A Decayed Tooth

Wood block print by ‘Ichiyusai’, (Kuniyoshi Utagawa), 1798-1861, Menzies Campbell catalogue number HC.J.16.X.67, under the title (Extracting a tooth).

The catalogue uses the name Ichiyusai Koniyoshi for the artist, and notes that he was born, bred and died in Yedo (Edo). Utagawa was a famous school of Japanese art. The print bears censors’ seals indicating it to be from the Edo period between 1842 and 1854. Before his death in 1861, Kuniyoshi was able to witness the opening of the port city of Yokohama to foreigners, and in 1860 produced two works depicting Westerners in the city.

The subject of the caricature is ‘A Good Doctor Kogarashi.’ A translation from the script reads – ‘The doctor Kogarashi is always calm saying ‘do not worry’ even for patients who are in a real pain. And he extracts all the bad teeth and sends patients home happily. It is always the best solution to extract a tooth as there won’t be any more pain.’ The dentures pictured in the foreground are thought to be an advertising sign.
DENTAL HISTORY MAGAZINE

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Excerpts and quotations are permissible providing the usual acknowledgements are made.

Contributions on the History of Dentistry from any source are welcomed. Word and JPEG files by e-mail are preferred but other formats are acceptable.

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Autumn Lecture 2009 by Dr Jo Cummins on the *Rosa Anglica*

The audience at the RCPSG on the 27th October 2009, were treated to a lecture which proved as entertaining as it was scholarly. Dr Cummins’ subject was *The Rosa Anglica*, a 14th century medical text by the physician John of Gaddesden (1280-1361). Dr Cummins has recently completed an English translation from the medieval Latin of the chapters of Gaddesden’s text which deal with dental and oral conditions. Her principal argument was that the dental information to be found in *The Rosa Anglica* has been undervalued by medical historians. She analysed some of the seemingly bizarre treatments recommended by Gaddesden and expressed her conviction, intriguingly, that at least one was advocated with tongue in cheek. We were reminded that some things never change, and that even in these days of ‘evidence based medicine’ there is much to be gained from a thoughtful study of the past. The lecture was beautifully illustrated and presented and we look forward to publishing some of the material in a future issue.

British Dental Association 2009 Annual Conference in Glasgow

Spring Lecture 2010

Dr Howard Moody, Vice Dean of the Faculty of Dentistry, Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh gave a well-received Lillian Lindsay Memorial Lecture to a packed room at the BDA annual Conference at the SECC in June. He traced the history of forensic dentistry from ancient Egypt to the present day, in an entertaining and erudite lecture illuminated by his own extensive experience in the field. He has agreed to give us a similar presentation as the Spring Lecture of the Group, at a date to be confirmed in April 2010.

To warm applause the President of the Lindsay Society, Professor Robin Basker, presented the Lillian Lindsay Memorial Medal to Geoff Garnett, in recognition of his outstanding contributions to the study of the history of dentistry over a number of years, as a lecturer, writer, editor and chairman. We are pleased to number him amongst our members and congratulate him on this well-deserved honour.

An innovation at this conference was a demonstration of cohesive gold filling technique by Peter Frost, Lindsay Society Treasurer, using equipment and materials from the BDA Museum, and introduced by Rachel Bairstow, the museum’s Curator.

The demonstration brought back memories for some of the audience, and it is interesting to contemplate that this technique, which was regarded as literally the ‘gold standard’ in restorative dentistry fifty years ago, has now passed completely out of use - or is there someone out there still using it?

The Edinburgh Phrenological Society and its Collections

In this companion article to his fascinating lecture for our group at the RCPSG in the spring, Professor Matthew Kaufman chronicles the strange 19th Century ‘pseudo-science’ of Phrenology which was thought to reveal an individual’s health and personality through ‘reading’ the heights and hollows of the surface of the cranium. In this generously illustrated article, we learn that dedication to the study of Phrenology was particularly intense in Scotland. In addition to gathering disciples in academic circles, it excited the interest and financial support of the general public. Professor Kaufman describes the personalities involved in the genesis of Phrenology and the origins and development of the influential, Edinburgh Phrenological Society. If any further proof is required of
the fallibility of phrenological methods for analysing the human character, one need only study the faces and heads of the various individuals on page 9 to find it.

Dental War Heroes Number 3

Eddy Blondeel: Founder 1st Belgian SAS Parachute Regiment

Dr Xavier Riaud continues his series on dental war heroes with this account of the struggle to liberate Belgium from the Nazis during the Second World War. After undergoing special training in the art of ‘ambush warfare’ at Inverlochy Castle near Fort William, the dental surgeon Eddy Blondeel lead his SAS unit behind the lines...

When Napoleon Met Eugenie or A Love Story in the Dental Surgery

Was one of the most celebrated royal marriages of 19th Century Europe the result of a chance meeting in a dental surgery?

In a previous issue of Dental History Magazine (2:2), Dr Jo Cummins took a pragmatic view of the marriage between the French Emperor Louis Napoleon III and Eugenie de Montijo, Countess of Teba. However in this article Dr Xavier Riaud cites The Memoirs of American dentist Tom Evans to argue the case for true love - and a more romantic viewpoint.

A Love Story in the Dental Surgery or Unreliable Memoirs?

Dr Jo Cummins responds to Dr Xavier Riaud’s article on the part played by Tom Evans in The Imperial Marriage of Napoleon and Eugenie (see above). Were Eugenie and her mother at Tom Evan’s surgery simply by chance when an official of the Royal Court dropped in as a casual patient - or did Tom Evans act as a cynical go-between for his infatuated royal patron in a political marriage?

Word of Mouth

We have a double Word of Mouth in this issue. In part I, Eugene Feldman reviews Two Lives by Vikram Seth. Seth recounts the remarkable story of his uncle, the dentist Shanti Seth and his wife Henny a refugee from Nazi Germany. Despite having his right arm blown off as a medical officer with the British Army in the bombardment of Monte Cassino, Shanti Seth established a successful solo practice in London after the War.

In Part II, Dr Feldman considers the dental vicissitudes of Willie Chadran in V.S. Naipul’s novel, Half a Life.

Web News

Carol Parry, Library and Heritage manager of The Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow discusses the history of The Glasgow Odontological Society and the case of a 16th Century Dental Hoax.
It may be surprising for many readers to learn that during the period between 1820 and the middle of the 19th century, Edinburgh was the most important centre in the world for the study and dissemination of the ‘pseudo-science’ of Phrenology.

In 1820, George Combe, an Edinburgh lawyer, his younger brother Andrew who was a doctor, and several other like-minded individuals established the Edinburgh Phrenological Society. The Society eventually had over 600 members, of whom about 100 were from the medical profession.

Forty Societies
In the following fifteen years, it is recorded that over forty other phrenological societies appeared in Britain. Although many of these had only a few members, or existed for only a short while, it gives some idea of how the subject excited interest amongst a public eager to embrace new ideas or knowledge. Every phrenological society owned one or more ‘phrenologically marked’ heads in which the locations of the ‘phrenological organs’ were delineated, and a collection of casts ‘illustrative of phrenology.’

Notable individuals
The individuals from whom these casts were taken were usually notable for some extreme of talent or character - the idea being that their corresponding ‘organs’ would be more easily discerned in their deficient or well-endowed state. A collection of such casts would therefore be invaluable for identifying the location of each of the ‘phrenological organs’ in its own situation on the surface of the head.

Pseudo-science
The founder of the ‘pseudo-science’ of Phrenology was Franz Joseph Gall (1758-1828) (Fig. 1), a Viennese physician who since boyhood had been interested in the relationship between the shape of the head, and the powers of the intellect. As a doctor, he visited patients in asylums, and came to the conclusion that ‘desperate faces reflected mental affliction.’

He also believed that the brain was the seat of the mind, and that the outer contours of the skull reflected the individual’s various faculties. Phrenology gradually arose during the late 1780s and early 1790s from the confluence of his own neuro-anatomical studies - he dissected large numbers of human and animal brains, and the earlier studies of physiognomy.

His ‘science’ was initially termed ‘organology’ or ‘craniognomy,’ and it was only later termed ‘Phrenology.’ One of his earliest books on Phrenology was his Craniologie. The apparent delineation of these ‘organs,’ convinced many of Phrenology's followers in the misguided belief of Gall's evidence of cerebral localization.

Gall was joined in 1800 by a medical student, Johann Gaspar Spurzheim (1776-1832) (Fig. 2) who, after he qualified in medicine in 1804, became his principal disciple and co-worker. In 1806, both were expelled from Austria, at the instigation of the Catholic Church, because of their atheistic views. Both went on an extensive lecture tour of Europe, and eventually settled in Paris.
In 1813, their pathways diverged, because of philosophical differences as to the future direction that Phrenology should take. Gall was more interested in his neuroanatomical studies, while Spurzheim wished to apply the tenets of Phrenology to contemporary philosophy, religion, and social reform - such as to the humane treatment of prisoners. In 1814, Spurzheim moved to England, where he lectured often to huge audiences in numerous venues around the country.

