A.M. Magazine

His craftsmanlike approach led one patient to dub him the 'Michelangelo of dentists' and he considers his work in facial aesthetics to be a person's crowning glory.

The $15,000 SMILE

Dr. Thomas Batchik, above, says spending $15,000 on your mouth is just another matter of priorities. As right. Dick Dean, feels his smile was worth the price.

The science — and art — of crafting better teeth

1. When Dick Dean came to Dr. Batchik, his upper teeth had major problems. Crowns on the back molar teeth were old and discolored. The two teeth adjacent to them were dropped and dissociated. The canines on each side were crowned and filled with gold. Postcasts were made and a new set of two crowns were made and fitted.

2. To correct the problem, first the old crowns were removed and the teeth were fitted for new crowns. Two gold crowns were made and fitted in the roots. The two castings were then made for the front crowns. The teeth were set in the new crowns and the crowns were set in the mouths.

3. A provisional restoration made of acrylic was cemented into the mouth. The teeth were checked and adjusted. The acrylic crowns were removed and the crowns were set in the mouth. The crowns were checked and adjusted.

4. When provisional crowns were removed and crowns cemented, the teeth were checked and adjusted. The teeth were checked and adjusted. The crowns were set in the mouth. The crowns were checked and adjusted.

5. Final restoration was cemented into place after hours of careful measurement for a proper bite. From then on, a patient must spend about 10 minutes daily to brush his teeth. After that he can keep the same healthy.
**SMILE**

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faces recently surrounded not only by dental advertisements but also by the TV commercials for a toothpaste which the recordings for a future edition of "Talk With Your Doctor" and an educational documentary. Balshi fondly dubbed the production, "The Reconstruction of a Smile."

**Quite frankly, it's like dropping your picture in Mary's window," joked a slightly embarrassed Dean while settling into the chair.

Dr. Dean's direction, a total of five specialists will peer into Dean's mouth during the entire five-month, $15,000 procedure is called. Each time, a new surgeon to remove the hopeless teeth, an endodontist for root canal work, an orthodontist to straighten the teeth, a prosthodontist to survey the gums and, finally, Balshi himself, the prosthodontist, who will install the new teeth. Dean had three appointments reading him for the actual 90-minute on-camera treatment in addition to some pre and post surgery and root canal work. It was the placement of eight new teeth by Balshi, a provisional restoration as it's called, that cost a mere $200 film.

Armed with an assortment of diamond drills and precision instruments, Balshi begins to dissemble the teeth, one at a time.

"If you don't start with the back teeth, you don't have any leverage remaining. That anatomy, which was previously prepared by root canal treatment, lowers a ledge, so to speak. The original tooth, or is called the abutment, is used to hold the new tooth in its place."

"The rest of Dean's top eight teeth are prepared in a similar manner, a bit of buffing here, a smidgen of shaving there. And with each tooth, a piece of tissue is removed to provide a place for the restorative film to rest inside."

Dean shivers at the thought of his new teeth. "I was taught to be afraid of needles, but now I'm afraid of the mirror."

"That's what's called an occlusal wafer," explains Balshi, "and it's used to determine the height of the new teeth."

Dean notes that Balshi has teeth lined up like tombstones although he'll never forget a professional gambler we tried to work on. They turned brown and shriveled up and dried up white bone, so while it would distract his opponents when he smiled at them.

The doctor studies Dean's facial features, asks him to smile and then decides the lateral and vertical movements of his jaw. None of the removal, the provisional, he outlines each false tooth with a diamond disk to give it look and separate and distinct. He then creates a small space between the front teeth, something Dean had throughout his life. Peeling off this doubly thick, white's breath, he paints the teeth, adding a touch of orange to the teeth and a bit of darkness to the blood vessels. The procedure involves filing the inside of the provisional with cement and installing it.

"In my opinion, the temporary set of teeth or "diagnostic tool" as Balshi calls it, will wear for two months during which time we will get a general idea of comfort."

"My grandfather used to carve little animals," Dean says. "He was a steady-handed Balshi of his curious blend of art and science. "Maybe that's what influenced me."

The rest of Dean's top eight teeth are prepared in a similar manner, a bit of buffing here, a smidgen of shaving there. And with each tooth, a piece of tissue is removed to provide a place for the restorative film to rest inside. Balshi checks the fit, removes it and files some more.

"This is where I try to show the real Dick Dean in his teeth," explains Balshi, "the man behind the smiling bridgework for other dentists. This is where the customing comes in, where the dental technicians and I work as a team."

Richard H. Shulman, an oral surgeon practicing in Lansdale and Ambler. "They haven't done a lot of cosmetic reductions so, understandably, they are a bit skeptical. Many dentists are quite qualified and routine do work like this, but the elaborate and optimal aesthetics, specialists are needed. Naturally, there's a lot of money in general dentistry, but it's only a fraction of that many of them will take on this type of work."

"I've never recommended any of my pa- tients to a prostodontist," said Stephen Eissenstat, division chief at the University of Pennsylvania. "I went to the University of Penn and we had very extensive training. I'm not dubious of what Dr. Balshi's doing. He's an excellent practitioner and it's an excellent procedure but only if it needs to be done."

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While Balshi, who is the national public education chair for the American Dental Association, says there is permanent there is a chance that it might wear out and have to be redone. That's why he stresses that any maintenance to the gold and the porcelain but the gums and teeth under-lying bone and tooth we have to keep them healthy.

"It's quite an uplifting feeling to see the change that comes over some people," com- ments Balshi, who has worked with Andreilli and Jeni Sledge of Sister Sledge. "I get a bang out of it."

"Who wears a mouth appliance," re- membered 39-year-old Marlon Maraska somewhat painfully. "Food cooked in it, the endodontic infections, and the health of Poly-Grip in business, and it gave me headaches and neck spasms. I finally came to the conclusion I'd risk the mouth, but it set itself successfully, but if it's complex you should seek the expertise of an orthopedic surgeon."

Balshi says an operation like Dean's can help people with removable partial den- tures, missing teeth or existing teeth that are in bad condition. He contends that as an addition to the evident physical problems stemming from the bad teeth, improper chewing and gastro-intestinal disorders, there are numerous psychological and emotional problems that many people men tell me they think if they look better they'll have a better chance at advance- ment. A letter was received from a man who had asked by the Indian government to lecture their dentists on prosthodontics. "I'm surprised at my view they feel older, less virile or not so attractive, no."

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