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Hell hath no fury like a mouthful of cavities

You just can't be cool in a dentist's chair. That's what I was thinking earlier this week while leaving the dentist's office, a six-month parole for my mouth firmly in hand.

Imagine, for 24 glorious weeks I won't be prodded, gouged, drilled, chiseled or buffed. Gone will be the guilt associated with looking at x-rays which reveal the flaws of a mouth gone astray.

No more hygienist's furrowed brow as she impales my gums with one of those devine picks. Forgotten will be the "harumphs" spouting from the dentist's mouth.

Most of you, with the exception of the most pristine, know this tale of rotted wood. Nothing, absolutely nothing, is worse than having to go to the dentist.

This is especially true when you work with the demure smart aleck who looks at you and says, "Oh, I don't mind going to the dentist at all. I've never had a cavity in my life."

Jeez, people like that really exist and they eat

candy and everything. Blind justice, hell — it's toothless when it comes to me and the sweet stuff. No matter how much I floss, brush, scrub or water-pick, the old ivories are becoming more like a sea of silver.

BUT THE FROWNING and fillings are only small portions of the humiliation. Not even Robert Redford could stay cool in the dentist chair.

The scenario is always the same. You walk in the door all chic and ready to boogie. Before you know it, a talisman is sucking all the vital juices from the mouth. A blinding light is stuck in your face, reminiscent of a Humphrey Bogart movie.

But, the interrogation begins only after the mouth is filled with braces, clamps, cotton and chicken wire.

To top it off, the dentist, allegedly to spare you pain, freezes the nerve-endings and sticks a mask over the nose which forces nitrous oxide directly to



the brain and compels you to make a fool out of yourself.

As they rip and tear at your mouth, the dentist and assistant want to know (a.) where you're going on vacation; (b.) what you think of Prince Charles

and Lady Diana; and, (c.) how you feel about a nuclear proliferation treaty with Nepal.

Filled with nitrous oxide, you suddenly become unusually talkative, silly and obnoxious.

But the worst part is yet to come. After the pros have done their day's work, you're forced to face the appointment secretary who is always, always very cute.

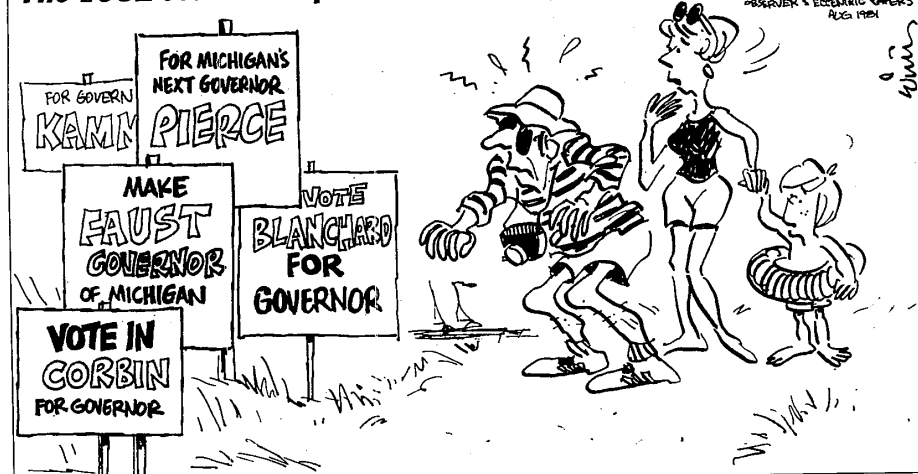
THERE YOU STAND, the entire face numb as if you just had a stroke. Nevertheless, you foolishly attempt to smile and end up looking like the Hunchback of Notre Dame.

Then, to make things worse, you open your mouth to say something disarmingly charming and end up drooling all over the front of yourself.

Well, maybe it's worth it.

At least that's what Bucky Beaver used to tell me when I was a kid. Of course, he never had to sit in a dentist's chair.

The 1982 season is upon us!



Marijuana: illegal but very popular

A group of suburban doctors gets together once a week to unwind after a day of surgery. Soon, out come some pre-rolled marijuana cigarettes, and the doctors all light up.