**A particularly hostile article**

In 1815, an anonymous and particularly hostile article was published in *The Edinburgh Review* that was extremely critical of Phrenology. The author was in fact John Gordon (1786-1818), a popular Edinburgh Extra-mural lecturer on Anatomy and Physiology. In 1816, following a series of public debates in Edinburgh between Spurzheim and the adversaries of Gall’s and his doctrine, he eventually guessed that Gordon was the author of the offending article. Gordon, in 1817, subsequently published his monograph entitled: ‘Observations on the Structure of the Brain’, in which he provided detailed arguments that further criticised the tenets of Phrenology. Shortly after this work was published, in 1818, Gordon died suddenly from an infection gained from a patient in the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary.

Spurzheim lectured and gave convincing anatomical demonstrations to both scientific and lay audiences while in Edinburgh, and gained many adherents to his cause. One in the audience was a sceptical lawyer - George Combe (1788-1858) who had read and originally unreservedly accepted the views expressed by the author of the article published in the *Edinburgh Review*. Combe had previously attended the classes of Dr. John Barclay in his Extra-mural Anatomy School located at Number 10 Surgeons’ Square where he had observed Barclay dissect and describe the anatomical features of the brain. He found these sessions entirely unsatisfactory, as no indication was ever given by Barclay that there might have been a relationship between the mind and the brain.

**The Scots Magazine, 1817.**

Combe wrote his first article in support of Phrenology in 1817, in *The Scots Magazine*, and a book entitled *Essays on Phrenology*. To his surprise, his article and book were both well received. George Combe, his younger brother, Andrew Combe (1797-1847) a doctor, and several others, all of whom were sympathetic to the tenets of Phrenology, established the Edinburgh Phrenological Society in February 1820.

During the period between 1820 and the middle of the 19th century, Edinburgh was believed to be the most important centre in the world for the study and dissemination of the ‘science’ of Phrenology. It is also clear that many others, particularly from the so-called ‘working classes’ and from amongst the ‘intelligent laymen’ elsewhere in Britain and later abroad both joined and regularly attended meetings of their local phrenological societies.

**The Edinburgh Phrenological Society’s Libraries and journals.**

From shortly after its establishment, the Edinburgh Phrenological Society also accumulated anatomical and scientific texts that were to form the basis of what was to become their substantial reference and lending libraries. The Society also published, in 1823, the results of their debates and the views of their more influential members in support of Phrenology in their *Transactions of the Edinburgh Phrenological Society*. Only one volume of their
Transactions was in fact published, as it was soon replaced by their Phrenological Journal and Miscellany. This later became the Phrenological Journal and Magazine of Moral Science (New Series 1838-47).

**Funding of the Society's activities**

As the Society's membership and activities expanded, it became increasingly difficult to run it from its modest subscriptions alone. The Society was therefore particularly fortunate to receive a substantial deed of settlement in 1831, on the death of Mr. William Ramsay Henderson, at the age of 30, a close friend and disciple of George Combe, and an ardent supporter of Phrenology. These funds allowed the Society to cover the cost of publication of its Journal, to purchase books for its libraries, as well as to procure substantial numbers of items suitable for display in its Museum. More particularly, it also allowed the Society to publish a ‘popular’ edition of George Combe's influential Essay on the Constitution of Man. This was priced one shilling and six pence, and was specifically directed towards a readership amongst the ‘intelligent poor.’ This book went through numerous editions, and many thousands of copies were sold, along with many thousands of additional pirated editions in this country and abroad.

**Hotel Dieu, Paris**

Andrew Combe, was encouraged by his older brother to study medicine, and qualified with the licentiate diploma from Surgeons' Hall in Edinburgh in 1817. He then went to Paris to study under Dupuytren (chief surgeon at the Hotel Dieu Hospital) and under Spurzheim. Andrew returned to Edinburgh in 1819, but because of intermittent poor health he was never to engage in full-time medical practice, though he was able to resume his medical career in 1823. In 1825, he graduated with the M.D. degree from the University of Edinburgh, and in 1832 was elected to a Fellowship of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh. In addition to actively contributing over the years to the Society's journals, he was elected its President in 1827, and was also the editor of The Phrenological Journal until shortly before his death in 1847, when it ceased publication. He was a prolific and popular author. All of his books sold well, and each went to numerous editions, so that much of his time was occupied in updating them. He was also a sympathetic clinician, and in 1836 was for about a year Physician to the Belgian Royal Family. In 1838 he was appointed Physician-Extraordinary to Queen Victoria in Scotland, and in 1844 was appointed Physician-in-Ordinary to the Queen in Scotland. George Combe published a biography of him shortly after his death.

**The Museums of the Edinburgh Phrenological Society.**

By 1823 the Society had amassed sufficient items relating to Phrenology, such as drawings (Fig. 5) and artefacts illustrative of the science to justify the establishment of a Museum. Its principal function was to display these artefacts adequately for the benefit of their members and their numerous visitors.

**Henderson Trust Collection**

As a consequence of the enthusiasm of its founder members, the Museum collection of the Society eventually contained more than 2,500 items, many of which are of the greatest interest in relation to the emergence and early history of Phrenology. The present Henderson Trust collection still contains the three hundred Life and Death Masks representing about one-third of the original number formerly displayed in the museum of the Phrenological Society. In addition, it possessed numerous ‘phrenologically marked,’ crania (Figure 6 a-d) and busts of heads (Figures 7a, 7b, 8), about 800 human crania, now incorporated into the Anatomy Department's anthropological collection, and the crania of numerous non-human species, also now incorporated into the Department's comparative collection.

![Fig. 5. Phrenological Drawings from Gall’s Craniologie](image-url)
The collection consisted principally of Life Masks and Death Masks of famous individuals (Figures 9-13) and infamous individuals (Figures 14-15), a collection of ‘phrenologically marked’ crania (Fig.6) and other items of phrenological interest.

Fig. 6. Phrenologically marked crania.

Fig. 7a. Phrenological Bust
Fig. 7b. Lateral View

Fig. 9. William Pitt
Fig. 10. Sir John Franklin

Fig. 11. Gall

Fig. 12. Mendelssohn

Fig. 8 Frontal View, Head of Boy

Fig. 13. Sir Walter Scott

Fig. 14. Burke
Fig. 15. Hare
The Society’s Museum was generally deemed to be particularly scientifically useful and no other collection of such a size exists in Great Britain.

An important acquisition
One of its most important acquisitions was the purchase in 1871 of part of Spurzheim's own collection of about 100 human skulls and about 300 casts of heads, which he had bequeathed on his death in 1832 to his friend the London phrenologist J.D. Holm. Spurzheim had died suddenly of a fever in Boston in 1832, while on an extensive lecture tour of the United States. In December 1855, because of increasing financial difficulties, the museum collection and all of the other assets of the Edinburgh Phrenological Society were transferred to the Henderson Trust. The Society's collection of Life Masks and Death Masks and other items illustrative of Phrenology that were at that time displayed in rooms specially set aside in their premises located at Number 2 Surgeons' Square were moved to a purpose-built museum in Chambers Street during the first half of 1877 (Figure 16). These premises were sold in 1886 to the Heriot Trust, and the frontage of the Phrenological Museum later became incorporated into the Heriot-Watt building, and more recently into that of the Crown Office. In the late 1870s, the Henderson Trustees initiated discussions with Sir William Turner, Professor of Anatomy in the University of Edinburgh, who 'intimated a willingness to accept the whole collection on deposit,' that is, on 'long-term loan.'

Fate of the Museum collections
With the discrediting of Phrenology during the latter part of the 19th century, and the more recent evidence of cerebral localization, the Henderson Trustees were bound by a clause that disallowed dispersal or destruction of the collection. Accordingly, they offered it to a number of institutions in Edinburgh, but Sir William Turner was the only individual to express any interest in it (see above). Turner's prize was the huge collection of national crania amassed by the Edinburgh Phrenological Society in order to examine national characteristics. These rapidly became incorporated into Turner's anthropological collection. The other items in the Henderson Trust's collection, mostly consisting of plaster of Paris casts of Life Masks and Death Masks, remained fairly intact until the late 1940s when the shelving on which they were stored collapsed and the damaged casts were disposed of. The items that remained intact were then stored elsewhere in the Department, only to be rediscovered by the author in the mid-1980s.

One of the largest collections in the world
Today, about 300 assorted casts, mostly Life Masks and Death Masks, associated with a large collection of 'phrenologically marked' human crania and plaster of Paris casts of heads, and over 200 casts of skulls remain. These still constitute one of the largest surviving phrenological collections in the world, and contain in that number the likenesses of many famous and infamous individuals. Most of the collection was recently transferred to the Scottish National Portrait Gallery, under similar conditions to those originally arranged with Sir William Turner on behalf of the University of Edinburgh. The Life and Death Masks, and the 'marked heads and crania' are presently displayed in the Gallery's store at Granton, Edinburgh, where they are on view to the public.


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6 Combe, G. (1819). *Essays on Phrenology*, ... Longman: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme and Brown. [subsequent editions were entitled, *A System of Phrenology*]. 

