability esp. under strain

Sobriquet — a descriptive name or epithet: nickname

Tittle — a very small part

Ubangi — a woman in the district of Kyabe village in Chad with lips pierced and distended to unusual dimensions with wooden disks -- not used technically

Definitions are from Miriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary 10th edition and Webster's Third New International, unabridged.

# Reader Appreciation

We asked our readers to send us comments on their favorite Horseman columns. It's clear by the response that Dr. Bob's fans find him to be a kindred spirit, whether he writes on the daily ironies of dentistry or the comic episodes of life beyond work. They also consider him a friend. And why not? In every issue, he writes them all a letter. In this issue, they get to write back.

I think it is a marvelous idea to recognize Dr. Robert Horseman for his contributions. He has always been the "light" at the end of the Journal.

My favorites have changed over the years, but my all-time favorite is titled "Geezerhood," from the September 1998 issue. I have been in practice for 23 years, so Geezerdom is rapidly creeping up on me. As I was reading, I began to recall a time when I took my father to buy him some new clothes. He was 81 at the time and had definitely developed the "beer belly" "cracker bottom" to the point where "this anatomical metamorphosis result[ed] in a major trouser problem," as Dr. Horseman puts it.

The tailor was doing his best to get the cuffs to break nicely while trying to keep the crotch from dropping to just above the knees. Viewing himself in the mirror, my father's only comment, in his best curmudgeonry, was "Don't make these look like I'm carrying a load back there." It was a comment that will live with me forever, and the one that I hope I will never have to utter.

Thank you Dr. Horseman, for bringing

a smile to my face over the years and for giving me a cherished memory of my father.

Jerry R. Bellen, DDS  
San Francisco

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I cast my vote for the September 1998 column on "Geezerhood." I laughed so hard, I cried! I sent a copy of it to my mom in Florida -- Geezerland! -- and to my mother-in-law who, like my mom, is "Geezerless," both widows of many years.

Dr. Bob is hilarious! He's a genius and I greatly admire his word and phrase selections, which severely tickle all my funnybones. He's the best!

Thomas L. Legan, DDS  
Capitola, Calif.

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I have practiced oral surgery down the clock from Bob since the days when I tallied the day's product of traded chickens with an abacus -- I assure you, the man is just as erudite, witty and incisive in person as he appears in printed form.

My favorite piece was years ago, in which Bob “tripped” out (as in Linda) about the foolish ravings of a dental lunch group -- “The Jolly Boys” (March 1987). This was a traumatic revelation to us -- that we were the subject of some of his wry observations.

Nevertheless, I have enjoyed Bob’s chronicles on the changing face of dental practice over the two decades prior. He is an inspirations to us all, both on page and in person.

Brian C. Chung, DMD  
Whittier, Calif.

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Today’s FDA Editor Ed Gonsky, DMD, and the Today’s FDA staff love Dr. Horseman’s humor columns! Today’s FDA runs reprints three or four times a year. Writing humorously is not an easy thing to do -- Dr. Horseman has a rare and wonderful talent for making his readers laugh, sometimes hysterically. It’s terrific that Dr. Horseman shares his gift with his colleagues -- it always helps to look at the humorous side of anything. We wish we had one just like him to write for us in Florida.

Karen Thurston Chavez  
Managing Editor, Today’s FDA  
Tallahassee, Fla.

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I have enjoyed Dr. Robert Horseman’s articles in the CDA Journal since the day I moved to California. Because of him, I wait eagerly to get my Journal every month and read it backward. It is hard to say which article is my favorite because I like them all and they all make me laugh. There is one impact his column has had on me -- it made me join CDA so I can have my own Journal and not miss an issue. I have not been fortunate enough to meet him, but I met his son and asked him to tell his dad how much I appreciate him.

Keep up the good work and never stop writing those articles.

Narendra G. Vyas, DDS  
Fontana, Calif.

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My favorite Dr. Bob column was the one about what to give a dentist for Christmas. “Show me the money,” (“What to Give a Dentist,” November 1998).

Clelen C. Tanner, DDS  
Hayward, Calif.

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Dr. Bob and I worked together on a lot of columns over the years. I found most of them very humorous so it’s hard to pick a favorite. However, one does stick in my mind as a very well-written parable, timely and inventive. Published in the June 1994 issue, it was titled “Achin’ in the Garden.” As far as I remember, it was the most re-published of all Dr. Bob’s articles during my 6 1/2 year tenure as managing editor, and with good reason: It said what a lot of his colleagues were thinking at the time.

Of nondental columns, I think one of my favorites was Dr. Bob’s “Manifesto for Life,” June 1997. (I don’t know what it is with those June issues!) He brilliantly put into words a lot of life’s little quirks that many of us try hard not to admit plague us. I laughed out loud at the one about women and Pamplona ... how true!

Dr. Horseman has written so many fantastic columns over the 10 years I’ve been reading him. I bow to his unique wit, creativity and staying power. May he go on forever!

