



The gap between this woman's two front teeth reappeared even after she had braces (left). Bonding with "composite" quickly fixed her smile.

Making those teeth worth smiling about

By George Houde

Dean Lodding is the smile doctor.

Are there chipped teeth in your grin? No problem. A little dental composite bonded to the right nooks and crannies, some smoothing and polishing, and the smile doctor will have your grin up to snuff.

Do you have a discolored central incisor, one that looks like it's been dragged through a toxic waste dump? A nifty porcelain veneer hyperglued to your tooth will fix that in a flash.

But wait. You say you've got a space between your front teeth as wide as the Straits of Hormuz, a space you could sail an American-flagged Kuwaiti tanker through?

Lodding will close that gap faster than you can say, "An American flagged oil tanker was attacked by Iranian gunboats today."

ON THE OTHER hand, what if your two front teeth have an overlap like the continental shelf?

No sweat. Lodding will have those teeth looking like the fabled Walls of Babylon in no time.

"Porcelain veneering is the state of the art in dental bonding," says Lodding.

The Elgin dentist has become an expert on turning lackluster teeth into pearls of porcelain. Lodding's tooth shop is equipped with the latest materials for bonding, veneering, bleaching, recontouring and crowning teeth. Those cosmetic techniques represent the cutting edge of dentistry, according to Lodding.

"Each of these techniques is immediate in achieving the desired aesthetic change," says Lodding. "Quickly and painlessly."

porcelain crowns and veneers will take care of minor orthodontic problems—small gaps, overlaps and crooked teeth—that previously were correctable only by braces.

Lodding says people who have had braces but whose teeth may have relapsed can be helped with the techniques.

"It can be used to close up small spaces which an appliance can't close," adds Lodding. "But it's not a substitute for orthodontics, which correct functional problems. Bonding and veneers are strictly an esthetic thing."

The renewed interest in physical fitness and good health, combined with advances in dental materials, have rapidly expanded the field of cosmetic dentistry, he says. Many dentists are acquiring the necessary skills and tools.

"A STRONG emphasis on physical fitness and good health has emerged in the past few years. We all want to look and feel good," notes Lodding. "An entire area of dentistry has evolved to treat discolored, chipped, spaced or improperly-positioned teeth immediately and dramatically."

Attaching porcelain veneers to teeth is a fairly recent development in dentistry. "Bonding" refers to the process of covering or filling teeth with a material called "composite," a resin-like material that hardens and can nearly duplicate the enamel of a tooth.

"It really was started back in the 1930s, when a Hollywood dentist started making veneers for movie stars," says Lodding. "They didn't have the technology to bond them permanently to the teeth back then—you couldn't eat with them or anything—so a person would glue them on for a scene and then remove them. They

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were called Hollywood veneers.”

YOUR CENTRAL and lateral incisors, up front as they are, may not be alone in their need for beauty treatment. Those mother lodes of gold or silver in molars and bicuspids, exposed to dinner guests during deep belly laughs, can now be camouflaged with tooth-colored composite. It comes in about 30 different shades, says Lodding, and is a suitable replacement for silver fillings.

Much of the cosmetic remodeling can be done in one or two appointments. Using composite to fill cavities or re-color teeth takes only one appointment, says Lodding. Making veneers requires two appointments because a wax

impression of the teeth must be made.

Lodding, who worked on an Indian reservation for a year after graduating from the University of Illinois dental school, says most of his clients—about 75 percent—are women, but men seem to be getting interested in improving their smiles, too.

POINTING TO the “before” pictures in his “Smiles We’ve Changed” album, Lodding says, “Most people will go along with teeth like this because they think it’s too costly and involved to change them. But these techniques are real conservative and easy to do.”

They are not too expensive, he adds. Using composite material to redo a tooth can

cost anywhere from \$40 to \$125. Porcelain veneers start at about \$200 per tooth.

“When bonded, the veneer tooth is incredibly strong,” adds Lodding. “But you shouldn’t do things that you might get away with with your natural teeth, though, like chew ice or bite down on a frozen candy bar.”

He says that having better-looking teeth can make a person look younger and usually makes individuals feel better about themselves.

“AS MUCH as I focus my practice on cosmetic dentistry,” says Lodding, “I still find that most people are not aware of the many ways they can improve their smiles. The other day, I got a kiss and a hug from a woman whose smile I fixed.”