**Figure Legends:**
1. Print of Dr. Gall showing him demonstrating his theories.
2. Life Mask of Dr. Spurzheim.
4. Engraving of Dr. Andrew Combe by John Horsburgh (1791-1869).
5. Engravings of various views of phrenologically marked cranium from Gall's *Craniologie*, with 27 'organs' delineated (5a-c).
6. Engraving of various views of 'phrenologically marked' cranium, from Gall's *Craniologie*, with 27 'organs’ delineated (6a-c).
7. Frontal (7a) and left side view (7b) of ‘New Phrenological Bust’ published by O'Neil dated 1824, with 35 basic and 3 supplementary regions (named 3a, 6a and 19a) delineated.
9. Death Mask of William Pitt the Younger
10. Life Mask of Sir John Franklin (1786-1847). He was an Arctic explorer who died on an expedition to Canada seeking the N. W. passage.
11. Life Mask of Gall
12. Life Mask of Mendelssohn (1809-1847)
13. Death Mask of Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832)
15. Life Mask of William Hare, the murderer, made in Tolbooth Prison in Edinburgh in 1828.
16. Bay Window and what remains of the entrance to the Phrenological Museum in Chamber Street, Edinburgh.
Edouard Blondeel was born on 25th January 1906 in Gand, Belgium. He began his studies at the Deutsche Schule, then the Oefenschool which was attached to the city's normal school. As a schoolboy of thirteen years of age he joined the Scouts who encouraged the adventurous out-door life he was growing to love. Before the outbreak of war, Eddy was Commissioner of Scouts for the Flanders area of Belgium.

In 1929, he enlisted as an aspiring officer in the 1st Mounted Artillery Regiment. In 1930, after rising to the rank of ‘Marshal of Lodgings’ (Maréchal des Logis), he returned to civilian life. In 1932, the same year in which he married, he enlisted once again at the rank of adjutant aspirant second lieutenant. He resigned his post in 1934 but this time at the rank of second lieutenant.

Although he had trained as an engineer, he wanted to take up a profession in which he could serve people; so in 1934 he began his studies in medicine, specialising in Dentistry. After much hard work he earned a diploma from the University of Brussels.

Thanks to his new accreditation, he received a grant which permitted him to travel to the United States of America to pursue an apprenticeship. In 1939, he left for the USA to study at the Dental School of North Western University in Chicago, where he obtained his Doctorate of Dental Surgery.

Belgians have a role

Blondeel joined the Belgian Training Centre ‘Joilette’ in Quebec, Canada. He was convinced along with many other men who joined him there that the Belgian people had a role to play in liberating their own country. He and his comrades wanted to be among the first to do so. In June, 1941, they left Canada for Scotland where they were incorporated into the Belgian forces of Great Britain, including the 2nd Riflemen Battalion. Some of their training was carried out at Inverlochy Castle, near Fort William.

In 1942, King George VI authorized the formation of paratroopers, for which Blondeel and a small group volunteered. Very soon he was qualified ‘airborne’ and on the 8th May, 1942, the Independent Company of Belgian Paratroopers

Edouard Blondeel
was formed, in which Blondeel was second in command.

When Blondeel's commander was injured in a crash landing, Eddy took over his command. After twenty months of intensive training, the Belgians returned to Scotland in January 1944 to join an SAS brigade that specialized in ambush. Eddy Blondeel was the commander in chief of his regiment, the 5th SAS Belgian Squadron.

The front line
The Belgian paratroopers were naturally nervous, because they would be deployed on the front lines. By July, the missions were coming thick and fast.

On 28th August, 1944, Blondeel parachuted, at his own request, into the Gedinne region in the Ardennes forest. There, he joined forces with the advanced elements who found themselves in the middle of a vast numbers of enemy troops. But Blondeel’s outstanding leadership qualities, and audacious courage helped galvanize his men and those of the Maquis. Eddy and his men put their training in Scotland to good use by harassing the retreating enemy with a series of ambushes.

Reconnaissance missions
From the 20th to 23rd December, 1944, and from the 28th December, 1944, to 14th January, 1945, during the battle at Ardenne, Blondeel operated with great success at the head of a detachment of armoured jeeps; making a series of reconnaissance missions. Engagement with the enemy was common, most notably in the region of Marche. He and his detachment played a decisive role in the Allied advance toward Holland and Germany.

Promotion
Between 1944 and 1945, he was promoted to Major and restructured his unit to become the First SAS Paratrooper Regiment. Very soon, 200 men had joined his unit which would capture numerous war criminals. These included Von Ribbentrop at Hanover by the Sergeant Jacques Goffner. The regiment also played an important part in the arrest of the Doenitz government at Flensburg.

Eisenhower's personal salute
Blondeel's regiment was at Godesholt by the time the German army capitulated. At the end of hostilities, when President Eisenhower was informed of the losses suffered by the SAS, he personally saluted their courage and self-sacrifice.

After the war, Blondeel was promoted to Lieutenant-Colonel. The Belgian government wanted to dissolve the regiment, so Eddy engaged himself in a new mission by creating a school for paratroopers - the C.E. Para at Shaffen - which opened in 1947. In 1949, he founded the Para-Commando Regiment, which would become the Para-Commando Brigade.

In 1946, Colonel Blondeel relinquished his command and offered his services to the Department of Defence. In January 1947, he was decommissioned from the army. He returned to working life as an engineer in the paper industry. He retired in 1981, at the age of seventy-five. After the war, he became one of the two Presidents and Honorary Colonels of the National Association of Comrades and Para-Commandos.

Honours
He was made Commander of the Order of Crown, Commander of the Order of Leopold II with palms, Officer of the Order of Leopold with palms, and Officer of the Legion of Honour. He received the Cross of War with palms, the Distinguished Service Order (presented by Montgomery himself), the French Croix de Guerre with palms and the Luxembourg Croix de Guerre.

Eddy Blondeel died on the 23rd May, 2000, at the age of ninety-four.
Operations of 5th Belgian SAS:

[The code-name for each operation appears in italics.]

Chaucer (July-August 1944; 22 members of the 5th SAS parachuted into Le Mans with the goal of harassing the retreating German army); Shakespeare (July-August 1944; a small detachment of 5th SAS parachuted into western Paris to harass retreating enemy troops); Trueform (August 1944: 102 SAS members jumped across 12 different points in the north west of Paris with the aim of inflicting maximum damage on enemy troops); Bunyan (August 1944: 20 Belgian SAS commandos infiltrated the region of Chartres to harass German troops); Noah (August to September 1944: 41 Belgian SAS commandos parachuted into the French Ardennes to collect information on the enemy); Benson (28th August to 1st September 1844: 6 Belgian SAS commandos jumped into northern France to collect information concerning the importance, movement and number of German troops); Portia (September 1944 to March 1945: 7 Belgian SAS commandos parachuted into the Drente region of Holland to collect information on the enemy and evaluate the possibility of establishing an SAS base); Bergbang (2nd-12th September 1944: 41 Belgian SAS parachuted into the region of Liege-Maastricht-Aachen to help local resistance efforts and cut enemy communication lines east of Meuse); Brutus (2nd September 1944: 19 Belgian SAS parachuted into eastern Meuse to make contact with the secret army and other Belgians from the 5th SAS); Fabian (September 1944 to March 1945: 5 Belgian SAS were deployed in the Arnhem region to gather information over the course of six months to pinpoint the location of V2 rocket launchers); Regent (December 1944 to January 1945: All of the 5th Belgian SAS joined British troops to hold back the German push at the Battle of Ardennes); Larkswood (April-May 1945: 2 Squadrons from the 5th Belgian SAS conducted reconnaissance for the Second Canadian Corps and the Polish armoured division during their progression into Holland).

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Author: Xavier Riaud, DDS and historian, Nantes.
In this article, Dr Xavier Riaud responds to ‘Handsome Tom: The Dental Pimpernel’ by Dr Jo Cummins which we published in a previous issue of ‘Dental History Magazine.’ It is Dr Cummins’ view that the marriage between Eugenie de Montijo and The Emperor of the French, Louis Napoleon III which was discussed in that article was ‘essentially’ one of dynastic convenience, fuelled by infatuation.

However Dr Riaud cites ‘The Memoirs’ of the dentist, Tom Evans to paint a more romantic view of the marriage. Dr Cummins’ response, ‘A Love Story in the Dental Surgery or Unreliable Memoirs?’ follows Dr Riaud’s article...

**Dr Riaud writes:**

I will not retell the daring plan which made Eugenie's rescue possible. By protecting her all the way to Deauville where she sailed for England, the dentist Tom Evans performed a heroic deed. I wish to relate another episode in the life of Evans, that is: the circumstances of the burgeoning love, between Napoleon III and his Empress, Eugenie.