Susan E. Lovelace  
Executive Director  
San Diego County Dental Society

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The CDA Journal is a good journal made better by Bob’s contributions. I would not read anything before getting a laugh from him. He has a wonderful and unique mind. I hope the younger generation of dentists appreciate him as much as those of his -- and mine.

Best article: “Mindful of New Ideas,” October 1994

No. 2: Re: Pigeons at his building (“For the Birds,” December 1997)

No. 3: Re: Restaurants having the same

sterilization requirements as dental offices. Best comment: Busboy wiping tables and seats with a towel “issued to him sometime during the Carter administration” (“A Foolish Inconsistency,” February 1993)

John Gorrie, DDS  
Fullerton, Calif.

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My favorite column is about the new young dentist who comes to lunch with local dentists and tells of his numerous, wonderful successes treating patients. Dr. Bob feels sorry for this person, who does not yet know how to talk to other dentists. You only talk of your disasters to other dentists. It’s a law.

Roger Bishop, DDS  
Los Altos, Calif.

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How can you pick a favorite out of all the columns that this literary, talented dentist has produced over many years? I turn to his column first thing to get all psyched up before reading the rest of the Journal. I then save and file them for my future edification. Some of the ones that seem to draw my attention include the February 1999 “The Emperor’s New Dental Smock.” It is well-done and very up-to-date with government interference in individual choice. “Chew on This” from July 1997 is an interesting approach to the value of having one’s own teeth. “The Art of Personal Suffering” from February 1994 was a different approach to the usual idea of the dentist being a sadist. “Learning the Language,” December 1994, is another favorite because of the dialogue and the way it was written. “The Insurance Game” January 1994 is a favorite because it discusses in a lighthearted manner a very serious matter for every dentist.

See what I mean about trying to pick a favorite? Oh, for the literary talent and keen humorous mind of Dr. Bob.

With laughter and appreciation,  
John C. Brown, DDS  
Claremont, Calif.

# A Columnist's Eye View

Robert E.  
Horseman, DDS

When people first meet me, they often comment, "Bob, you're much older than I thought!" To which I reply, "I owe it all to dentistry. Before I became a dentist, I was half this age and looked a lot younger than that." Sometimes people refrain from mentioning that I am a bit heavier than they had pictured me, but not often enough. There is a common misconception that writers are invariably small, bird-like people on the order of Billy Barty. In reality, many of us are as fit and robust as Ted Kennedy or the late Orson Welles.

Many years ago, I was invited to contribute an occasional page to the CDA Journal. I was so honored, I neglected to inquire about the pay. Instead, I asked, "What will I write about?" The answer was the stock axiom, "Write about what you know." I discovered, with the help of my teenage granddaughter, that I didn't actually know anything. Oh, I had strong suspicions about some things, but invariably they turned out to be at wide variance from the facts as interpreted by anybody born after 1980. For example, I thought popular music should have a tune you could whistle and lyrics you could sing without getting your mouth washed out with soap.

So I developed a philosophy of writing with these tenets:

- Never record anything that contains verifiable facts. In fact, stay away

from facts altogether; they can be an acute source of embarrassment to the publishers and me.

- Aim for 900 words, including "a" and "the."

That's it -- 900 words of nonfactual material. You think that's easy? I'll sit around for 20 minutes honing an article based on whimsy, fantasy and quirkiness when all of a sudden a fact sneaks in and I have to start all over again.

That's why the most important element of my work is the illustration by Charlie Hayward. Charlie never drew a fact-intensive cartoon in his life; it's against the Cartoonists' Code of Ethics. One accurate, reality-based toon and you're out of the Guild is their position.

It is interesting to note that none of the people ultimately responsible for getting my meticulously researched scientific and advanced dental observations onto the printed page are dentists themselves. You'd think it would be easy to make them believe anything I claimed had a dental origin, like convincing Charlie Hayward that the human dentition consists of 75 teeth and the Obicularis Oris is a constellation just southwest of Orion. Such is not the case. Charlie draws dragons, snakes, Edsels and dental surgeries with equal facility. His is not to reason why. If the text has no relation to the illustration, it's my fault, he reasons, or Jeanne Marie's.

Managing Editor Jeanne Marie Tokunaga's job is equally complex. Mainly, she is the watchdog who keeps CDA from getting sued by some beef-witted subscriber who can't tell when I'm kidding. Her response to these irate parties is "If any statement by Horseman makes you consider filing a lawsuit, then he's kidding." Poised with red pen in hand, she asks me, "What is the exact meaning of 'cracker bottom'?" and "I can't find 'doodyhead' in my dictionary. Are you sure that's the way to spell it?" I don't know what they're teaching them in journalism school these days.

When you get to the last pages in this publication, after having absorbed enough scientific facts to make your eyes bleed, you encounter a page created by two guys who have no idea what they're doing, edited by a woman who can't explain either one of them.

Please don't write in complaining that X-rays were not invented by Dr. Frankenstein and that real people's hands don't have four fingers. Address all your concerns to Editor Dr. Jack Conley. Don't believe him when he tells you he never heard of any of us.