This scene is repeated at social events in all suburbs. People from all walks of life — even professionals like doctors, lawyers and accountants — regularly take part in an activity prohibited by law.

Let's get one point straight: I'm not talking about people smoking marijuana while performing their working duties. I've never observed that in this area. But I have seen the marijuana smoking occurring regularly among people in the most esteemed professions.

This also is not intended as a defense of pot smoking. I smoke neither pot nor cigarettes and seldom drink alcohol. I think all are harmful to a person's health.

On the other hand, I am not comfortable living my life wearing blinders. Newspapers have a responsibility to tell people what is going on, not merely to report the news people would like to know. And whether people like it or not, extensive marijuana smoking is going on among adults in our communities.

I JUST MISSED the period of heavy drug use when I went through college, and my knowledge of the subject was limited. I assumed marijuana smoking was bad because many people said so.

One of my first assignments as a young Army officer was to teach a class on drug abuse. In preparation for the class, I searched for empirical tests proving that the effects of smoking illegal marijuana were more harmful than the effects of drinking legal alcohol. To make a long story short, I couldn't find any such evidence.

The thrust of the class that I taught was: Don't smoke marijuana because there are many state and local laws which prohibit its use. I knew that was lame, but that's all I could honestly say.

Since then, I've had many conversations with friends who smoke marijuana. They maintain that marijuana doesn't damage the organs of the body as does alcohol. They also say they don't have next-morning hangovers as they do with alcohol.

An argument often raised against marijuana is that it leads to the use of other, more harmful drugs such as cocaine and heroin. Yet no scientific research has proven this.

Another argument is that if it became legal, many more people, including children, would smoke. No reasonable adult favors increased use of marijuana among children. But again, there's no conclusive evidence this would result.



Nick Sharkey

When you talk privately to most police officials, they will admit they are perplexed about enforcing marijuana laws. In some "progressive" Michigan cities like East Lansing and Ann Arbor, marijuana smoking is often done in public. A police chief once candidly told me, "Marijuana enforcement is not among my top priorities." It doesn't take much sophistication to understand what he meant.

As I said, I am not arguing that marijuana smoking is healthy. Studies which are now being conducted will probably prove that it is harmful. But I'd be surprised if they demonstrated that marijuana smoking is any more harmful than the legal substances of cigarettes and alcohol.

WE LIVE in a society which is hypocritical in other ways. In a state where legalized gambling is prohibited, newspapers regularly publish point spreads of upcoming football games and the bookies' odds of the next big prize fight.

Maybe some day someone will figure out how the state can raise revenue by legalizing marijuana. Look at what happened to the numbers racket. State officials picked a new name ("Daily Lottery") and started collecting money for a previously illegal activity. In some states alcohol can only be purchased at state stores, thereby putting more revenue in the state coffers.

If government officials can make money from marijuana, maybe smoking it will someday become respectable.

Postage increase is such a little thing

The spiral in prices has made it almost impossible for young folks to purchase homes and made eating out a costly venture, but inflation has not been without some smiles along the way.

Most of the populace is calloused toward the rising cost of new autos and the labor charges when work is being done on their homes or on any equipment.

But the other day at our luncheon table, the protest centered on one of the smallest price increases — the proposed addition of two cents to first-class mail.

THE PROTEST was made seriously by a diner who voiced the opinion that the government must be in dire need if a mere letter had a charge of 20 cents when the price not too long ago was a mere two pennies.

The chuckle came when the protester laid down a 25 percent tip for the waitress and thought nothing of it. But his protest of the proposed postage increase stimulated some pointed discussion. The members of the Doom and Gloom Club finally agreed that the increase, if put into effect, still left mail one of the cheapest things in today's economy.

Mind you, the chap who was doing the protesting



the stroller

W.W. Edgar

was complaining of the extra two cents, and yet the tip he left was more than double the customary percentage.

The Stroller couldn't help asking, "If you sent a message by a delivery boy and he had to travel only two blocks, what would you tip him?"