**Thomas W. Evans**

Thomas W. Evans was born on December 23, 1823. He obtained his doctorate in medicine at Jefferson Medical College, Philadelphia. In 1841, Thomas became a student of the Philadelphian dentist, Dr John de Haven White. He opened a surgery in Baltimore, Maryland, then in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. In 1847, he acquired a certain prestige after demonstrating a new technique for fillings using gold at the annual Philadelphia exposition, where he won first prize. There, he also met Dr John Clark, a retired Parisian doctor who returned to his American home on holidays. Clark was quickly convinced that a dentist as gifted as Evans would be something of a sensation in Paris. So, in November, 1847, Evans moved to the French capital, where he met another American dentist, Dr Starr Brewster, who treated numerous patients of the French aristocracy. One day, Brewster who treated Charles Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte – the future Napoleon III (1808-1873) - was summoned to the services of the Emperor, but he was unable to attend. Brewster sent Evans in his place, and from then on, Evans became the official dentist for royal European families. He earned the friendship of Napoleon, who named him the crown's official dentist in 1853. He also became an official member of the Emperor's council, and in 1854 was awarded the Legion of Honour.

**Memories, Memories...**

*Tom Evans writes:*

“I met the Prince soon after his arrival in Paris. He hadn't been at the Elysée Palace for very long when he sent a message to Doctor Brewster asking if the good doctor could pay him a visit. As chance would have it, Doctor Brewster had taken ill when the message arrived and could not make it to the Palace. I had the good fortune of replacing him and visiting the Prince myself.

He received me in a very amicable fashion, in such a way that I did not perceive he required the services of Doctor Brewster, and I felt unexpectedly at ease with
him. I performed a light operation on him, which relieved him greatly. Once I had finished he thanked me with immense cordiality, complimenting the 'gentle' manner in which I had performed my work. He expressed a desire to see me again the following day. I continued to offer him my services, and from then on until the day of his death I visited him frequently, sometimes twice weekly; as it was not only in the capacity of a dentist that I would visit him - he quickly expressed to me that I was a source of friendship and confidence.”

**Dental care for a Prince, then an Emperor**

*Later on, the American dentist remarked:*

“My professional relations with the Emperor began, as I have already said, shortly after he became President of the Republic. His teeth were extremely delicate, which, according to him, was a trait he inherited from his mother. Because of this hyperesthésie/hypersensitiveness – the term which was used by Corvisart and Nelaton – which spread throughout his body and became increasingly worse towards the end of his life, he suffered enormously from the most minor of inflammations, so much so that he required my services quite often.

In addition, he had a tendency to suffer from haemorrhaging; as a child he nearly died from loss of blood after having a tooth extracted. He owed his life to the vigilance and care of his mother, who, during the night of this haemorrhage, pressed her finger firmly into his gums until they stopped bleeding. As I was ordinarily called to the Palace for problems relating to his teeth, I almost always managed to relieve his suffering. He hated it when we caused him pain; so I approached with great caution anytime I had to touch his teeth or gums with an instrument. It was therefore only natural that the Emperor would be most grateful for the gentle manner in which I treated him, and for the great relief that I was, happily on many occasions, able to give him almost instantly. But I was not the only one in my profession to enjoy his admiration – it was afforded to all dentists. He found aid and relief in our capabilities, and for this reason he had an excellent opinion of dentists in general.

I was lucky to have had the opportunity to provide great services to the Emperor from a professional point of view, and I was amply rewarded in so many ways, particularly by the encouragement that he gave me and the consideration he showed me, which resulted in dentists being held in very high regard...”

**Evans continued:** “The Emperor realised quickly that I was worried about the position I occupied within his immediate entourage. And, as he saw no difference between the men except for their intelligence, merits or knowledge, I was soon officially admitted to the Elysée Palace on equal footing with medical doctors, surgeons, university professors and men of science in general. When the Court was constituted, I received the title 'dental-surgeon' under the same form and conditions as the other doctors and surgeons of the 'health service' attached to the 'House of the Emperor'. I wore the same golden uniform as the other members of the personal medical service, and my salary was equal to theirs.

I was the sole dentist at the Tuileries Court, and the Emperor showed great benevolence and attention to my well-being at every occasion, particularly in public. My position within the imperial Court allowed me to travel to other Courts, and there were few in Europe in which I was not welcomed.”

*He finally explained that:*

“Napoleon III was a very hard working man. He went to bed late and rose early. When he needed to see me, he would arrange an appointment very early. When I arrived, he was generally in his office, where he had already been working for several hours...”

**Marriage – a State duty?**

Some time after the coup d'État of December 2, 1851, which saw the Prince take power as absolute monarch his closest advisors recommended that he marry. After several unsuccessful attempts at convincing him, the future Emperor finally realised the necessity of marriage, at the age of forty four.

Eugenia Maria Ignacia Augustina Palafox de Guzman Portocarrero y Kirkpatrick de Closeburn, 9th countess of Teba, or Eugenia de Montijo (1826-1920)

**Evans remembered:**

“In the Autumn of 1851, I met a Spanish family of three; a woman and her two daughters. One of the daughters was remarkable not simply because of her great beauty, but her vivacity and intelligence; and those that knew her intimately admired even more so the kindness of her heart and the sympathy she showed to all those who suffered or were in need... There was in her manner so much nobility and concern for those in her care, and I recognised very quickly that Eugenie de Montijo was a being completely exempt...
from ostentatious tendencies. She was one of those rare beings who followed the generosity of her heart, and for whom the left hand ignores what the right hand does.

She was living at the time in Vendome Place, not far from my surgery, and was generally accompanied by a friend, Mrs Zifrey Casas, of American origins but married in Spain, or by her servant Pepa.

The numerous visits the young countess made to me, often in the interests of her overseas compatriots for whom I could offer my services, allowed me enough occasions to form an opinion of her character. Impressionable, compassionate, generous, ready to abandon herself to a moment's impulsion, and rarely thinking of herself, she never seemed so happy as when she was able to offer her help.” 13

A meeting at the dental surgery

The dentist remembered:

“One day, among the people with her in my waiting room, there was by chance a friend of the Prince-President. This man, in a great rush, seemed somewhat annoyed at having to wait; so she offered him to go ahead of her, even though she herself had been waiting much longer than him; the gracious manner in which she did so surprised him, because, barely had he entered into my office, when he asked me who was this beautiful young woman who had allowed him to enter before her.

Soon after, the Countess of Teba and her mother, the Countess of Montijo, were included on the list of people invited regularly to receptions at the Elysée Palace, where the Prince-President remarked; the young countess was admired and attracted the attention of all who were present.” 14

Her smile gleamed like a row of pearls

Obviously affected by this woman, the celebrated dental practitioner said of her:

“Her round figure and remarkably pure traits were singularly attractive; she had a pale and shiny complexion, soft blue eyes that were particularly transparent and shadowed by long eyelashes, which, when closed, were slightly lowered, and hair with a magnificent hazelnut hue. She had a slightly thin nose of exquisite form, and a delicate small mouth, which, when she smiled, gleamed like a row of pearls.” 15

The Prince is interested

Evans recounts:

“The Prince, struck by the beauty of the Countess, recognised equally the rare qualities of her heart and spirit. He met her again in the autumn of 1852... At the moment he became Emperor he announced officially his engagement to the Senate in the throne room of the Tuileries, as well as to the Legislative Body, and to the highest functions of the Empire.” 16

Imperial discourse

On this day, Napoleon said of her:

“The one who has become the object of my preference is one of the highest birth. French by heart, by education, by the blood memory of her father who fought for the Empire, she has, like Spain, the advantage of not having in France family to whom it is necessary to offer honour and dignity. Gifted with all qualities of spirit, she will be the ornament of the throne, and on the day of danger, she will become one of its courageous supports. Catholic and pious, she offers to the heavens the same prayers as I for the glory of France; all that is good and gracious, she will bring once again, I firmly believe, the virtues of the Empress Josephine. Therefore I say to France: I would prefer a woman that I love and respect to a woman for whom marriage is but an advantageous alliance. Showing disdain for no person, I give in to my desire, after having consulted my reasoning and conviction. By valuing independence, the qualities of the heart, the joy of family above that of dynastic prejudice, I will not be less brave because I will be freer.” 17

On January 30, 1853, Napoleon III married Eugenie de Montijo in Notre Dame Cathedral, in a ceremony identical to that of his celebrated forebears and those of Josephine. Evans was of course invited. It was a triumphant ceremony and Eugenie would go on to become one of the most loved and admired Empresses of the 19th Century.
A magnificent gift

A few days after her marriage, Eugenie sent her servant Pepa to help Evans so that he could come to the Tuileries to offer his services to her.

"Her Majesty desired that I would come myself...It was unusual that she would ask me to come and see her, it was as if she was asking me a favour. As soon as I entered her room, she welcomed me cordially and with great simplicity... My illustrious and very interesting patient was well at this moment, but she had recently suffered greatly and was worried her symptoms would return. And, as she had important issues to attend to during the day, and a reception that evening, I stayed several hours at the Tuileries and did all that I could so that she would be able to attend her appointments. As such we had a lot of time to talk ... It was the first day of her marriage that she had suffered most, and the Emperor offered her his greatest sympathies; he offered her much attention, and continually entered into her office to see how she was feeling. As I was soon to be leaving Paris, I was very happy to know that my charming patient suffered no more, the Emperor returned to her room, jewel case in hand; he approached the Empress, took out of the case a magnificent pearl necklace, and passed it around her neck."

Conclusion

This love story had a profound affect on me. In fact, how many practitioners among us can say we have found love in our dental surgery or in some manner related to our profession? In fact, this happened to me. This is how I met my wife and the mother of my daughter, as I was replacing another dentist. We are still together to this day.

