

# And to Dr. Sandhu, a big thank you

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BY DIANA FISHER

*Special to the Advance*

*All I want for Christmas is my two front teeth, so I can wish you Merry Cwithmath!*

Christmas came a little early for me this year, when Dr. Raj Sandhu of Dentistry @ Kemptville gave me an implant and with it, a reason to smile.

They say you lose a tooth with each pregnancy. Not so in my case. My teeth and nails were strong and my hair was shiny throughout my three pregnancies. But living in Taiwan for three years left me with a big gap in my grin.

I drank mostly bottled water when I was in Taipei, because the tap water wasn't the safest. Every year they get a breakout of hand-and-mouth disease or some such thing, and I wasn't going to risk it. Neither the tap water nor the bottled water in Taiwan contains an adequate amount of fluoride, so tooth decay is a common problem. Most of the toothpastes are little more than baking soda, and they don't contain fluoride either.

Going to the dentist in Taiwan is an experience for sure, but it

isn't an expensive one. I think I paid about \$300NT or \$12 CDN per visit. The hygienists at the clinic around the corner from my apartment wore skimpy uniforms that were so short and tight, they had me wondering if they were working for tips. The front wall of the dental office was open to the street like a garage, and passersby would often stop to take a curious look inside the mouth of the patient being treated. It didn't look like the most sanitary of environments in which to be performing medical procedures, and I decided to avoid it at all costs.

When I took a trip home, I returned with a suitcase full of all of the drugstore items that one had difficulty finding in Taiwan, including fluoride toothpaste.

I brushed my teeth three times a day and flossed when I remembered to, about twice a week. But the liquid invert sugar that is squeezed into every edible or drinkable substance on this island eventually caught up with me.

I began waking up in the middle of the night with pain in my mouth. It was time to give in and see the dentist.

The dentist seemed competent,

## The Accidental Farmwife



and his English was perfect. But when he told me I would need a root canal to repair my infected tooth, I balked. I was not about to have dental surgery done in a room that is open to all the sounds, smells and pollution of Taipei.

So I let him seal the tooth and prescribe painkillers to tide me over until I returned to Canada. Thankfully, my leaving date was only a few months away.

Back on Canadian soil, my dentist confirmed that I did indeed require a root canal, followed immediately by a crown. I spoke

to my insurance company, and was told that the crown was not covered. A few months later I switched to another insurance company, and tried again. Again I was denied. Finally, I decided to go ahead with the root canal and hold off on the crown until I could afford the \$3600. But it was too late. My tooth cracked in half and had to be removed.

Now, I don't think I'm a truly vain person, but losing a tooth, even one on the side of your mouth, certainly changes the way you smile. I found myself shielding that side of my face with my hand when I spoke or laughed, and my smile changed to a diminished, closed-mouth version of my usually wide, toothy grin. I became very self-conscious of getting my photo taken, and even resorted to photo shopping my missing tooth back into my portrait before printing or posting.

Then, one day, some clever advertising caught my attention. A new dentist office was opening and they specialized in implants. I decided to go in and talk to them, to see exactly what was involved and how much it would cost. Maybe I could pay it off in

installments.

One week later I had an appointment. We did a claim and learned that \$1600 of the \$3600 cost for the implant and crown would be covered by insurance. I was advised to apply to a credit company to pay off the rest, in interest-free monthly installments.

Two weeks after being approved, I had a bolt installed where my missing tooth used to be. I felt a bit like Frankenstein and certainly resembled him when I smiled, so I tried not to do so with an open mouth very often. Three months later, the bone had healed and it was time to get my specially-made crown for which I was paying \$200 per month.

When I looked in the mirror that the dentist held up in front of me and he told me to "smile big", it was easy to do just that. And I've been smiling ever since.

Thank you Dr. Sandhu and the staff of Dentistry @ Kemptville, for your conscientious efforts to keep your patients calm, comfortable and smiling.