

Entertainment Outlook

Date with the dentist causes trepidation



Weir's View

By Ian Weir

Thomson News Service

Even in an age in which people so routinely make unexpected career changes, it was startling to pick up the newspaper and read that the Princess of Wales has taken up dentistry.

But it's true. Diana has just been admitted to the Royal College of Surgeons as an Honorary Fellow in Dental Surgery.

This, you will admit, is an intriguing concept. A royal dentist. No longer empowered to cry "Off with his head," the modern monarch settles for "Out with his teeth."

Now granted, Princess Di hasn't exactly become a dentist. She's an honorary dentist — one who has the status and the title, but who would never dream of actually performing root canal surgery. In other words, the very best kind of dentist.

And this raises a forlorn question. If a princess can become an honorary dentist, is there any way a mere commoner could become an honorary dental patient — one who receives the full benefit of dentistry without ever having to have his teeth drilled?

If you've detected a certain note of desperation here, it's because I have a dental appointment next week. And this is always a gloomy prospect — espe-

cially when you haven't seen a dentist in nearly five years.

Let me stress that I haven't been avoiding dentists because I'm afraid of them. Heavens, no!

Dentists aren't at all frightening — they're just ordinary folks. With long needles. And drills. And a ghastly way of saying "hmmmm" as they go poking about in search of an exposed nerve.

No, I've had good reasons for avoiding a dentist for five years. To start with, I've been trying unsuccessfully to meet the first prerequisite for a dental appointment — marry someone with a dental plan.

Plus, I've been following the advice of the last dentist I visited — who urged me never to see a dentist again as long as I lived. (Well, she didn't exactly phrase it that way. What she said was, "the next time you're in, that back molar may need a root-canal." So I took the hint.)

But most of all, I have philosophical reservations about modern dentistry.

As you know, modern dentistry is very big on prevention. The goal of the modern dentist is to take up arms — his expertise and your wallet — against the host of gum diseases that will ravage your teeth in 20 years if they aren't cut off at the pass right now.

Well, I would never imply that the dental profession is less than wholly honorable. But has it never struck you as curious you had never heard of all these new afflictions until fluoride and regular check-ups had eliminated cavities?

I have a theory on this. Fifteen years ago, dentists realized they had become so proficient they had all but wiped out tooth decay. Faced with professional ruin, the Royal College of Dentists sent

a team of crack researchers to a secret laboratory, forbidding them to come out until they had identified some gum diseases.

This theory is doubtless rooted in pure paranoia. Still, part of my dread of going to the dentist arises from the fact dentists and I simply do not see eye-to-eye on what constitutes "essential work."

As far as I'm concerned, "essential work" means taking the x-rays. After that, we negotiate.

Unfortunately, dentists have their own ideas. Next week, for instance, there'll be another skirmish in the ongoing war over my wisdom teeth.

Dentists have lusted after my wisdom teeth for 15 years, and this one will be no different. Once we've reached the inevitable impasse on this issue, he'll subside into sullen wrath and commence grilling me about my flossing habits.

You are doubtless familiar with this

scenario. The dentist forces you to admit that you floss infrequently, and you don't know how to do it properly in the first place. He then lectures you mercilessly on the need to floss after every meal until at last you stick out your lower lip, cry "I don't hafta if I don't wanna!" and burst into tears.

Oh, it's a depressing prospect. A deeply dismal prospect, and it leads to just one conclusion.

This world is in terrible need of more dentists like Princess Di.

Face in the Crowd



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ASK DICK KLEINER

Who recalls Farmer Ron?

Dear Dick: I have been trying to remember the name of a good movie I saw when I was very young. It was about a vegetable truck farmer and starred Ronald Reagan, George Tobias and, perhaps, Ann Sheridan. Why isn't it shown on TV, like so many other old movies? — R.A., Renton, Wash.

Dear R.A.: I think you must be remembering "Juke Girl," a 1942 film about Florida fruit workers. The cast also included Gene Lockhart and Faye Emerson. It has been on TV, but these days, not many of Ronald Reagan's old films are shown. Perhaps the stations feel it might be embarrassing to the chief.

Dear Dick: For years, I've told friends there was an instrumental record called "The Clouds" performed by The Spacemen around 1960 or 1962, and was Number 1. Nobody has ever heard of it. Tell 'em it was Number 1, Dick. — J.F.M., St. Marys, Ohio.

Dear J.F.M.: Wish I could, but I can't. According to The Billboard's Book of Number One Hits, no record by The Spacemen was ever Number 1 on its national charts. And, also, from the same source, there was never a record called "The Clouds" that achieved that national ranking.

Dear Dick: I am completing a book

called "What Happens To a Fallen Star," in which I document the lives and careers of twelve eminent performers who reached great heights in show business but who then disappeared. I hope to include a story about John Gary, very prominent in the '60s as a singer. But I cannot locate him. Do you have any information about his present whereabouts and career? — C.E.F., Houston.

Dear C.E.F.: Not much. Richard Lamparski, who does those "Whatever Became Of..." books tracked Gary down a few years ago. He had married a Dallas woman and was devoting himself to managing her real estate holdings. He did sing occasionally, too.

Dear Dick: I am a big fan of "High Mountain Rangers" and think Christian Conrad is great. Can you give me some information about him? — E.W., Copperas Cove, Texas.

Dear Dick: I watch "High Mountain Rangers" every week. I would like to know which of Robert Conrad's sons is Shane Conrad and which is Christian. Also, how old are they? — J.E., Jersey Shore, Pa.

Dear E.W. and J.E.: Christian plays Matt, the older son; he is 23. Shane plays Cody, the younger son; he is 16. They are two of Robert Conrad's eight children. Christian says he really wants to be a director and/or producer and acting is just for the experience.



Ronald Reagan Christian Conrad

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