Author: Xavier Riaud, DDS and historian, Nantes.

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9. ibid.
10. ibid.
11. ibid.
14. ibid.
15. ibid.
16. ibid.
17. Louis Napoleon’s Speech concerning his forthcoming marriage.
18. Evans, 1910, op. cit.

Fig.1. Collections of the University of Pennsylvania Archives, Philadelphia, 2005.
The following is a response to Dr Xavier Riaud’s article, ‘When Napoleon Met Eugenie or A love Story in the Dental Surgery’ (This Issue pp. 15-18).

In my previous article on the career of the dentist, Tom Evans at the Court of the French Emperor Napoleon III, I wrote the following:

“Louis Napoleon needed to found a dynasty but several European princesses had refused his advances on the grounds that he was not really of royal blood. Eugenie was a stylish, intelligent woman, and an ideal compromise as a wife, in that, although she was not of the blood royal herself, she was sufficiently related to several royal houses. The marriage was a success and Eugenie duly provided the desired son and heir.”¹

After further study of the relationship between Napoleon and Eugenie and the romantic role supposedly played by the dental surgeon, Tom Evans in their introduction, I find that I must revise my opinion that ‘the marriage was a success.’

Despite Dr Riaud’s able quotations from Tom Evans’ Memoirs, I now believe that in the early years at least, the marriage was anything but successful.

The Evans’ Memoirs extol the intensely romantic conjugal life of the royal couple. But how far is it prudent to rely on Evans’ version of the story?

There is no doubt that his account is a useful historical source on the politics and social life of the Second Empire. But are his Memoirs an unvarnished record of the intimate life of Napoleon and Eugenie? I believe not.

Tom Evans admits that the Emperor’s patronage was the main reason for his professional, social and financial success.² One cannot therefore criticise him for repaying the Emperor’s good offices by writing a panegyric of his patron as a public compliment. We hear from Evans that Napoleon III was amicable, unassuming, encouraging, generous, benevolent, humorous and hardworking.³ Still more flowery language makes it clear that Evans was similarly besotted with Eugenie, who is depicted as the incarnation of feminine virtue. The Empress was a fascinating woman who had appealed for his protection. The flight from Paris with a beautiful fairytale princess fluttering under his wing was naturally one of the defining moment’s of Tom Evans’s life. It is thus no surprise that his description of Eugenie’s character reads like breathless romantic fiction which would not be out of place in an early Mills and Boon novel.

I am not suggesting that none of the virtues attributed to the royal couple by Evans and highlighted by Dr Riaud are genuine but I am saying that there is no balance in Tom Evan’s recollections and indeed this lack of balance is acknowledged by his editor and former partner, Dr
Edward Crane, who says in the preface to the Memoirs:

“... It is the generally conceded the privilege of the writer of memoirs and reminiscences to remember only what he chooses to remember.”

Nevertheless it would be unjust to look to Napoleon’s political enemies and to contemporary gossip to redress the balance; some of which calls the Emperor a womanising weakling and a proto-fascist.

The truth about any marriage can only be fully known to the couple involved but historians can glean some insight by turning a deaf ear to the hissing static of memoirs, political bluster, and scandal sheets to concentrate on the pure wavelength of the unequivocal facts.

The facts of the Imperial marriage appear to be these: Napoleon had a sensual nature which he indulged; referring to his relations with women he said: ‘It is usually the man who attacks. As for me, I defend myself, and I often capitulate.’

Stories that his first illegitimate child was born when he was a teenager cannot be substantiated but it is acknowledged that before his marriage he had already fathered three illegitimate sons by two women. In addition to these early liaisons, during his first exile in England (1838-39), Napoleon took the wealthy adventuress Harriet Howard as his mistress. Howard used her fortune to promote his campaign to return to France. She followed him to Paris after he became Prince-President.

The grateful Prince-President conveniently set Howard up in a house adjoining the Tuileries Palace where he and his friends, including Tom Evans, could make discreet visits. She is the ‘Madame H’ referred to in the Evans’ Memoirs. It was at these soirées that Tom Evans was drawn into the intimate circle of men who undertook delicate missions for the future Emperor of both a diplomatic and personal kind.

Naturally in this comfortable quasi-domestic situation, the middle-aged Napoleon felt no urge to marry until the obligation to produce a legitimate heir became pressing. The responses of two royal houses who were presented with marriage proposals by the French will suffice to uncover the hurdles which faced the bachelor Emperor in the matrimonial stakes. Crown Prince Gustav of Sweden, for example, was of the opinion that the Bonaparte regime was dangerously unstable and for that reason refused the hand of his beloved daughter, Princess Carola.

It is easy to warm to Prince Gustav as a father, when twenty years later, after reading of the Empress Eugenie’s desperate flight from the Paris mob in her dentist’s carriage, he said: ‘Well I foresaw that correctly.’

Silence

Similarly, Prince Albert and Queen Victoria maintained a stony silence when Napoleon sought an advantageous alliance with the British by soliciting the hand of Victoria’s young niece, Princess Adelaide.

Under silent pressure from Windsor, Adelaide’s parents declined the proposal. Not long after this British rebuff, Napoleon announced his engagement to Eugenie whom he had been simultaneously soliciting to become his mistress.

Fortunately the artfully chaste Eugenie had been coached by her mother and her companion the author and historian, Prosper Mérimée, on how to hold the fancy of an Emperor (Mérimée’s story Carmen inspired Bizet’s opera.) When the desperately infatuated Napoleon enquired how he might find the road to Eugenie’s heart, she replied, ‘Through the chapel, Monseigneur.’ It may be recalled that the same tactics were used by Anne Boleyn and her family on the English King, Henry Tudor.

Eugenie was not cold to the opportunities offered by the Emperor but it is a sad fact that her heart probably lay elsewhere. She had loved and lost the Duke of Alba (who had married her sister), and Pepe, the Marquis of Alcanices. She had sent a telegram to Pepe Alcanices on the verge of the public announcement of her marriage to Napoleon, more than likely to prompt an alternative proposal, but Alcanices had replied congratulating her on her forthcoming engagement. This game of romantic roulette which was played by the governing families of Europe was enabled by a select band of go-betweens; Count Felix Baccioli, Napoleon III’s private secretary for example, was known to arrange the introduction of suitable women to the Emperor. It may well be that he and Tom Evans concocted the encounter in the dental surgery and the
subsequent invitation through which Eugenie had been ‘formally’ introduced to her future husband at The Elysée.

The Evans’ Memoirs do not tell us the name of the gentleman from the Imperial Court who so conveniently turned up at Tom Evan’s surgery at the same time as Eugenie and her mother but it may well have been Count Baccioli. If the meeting in which Eugenie courteously gave up her dental appointment to the distressed court official actually took place, it was a good rouse whereby protocol could be observed and Eugenie could receive a perfectly proper invitation to the Palace. As the author Alan Albright remarks, ‘The meeting in the surgery was no more than, a romantic embellishment with a grain of truth.’

There is no doubt that Napoleon was intensely attracted to Eugenie; delayed consummation after all is a strong aphrodisiac, yet within six months of the marriage, the romance was unravelling. It is now accepted that the inexperienced Eugenie was unresponsive to Napoleon. Although it is a harsh word, historians write that she found relations with her middle aged husband ‘disgusting.’ After the hazardous birth of their only son, Eugenie’s door was permanently closed.

She sent the following advice to Anna Murat who was about to marry Lord Granville, ‘Tell her that after the first night it makes no difference whether the man is handsome or ugly. By the end of the week it’s the same old thing.’ Napoleon reacted by openly returning to his former mistress, Harriet Howard, thereby humiliating his wife. A string of affairs followed, notably with the actress and photographic model, The Countess of Castiglione.

Yet after the fall of the Second Empire, and the permanent exile of the Imperial Family in England, it is heartening to relate that the royal couple appeared to have found a kind of true love. Napoleon was redeemed in Eugenie’s eyes by his courage in defeat and his calm suffering of ill health. In the end, they seem to have found domestic contentment.

Postscript

The simple objects found in the Emperor’s wallet after his death speak more eloquently of the shades of true love than the romantic flummery of his dentist’s memoirs. These were: a letter from his mother Hortense, a letter from Eugenie, and a lock of his dead son’s hair.

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Author: Jo Cummins, Assistant Editor, DHM.
Two Lives
by Vickram Seth
Abacus; new edn., 2006
ISBN-10:0349117911 985

Half a Life
by V. S. Naipul
Alfred A. Knopf., 2001
ISBN-10:0375407375

Two Lives...
In August 1969, when Vikram Seth was only seventeen years of age he left India to study in England. He was to live with his great-uncle Shanti and great-aunt Henny whom he hardly knew; both were aged sixty. After touching down at London’s Heathrow Airport, he made his way to their house at 18 Queens Road, Hendon, where a brass plaque read:

S. B. Seth
L.D.S., (Edin.), B.Sc., D.M.D., Berlin
Dental Surgeon

His uncle and aunt were remarkable people and eventually he wrote their life stories in the book, Two Lives.