He admitted he probably would tip the messenger more than the cost of a 20-cent stamp. And it is that way with all types of mail. To The Stroller, mailing charges always have been the cheapest thing in sight.

JUST THE OTHER DAY, he had cause to ask charges for sending an ordinary letter to a friend in New Zealand. The postal clerk weighed the letter and very calmly said, "That will be 40 cents."

Can you imagine? An air mail letter going half-way around the world for only 40 cents. And then some folks holler because of a proposed two-cent raise on first class mail bringing the domestic price to 20 cents.

On the same day that the diner protested the proposed increase in postage, he didn't say a word about, or didn't even notice, the price of the roll he had just eaten going up a nickel. He evidently took it for granted. But two cents more for a letter was almost unbearable to him. There are times when rises in rates are worthy of a protest. The Stroller had one such case several weeks ago when he had a new chain put on a garden mower.

When he looked at the bill, he just had to laugh. The cost of the chain and a small gear was \$6.28, and labor was \$25.

In cases like these, there is little to protest. Labor costs are far beyond what seems justified. And so it is with many other services.

But the proposed raise in the price of first class mail from 18 cents to 20 is not worth a complaint. Where else can you get such service for so little money?



Tim Richard

Drill for oil? Don't shout 'no' so fast

Michigan faces some soul-searing decisions as it becomes clearer that our beautiful peninsula has oil.

The case against allowing drilling is fairly easy to make, and my friends the environmentalists are already at it.

If the oil is located under the land, it will turn up in a place like the Pigeon River Country, where there are elk and the world's only known nesting habitat of the Kirtland's warbler. Have you ever heard a bull elk calling at night? Have you ever spotted a yellow-and-black creature you were pretty sure was the Kirtland's warbler? I have, and appreciate the argument.

If the oil is located in the Great Lakes, then we could really run into trouble. Big as they are, the Great Lakes are a fraction of the size of the oceans, where there have been drills — and spills.

Unlike the oceans, the Great Lakes are a source of drinking water and may well be our industrial ace-in-the-hole when it's discovered the Sunbelt water resources are expensive and erratic.

Moreover, the Great Lakes drain very, very slowly, and any pollution will be with us several generations, at least.

HAVING ACKNOWLEDGED the potency of the environmental arguments against oil drilling in Michigan, I now join the side of the devils and say we had better look at the prospect again.

Any political entity with any kind of energy resource seems to be sitting pretty these days, whether the resource be oil, gas, coal or thermal. Capital is mobile, people can be mobile, but natural resources are not.

Consider the tax implications alone. Michigan individuals and businesses pay some hefty, though not intolerable taxes, but we have to look a bit enviously at some of our southern and western neighbors. Random items:

- Texas, according to a National Public Radio broadcast, covers 25 percent of its state budget with severance taxes on energy. While local community colleges in Michigan are charging around \$20 a credit hour tuition, Texans pay \$4 per credit hour, according to some of my friends in that line of work.

- New Mexico, its newspapers report, has a budget topping the \$1 billion mark for the first time. Last year, when Michigan's governor was tolling everybody in mid-stream to make budget cuts, New Mexico ran up a \$300 million surplus. This year its governor recommended a \$205 million package of property, business, sales and income tax reductions. He did not, however, recommend cutting severance taxes on energy sources.

- While we in southeast Michigan pay higher and higher water and sewer rates to provide tertiary treatment at the Detroit sewage treatment plant, Laramie, Wyo. is paying for its local share of a new sewage treatment plant with severance tax returns on coal and oil. While Detroit is closing libraries some suburbs which should have them aren't building them. Laramie is pumping an additional \$80,000 in severance tax money into its library.

YOU MAY NOW appreciate the beauty of severance taxes: your own citizenry pays the same rate as outside buyers, of course, but the bulk of the dollars come from the outside.

Your area can provide public services, train people for jobs and induce new industries to locate in your backyard either (a.) by taxing your own people, or (b.) taxing people from the outside. Clearly, you can win more votes and lure more industry if you employ the latter method.

Michigan will richly deserve its continued recession if we automatically and continually shriek "no!" whenever anyone mentions drilling for oil "here."