A one armed dentist?
Vikram was welcomed to the house with tea served by Aunty Henny. ‘Shanti Uncle’ as Vikram calls him, left his surgery briefly to give his nephew a hug. Shanti’s embrace was made with only one arm because his right arm was artificial. The young man was intrigued - a busy practising dentist with one arm! How could this be?

The Seths’ large semi-detached house in Hendon had two floors with four spacious rooms on each floor. The dental surgery was on the first floor with a waiting room facing it across the hall. A bright attic room was renovated as a study-bedroom for Vikram who had recently won a scholarship to Tonbridge school to study for A-Levels.

His goal was a place at Oxford or Cambridge University but both required a foreign language as an entrance qualification. As Hindi was unacceptable he chose to take German. This was Aunt Henny’s native language which Shanti also spoke fluently. Soon Shanti Uncle was calling him, ‘sonchen’ or little son. He was later accepted to study Philosophy, Politics and Economics at Corpus Christi College, Oxford, in September 1971.

During Vikram’s time at university, Shanti would often talk to him about his family. He had been particularly fond of his eldest brother Raj, who sent him abroad to study. But Vikram noticed that Aunt Henny (né Helga Gerda Caro) never spoke about her family. It was only later that his parents told him why - her family had been killed in Nazi Germany.

After graduating from Oxford, Vikram moved to Stanford university in the United States to pursue postgraduate research but he kept in touch with his uncle and aunt by letter.

Over the next ten years, Vikram Seth became a successful author. He often received invitations to book festivals and during one of these in England, he re-visited his uncle and aunt who were now retired and in their seventies. Shanti Uncle had been in hospital several times and Vikram was concerned that this would be the last opportunity to see him. But it was Aunt Henny who died first in April, 1989.

A private person
Later that summer Vikram’s mother suggested that
he should interview ‘Shanti Uncle’ with a view to writing a biography of his life. Vikram was hesitant because his uncle was such a private person but when his mother broached the subject with Shanti, he liked the idea.

So in 1994, over a period of five months, Vikram recorded a series of interviews. Shanti was happy to talk about his youth in India, his dental studies in Berlin and his service in the Army Dental Corps. But when Henny was mentioned Shanti became so sad that Vikram tried to avoid referring to her.

Shanti Behari Seth was born in Biswan in Northern India in 1908; he was one of eight children. His father had died from plague a few months before his birth. But Raj, the eldest sibling, became like a father to him and Shanti grew to love him deeply. Raj encouraged and supported his young brother’s education and suggested that he should train to become a dentist.

Berlin
In 1931, at the age of twenty-three, Shanti applied to dental schools in Paris and Berlin. He was accepted at both universities but after a visit to France and his sister in London, he set out for Berlin where he enrolled at the Dental Institute of the Freidrich-Wilhelm University.

The pace of the dental course was relentless. Classes started at 8 am and continued until 8 pm with only a couple of breaks during the day. The curriculum was demanding with medical subjects such as anatomy, physiology, histology, pharmacology, and surgery added to the dental schedule. But Shanti was not happy. Germany and the German language was strange to him and at first he found dentistry ‘distasteful.’ He disliked having to put ‘his fingers into other people’s mouths.’ A foot infection was the last straw and he wrote to Raj intending to return to India. But Raj persuaded him to persevere in Berlin.

Hitler’s Germany, Bridge and sandwiches
Soon financial difficulties added to his woes. Great Britain went off the gold standard and instead of getting 20 German marks per pound sterling, the rate dropped to 11.20 marks. The economic depression prevented Shanti from getting odd jobs to augment his dwindling resources and he had to move ever downward from one cheap room to another. Fortunately he could get rolls and soup at a student canteen but he lived from hand to mouth for months.

But not everything was bad. He met Arvind, a friend from Benaras who was studying at a technical institute. Arvind introduced him to his friends and they began playing Bridge which he continued to play for the rest of his life. At last Germany re-instituted the rate of exchange and Shanti had cash at his disposal again. He could move to more comfortable lodgings.

A room became available at the house of Mrs Caro a widow, in her sixties. She had two daughters and a son. One of the daughters, Henny (Hega), would be Shanti’s future wife. The Caros were Jewish, but they thought of themselves as German with an eclectic circle of colleagues and friends of all manner of beliefs.

It was 1933; Hitler came to power. But Shanti Seth does not appear to have been much interested in politics.¹ He concentrated on his dental studies which he began to enjoy. He passed his examinations even though some of them were written in German. One examination was in Latin, so he hired a Latin tutor and scraped through the exam. He was concerned about the off-hand approach some students took to the dissection of corpses. At lunch they simply washed their hands and sat down to a sandwich before returning to the dissecting table. In the end Shanti got used to this and joined them.

After his uncle’s death Vikram discovered a petition to the Prussian Ministry of the Interior among his papers. It was dated June 1933. The document said that since he had passed the exams set by ‘The German Institute for Foreigners,’ he was given per-
mission to take the preliminary examination in preclinical dentistry. But there was a reservation attached. Even if he passed, he would not be granted the right to take more examinations or, ‘practise as a dentist in the territory of the German Reich.’

Dental Research in Nazi Germany

Shanti passed the state examination in Medical Dentistry with distinction in April 1936, (the year of Hitler’s Berlin Olympics).

He began his doctoral research on microscopic changes in tooth enamel and dentine in relation to various restoration materials. It is surprising and perhaps an indication of the advanced state of German Dentistry in the 1930s, that his research involved materials such as silicates, gold inlays, amalgam, porcelains, and oxyphosphates; even zinc oxide with eugenol as a temporary measure. He found the work fascinating and couldn’t believe that he had ever thought of giving up dentistry.

The Nazi Party intervenes

He knew that aliens were unwelcome in Nazi Germany, nevertheless when his doctoral supervisor, Professor Eugene Wannenmacher invited him to work with him, Shanti applied to remain in Berlin. He received a reply from the Ministry of Education informing him that even though Wannenmacher, his sponsor, was a member of the Nazi Party, he would not be allowed to employ a foreigner as many German students were unemployed.

Shanti was saddened to be parted from his friends but inevitably his time in German academia was at an end. He considered living in London. He did not know at that time, how lucky he was to be leaving Germany so easily.

A miserable time in Edinburgh

Effectively forced out of Berlin in 1937, he moved to Great Britain. Alas he had to re-qualify in every subject because German dental degrees were not recognized there. He was offered and accepted a place at Edinburgh University because living expenses in Scotland were cheaper than in London.

It proved to be a miserable year. Once again he was a student, he found that he wasn’t learning anything new, and in his opinion, it was becoming apparent that German dentistry was superior to the British practice. In Berlin, sixty root-canal treatments were required before final examination but in Edinburgh only three or four were necessary. It also seemed to him that the British emphasized extraction rather than the importance of conservation which was taught in Berlin. In addition, all of his examinations in Edinburgh were written rather than practical. In a small gesture of defiance he slipped a quick answer in German to one question in his anatomy exam.

London beckons

In 1938, after qualifying in Edinburgh, Shanti lost no time in heading south to London despite the cost of living there. He survived on the income from some shares which his grandfather had left him but he was in perilous financial straits. In the nick of time, a position opened up as an assistant to Mr Warden, a Parsi dentist near Ladbroke Grove.

Warden was too ill to practise but although Shanti took over all his patients and was consequently working all hours, when he broached the question of a partnership, he was rebuffed. Shanti did not resign because he found it ‘a great pleasure to be practicing his profession.’

He recalled some cases for Vikram from the Ladbroke Grove Practice. One was a boy of sixteen who presented complaining of toothache ‘in the upper first incisor, a big tooth.’

‘His father asked me to take the tooth out, but after examining it, I said that I could save it by carrying out root canal treatment. The father got very annoyed and said, ‘This is newfangled baloney. I am the father, and I’m paying for the treatment.’ I told him it was against my conscience to take out a young boy’s tooth when I could save it. This went on for twenty-five minutes. Finally the boy chirped in: ‘Daddy, why not give Dr. Seth a chance?’

I prayed I would succeed, and did everything in the classical way. I checked it later with an X-ray and it looked perfect. The boy was very happy since he didn’t have to have a denture at such a young age.”

The value of a thorough medical history

In another case, a physician referred an adult male, recommending a clearance. This time, on examination, Shanti agreed. In the first session he proposed extracting a quarter of the teeth. The patient consented. Unfortunately there was abnormal bleeding after the first quadrant was cleared. It took Shanti
two hours to arrest the hemorrhage. He was so concerned about the patient’s post-operative condition that he sent his nurse to visit him at home the next day.

When the patient returned the following day, Shanti found that he was still bleeding. He phoned the man’s physician, to complain that he had not been advised ‘that his blood did not easily clot.’ The physician said that it would not have occurred if Mr Seth had taken an adequate medical history prior to surgery.

Shanti sent the patient to St. Mary’s Hospital paddington, requesting emergency treatment but only a day later the unfortunate man, still bleeding and by now almost in shock, returned to his surgery. Apparently someone in the hospital had told him that there was nothing wrong, painted the area with iodine and discharged him.

Now very concerned indeed, Shanti wrote to the hospital superintendent threatening action if the patient was not properly treated when he returned to the clinic that same day.

Months later the patient told Shanti that he had been hospitalized for six weeks, during which time he had received several blood transfusions. Shanti confided to Vikram that if the patient had died, he would have felt guilty all his life.

In 1939, Shanti’s family wanted him to return to India and set up practice there but he now had a good reason to remain in Europe - Henny had arrived in England. She had escaped the Nazis although her mother and sister were still trapped in Germany. Therefore in February 1940, six months into the war, Shanti enlisted in the British Army Dental Corps as a lieutenant. He was thirty-three.

If in doubt ...

He underwent officer training at Chester and was subsequently posted to Cardiff. He had no sooner arrived in Wales when a sergeant brought him two baskets of unpaired upper and lower dentures. The dental laboratory had been bombed by the Germans but he hoped Officer Seth, could sort out the mess somehow...

He was advised that the soldiers he would be treating should be, ’dentally fit’ for a minimum of one year, which would include fighting at the front and possibly behind enemy lines. However he was ordered, ‘If in doubt, take it out.’

Shanti remained in Cardiff for almost nine months. Then he was posted to Khartoum for a short time before going on to Gebeit close to the Red Sea. He became the Commanding Officer of the Dental Unit of the 14th Combined General Hospital of the Middle East Forces with three men under his command. In 1942 he was promoted to captain and dispatched to Egypt in the Canal Zone where he worked in the base hospital.

During the war Shanti corresponded with his brother Raj and sometimes with Henny. These letters were later made available to Vikram. Sadly while he was still serving in Egypt, Shanti’s beloved brother Raj died in Calcutta in September 1942.

Meanwhile in London, Henny was living through the Blitz. During that period and beyond, Shanti helped her financially. She kept a careful note of his contributions. They came to almost £24.

Shanti moved on with the British army to Tripoli, Syria, and Lebanon. In the winter of 1943 he was in Italy with ‘The 17th Field Ambulance Unit.’ The long push northwards from Sicily to Naples in winter through mountain territory in the biting cold and rain took an enormous toll on The Allies. In 1944, the assault on Monte Cassino became a huge challenge for the exhausted men. They were ordered to attack the ancient monastery which was occupied by the Germans. They tried twice and failed.

Catastrophic farewell

Shanti’s Ambulance Unit was ordered back from the front line to a base near Cancello, a town near Naples. But a third assault on the monastery had already begun; artillery and mortar fire rained down on his unit from the German positions on the hilltop. Nevertheless, Shanti postponed the move to the rear for twenty-four hours, ‘because his friends wanted to have a small farewell celebration for him that evening.’ It was a catastrophic decision because his right arm was blown off in the shelling. Later he told Vikram:

“There were no trenches near my dental unit. It was a hilly and rocky area. I was sitting behind my pan-niers—the boxes in which I kept my dental gear—and my hand was outside. All of a sudden, there was a big bang, and my hand was off and hanging by my skin. There was terrific pain and a lot of blood. I waited for twenty minutes. The shelling went on. Then I thought, nobody would know I was here. More bleeding. Best to run through the shelling to the tent where the medical officers were attending to the wounded patients. There were quite a few there; I knew all the officers by their Christian names, and they insisted they would do it themselves for me. But even after an injection of mor-phine, the pain was unbearable. I got another but then I
don’t remember anything.”

Still under fire, the military surgeons amputated Shanti’s right forearm. He was removed to the clearing station, then to a general hospital in Casserta. He thought desperately over and over, ‘What will I do? What will I do?’

The first letter he wrote from the hospital, only two days after his injury, was to Henny. This painstaking letter, written in pencil, using his left hand, was preserved by Henny and found among her papers, after their deaths.

Shanti returned to England in a Hospital Ship. He suspected correctly that his arm had been badly set which limited the maneuverability of the prosthetic arm with which he could be fitted. The mechanism enabled him only to turn the hand on its axis and release it. The heaviest object he could carry was a glove fitted to the artificial hand. He was discharged from hospital in May 1944. He was in despair. His hand and profession were lost to him. What kind of future faced a dentist with one hand? I had never heard of nor could I have imagined a one-armed dentist. He was thirty-six years old.

**Baffling advice**

Professor Wannenmacher, his former supervisor gave Shanti an introductory letter to Alfred E. Rowlett, who had been Chairman of the British Dental Association and who was now Treasurer of the ‘Fédération Dentaire Internationale.’

Shanti had already visited and corresponded with the Chairman during the war. Indeed Rowlett was one of those who had urged him to enlist. He responded now by encouraging Shanti to contact various universities for a demonstrator’s position. This baffled Shanti, ‘What could he demonstrate with only one arm?’ Every application was denied but later, through Rowlett’s contacts, Shanti was recommended for a job in ‘The Amalgamated Dental Company.’

His research background was useful at ‘Amalgamated Dental’. Now he had the opportunity to study the newest techniques and dental materials. Later, as an adviser, he traveled extensively in Europe, lecturing and developing contacts with some of the most outstanding figures and institutions in the profession and producing numerous written reports on his work. A number of articles for national academic journals added to his profile as an author.

Since Shanti could not demonstrate techniques, he learned how to make documentary films instead. He was so successful that he was elected an associate of the British Kinematograph Society.

But although he had found satisfaction and financial security at ‘Amalgamated’ it was not enough. He wanted to practise dentistry. He had heard of G.M. Beaton, a practising dentist who had lost an arm in the First World War. Shanti wrote to him in 1944.

Beaton replied with some encouraging advice. He believed that for the disabled practitioner, self-confidence was vital. He included practical details: ‘An artificial arm will help you in many ways with practice—get a light dress arm with the first two fingers close enough to hold a mouth mirror so that you can pull the lips apart when injecting for upper or lower...’

But it was to be Henry Edwards, a friend and general dental practitioner who had also trained in Germany, who played a major role in helping Shanti to return to the surgery. By subterfuge and persuasion, Edwards gradually succeeded in getting Shanti to work part time at his surgery in London, with his support if necessary.

At first Shanti only performed simple restorations but he gradually included extractions. Even though Henry was most helpful and suggested a partnership, Shanti wanted to set up his own practice. Yet he was hesitant; his amputation was still-painful and since the war was only recently ended, dental equipment was difficult to obtain. He was without a surgery or even a house of his own. More than anything else, he doubted that many patients would attend a one-armed dentist.

Late in 1948, good fortune came his way. The house next door to where he was lodging in Hen-don was up for sale and he bought it for £5,000. This would be his home for the rest of his life; it also became his surgery. The ground floor had a large sunny room facing the park which he converted. He practised there in the evening from 6pm to 10 p.m. with a hired nurse.

Some patients were simply casuals from the street, others were referrals from friends and colleagues. If anyone required a general anaesthetic, Shanti referred them to the Eastman Dental Hospital. [This clinic was the gift of George Eastman of ‘Kodak.’] He trained himself to use his left hand but unfortunately the strain of the rather awkward operating position this involved resulted in back problems which eventually required physiotherapy and manipulation under general anesthetic. He was confined to bed for three weeks and became very
concerned that he would lose his practice.

Treasure trunk

The second part of Two Lives is mainly devoted to Henny. Vikram used a trunk full of her letters and mementos, which he had found stored in the attic of the Hendon House, as the source to piece together her life. It seems to have been as eventful as that of her husband. With the exception of her brother, Heinz, who had emigrated to Argentina and died there in 1953, Henny had lost all her family and friends in The Holocaust.

After her escape to England through the sponsorship of an influential acquaintance, she supported herself initially by working as a domestic and as a nanny. In February 1941 she found work as a clerk-typist in a pharmaceutical company. She worked for the same firm in a partly managerial capacity for the next twenty years. She married Shanti in 1951.

Henny’s story reveals even more about Shanti’s attitude to dentistry. The reader learns of the couple’s friendship with two other dentists, notably Henry Edwards (who had helped Shanti return to practice) and Fred Gotte, a German emigrant. All three men had studied dentistry in Germany. They and their wives were therefore close friends. This ‘dental trinity’ considered themselves ‘different’ from British graduates, so their association was natural and mutually beneficial.

Vikram’s account of The Seths’ domestic life in Hendon illustrates Shanti’s commitment to the profession. On one occasion the family Christmas dinner was interrupted. A patient had telephoned in terrible pain. Shanti got up from the table and told him to come straight to the house where he opened the surgery and drained his abscess. ‘Easing pain was half his dental philosophy; the other half was preserving teeth…Extractions were a last resort.’

Shanti recalled his difficulty and stubbornness when the time came to retire:

‘I was still practising long after seventy. My heart specialist told me to retire, and I said okay. He told me to rest more, and I said okay. But I thought there’d be no harm in working for just half a day a week, and within two weeks I was back to the regime, on my feet five days a week—with no lunch till three o’clock if I had a difficult or interesting case.’

Henny finally took charge and had the dental chair unbolted from the surgery floor and sold.

Now in true retirement, Shanti and Henny kept themselves occupied. He enjoyed walking in Hendon Park and shopping in central London. He rarely read a book but watched lots of television and read his newspaper thoroughly. They would occasionally have a Bridge party with their friends. Most years they flew to Zurich in August for a holiday. The trips stopped in 1989 when Henny’s cancer began its final course. She died at eighty years of age.

Remarkably, Henny had never spoken to Shanti about her mother, Gabriele, who had died in Theresienstadt, or her sister Lola who had perished in Auschwitz. Once when Shanti had spoken of them and recalled how sad it was that they hadn’t survived, Henny had replied sharply, ‘Let’s not talk about it.’

It is only towards the end of Two Lives that we learn that throughout his working life, Shanti’s general health had been poor. He had his first heart attack ten years before his retirement. Over the years he suffered from various complaints including headaches, insomnia, claustrophobia, neck and knee pain, and of course the chronic back ache.

He died on 2 May 1998, a week after Vikram’s last visit with him. The family gathered in Golders Green Crematorium, where nine years earlier Henny had been cremated.

[Shanti Seth dedicated his life to the profession. Despite his physical disability, he was a supremely able, compassionate and hardworking dentist. His life and career is surely an inspiring story.]

References

1. Editor’s comment, JC.
2. ibid.
3. ibid.

Dr Feldman continues this edition of ‘Word of Mouth’ with a review of...

Half a Life by VS Naipul

When V.S. Naipaul received the Nobel Prize in 2001, he said he would no longer write fiction because he was all written out. He was already the author of a dozen novels and a similar number of nonfiction books. But some inner muse must have taken over because he wrote Half A Life in 2001 and Magic Seeds in 2005.

The novel, Half a Life, follows the journey of young Willie Somerset Chadran, from his home in India to study at an English university. Its author, Vidiadhar Surajprasad Naipaul, who was born in 1932, took a similar journey. He relished the sense of freedom he experienced when, as a young man, he left Trinidad to study at Cambridge University, intending to make a name for himself as a writer.
Willie, Naipul’s fictional character of Half a Life is painfully aware of his social and sexual naivety. Nevertheless he is focused about his aim in life which is to become a published writer. He manages to get a few stories into print but life is dull and success is proving elusive when he meets Ana, a young woman from East Africa who eventually becomes his wife.

During his time in England it becomes apparent that Willie had never seen a dentist. His new love Ana insists that he makes an appointment as a matter of urgency. Naipul describes Willie’s dental adventures thus:

“The first time they kissed—on the narrow sofa facing the electric heater in his college room—she said, ‘You should look after your teeth. They are spoiling your looks.’ He said, as a joke, ‘I dreamt the other night that they had become very heavy and were about to drop out.’ And it was true; he had been careless of his teeth since he had been in England, and he had altogether neglected them after the Notting Hill riots and Percy Cato’s disappearance and the dismissing paragraph about his book in Richard’s wretched catalogue. He had even begun to take a kind of pleasure in the staining, almost now the blackness, of his teeth. He tried to tell her the story. She said, ‘Go to the dentist.’ He went to an Australian dentist in Fulham and told him, ‘I have never been to a dentist. I feel no pain. I have no problem to talk to you about. I’ve come to you only because I have been dreaming that I am about to lose my teeth.’ The dentist said, ‘We’re ready even for that. And it’s all on the National Health. Let’s have a look.’ And then he told Willie, ‘That wasn’t a dream with a hidden meaning, I’m afraid. Your teeth really were going to fall out. Tartar like concrete and horribly stained—you must drink a lot of tea. The lower teeth mortared together, a solid wall of the stuff. I’ve never seen anything like it. It’s a wonder you were able to lift your jaw.’ He went at the tartar with relish, scraping and chipping and grinding, and when he was finished Willie’s mouth felt sore and his teeth felt exposed and shaky and sensitive even to the air he said to Ana, ‘I’ve been hearing funny things from the boys at the college about Australian dentists in London. I hope we’ve done the right thing.’

Ana and Willie leave England to live on her parents’ plantation in East Africa. For the next twenty years, Willie lives the high life as a hunter and sexual bon vivant. But eventually he finds life tedious with Ana and leaves her for fresh pastures in Germany. Clearly the social and sexual parvenu had developed into a man of experience. In some ways he didn’t do too badly. Whether he ever became a noted author is another matter.

Author: Eugene Feldman, D.M.D., M.S. (Retired Orthodontist, Pennsylvania.)

References
2. Excerpt from Half a Life, with the kind permission of Alfred A. Knopf, Publishers.
Glasgow Odontological Society

Glasgow Odontological Society is on the web at http://glasgowodontologicalsociety.com/. The Society was founded in March 1902 with the name of the Odontoblasts Club and membership was initially limited to fifteen, all of whom were to be Licentiates in Dental Surgery of the Faculty of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow. Following a change of name to ‘The Odontoblasts Society,’ the Society assumed its present name in 1903. In 1952 the council decided to assemble a collection of photographs of each member who had served as president and to ask future presidents to provide a photograph for this collection. The album for mounting these photographs was made by a grateful patient.

Archives

The archives of the Society are stored on behalf of the Society in the archives of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow and are described on the College website at:

http://www.rcpsg.ac.uk/FellowsandMembers/ArchiveServices/ArchiveCollections/Pages/arch_GB250RCPSG82.aspx

Membership

Today the membership of The Glasgow Odontological Society fluctuates between 150 and 200 members with an average attendance at meetings of from 30 to 40 members. The website provides a syllabus of meetings, a brief history of the Society, a list of members, Office Bearers, Past Presidents, and membership details.

A Hoax and Tin Fillings

An article published in The Journal of Dental Research, Vol. 88, No. 1, 8-11 (2009) by A.I. Speilman proves that a so-called miracle in a remote village in Silesia, reported widely in 1593 was the first documented case of the use of a moulded gold crown.

Using period instruments available to goldsmiths and a 0.001” copper sheet, the author reproduced on a plastic paediatric model, what the gold crown could have looked like. The abstract of the article is available at http://jdr.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/88/1/8.

A further article from the Journal of Dental Research “An Original Case of Tin Dental Fillings from 18th Century Northern France,” Vol. 88, No. 3, 198-200 (2009), examines an 18th century dental treatment in a barely 50-year-old male whose body was excavated from Saint Amé’s Collegiate Church, Douai, France. This individual had six dental restorations, exceptional for that period. The abstract is available at http://jdr.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/88/3/198.
Susan Forrest has contacted our Secretary in relation to her grandfather, the dentist, William Patrick (1890–1957). Mrs Forrest kindly provided a selection of her grandfather’s certificates, two of which are reproduced below.

William Patrick, lived in Bute Gardens, Hillhead, in the West End of Glasgow. He began his practical dental training in April 1909 as the apprentice of the general practitioner Robert Austin, whose surgery was at 231 Bath Street Glasgow. William also attended classes at various institutions including Glasgow Dental Hospital and School (Fig. 2) and Glasgow Royal Infirmary. He qualified on 19th April, 1913. Shortly afterwards, in 1914, he bought George Michie Raeburn’s practice at 4, Newton Street, Charing Cross.

At that time, the practice employed two female dental mechanics, Bessie White, and a pupil, Miss Edith Reid Sloan. William agreed to take over the responsibility for Miss Sloan’s training in mechanical dentistry. Edith Sloan’s father had already paid Mr Raeburn the considerable sum of seventy pounds for her three year apprenticeship.

Although William settled down to practise in the city, he was a keen outdoors-man, often cycling from Glasgow to Kilmacolm to fish. He kept a meticulous diary of where he fished, what he caught and if he lost any tackle. But fly fishing was only one of his sporting interests. He won trophies for curling at Crossmyloof in the 1930s and also played tennis, golf and bowls. He spent his weekends at Millport, Isle of Cumbrae where he was continually being asked by locals to treat their toothache.

Eventually he sold his Glasgow practice and set up a surgery in Millport in the front bedroom of his house at ‘Wisherton,’ Kaymes Bay. Older Millport residents tell the story of the local school children, escorted by their janitor, forming a line, sitting on the railings outside the house, waiting to be called in for treatment.

**MacTavish’s Gold Crown**

William also treated Dr MacTavish, the local medical practitioner. He made a crown for the doctor from a gold sovereign. Dr MacTavish’s daughter kept the crown. When she later moved to Edinburgh she donated it to a museum where the crown was displayed, with an attribution to William Patrick.

The name of the museum is not known and the crown has since disappeared.

Do any of our readers know anything more of William Patrick or of the present whereabouts of Dr MacTavish’s crown? If so our secretary would be glad to hear from you.
# List of Supporting Members

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**North Cuillin Ridge**

*Oil* on canvas, 56 x 36 cms, signed P Barton 1992, by Peter Barton MA, MDS, MB, BS, MRCS, LRCP, (1921-). In the collection of Khursheed and Kate Moos.

After wartime military service Peter attended the Sir John Cass School of Art in London. He subsequently qualified in dentistry (1952) and medicine (1954), and became a consultant oral and maxillofacial surgeon in Oxford. He gave up his appointment to paint full time in 1983, and had his studio in Sheildaig, Wester Ross till, in 2002, the onset of Parkinson’s disease put an end to his hill walking. Peter has exhibited widely in Scotland and England and a large number of his works are held in public and private collections.