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Sue was one of the first Clinical Instructors at LVI and has been taking courses with us since 1995. She has completed Advanced Functional Aesthetics, Advanced Posterior Aesthetics, Comprehensive Aesthetic Reconstruction Program (Masters), Practical Occlusion in the Progressive Practice (Occlusion I), Mastering Neuromuscular Dentistry (Occlusion II), Neuromuscular Coronoplasty and Case Finishing (Occlusion III), Developmental Diagnosis and Treatment Planning (Occlusion IV), Full Mouth Reconstruction, Mastering the Fundamentals of Neuromuscular Orthodontics, and she is scheduled to take Advanced Scan Interpretation in 2003.

## Your Smiles Should Be Like Snowflakes

Sue E. Wendling, DMD

Have you ever been in attendance at a lecture on appearance related dentistry and after a few slides felt like Bill Murray in the movie, "Groundhog Day"? You know what I mean. With each successive before and after, the "after" smile looks almost identical to the post treatment view of the previous case which mimics the finished work of the case before that one and so on. The smiles you create for your patients should be like snowflakes...no two exactly alike. They shouldn't be like those ink imbedded rubber stamps that three-year-olds amuse themselves with by repeatedly stamping the same image on a sheet of paper. If you think you might be "rubber stamping" your smiles, review some of your cases and critique yourself. A good test might be whether or not you can identify your patients by viewing the after image of only the smile.

I learned a valuable lesson in smile design from the late Dr. Bob Lee. He spent the entire first day of a three-day course reviewing slide after slide of "ideal" smiles. At first, I thought it was a waste of time. But, it didn't take long to realize that you can't truly critique a smile and you can't design a smile if you don't recognize what constitutes a pleasing (and functional) smile.

If you're an LVI alumnus, you've learned and utilized the basic rules of smile design including the golden rule calculation. I'd like to share with you some of the additional considerations that go into smile design in my office. Some of my guidelines are fairly standard. Other factors I consider may be criteria you haven't previously utilized. Indulge me, as at times I will be trying to make the intangible tangible.

Successful smile design starts with the patient interview. I have a simple technique of taking a Polaroid of their smile, let them watch it develop and then I ask them to critique their own smile. Next, I point out various additional things they might want corrected and ask if they agree.

At the time of preparation the wax-up becomes your best friend. Detailed lab slips are not just for the finished case. Your technician can't read your mind. For the wax-up, include instructions

on length, width and shape as well as pre-treatment slides. Include a photo similar to the outcome you and your patient are trying to achieve. We use examples from the LVI Smile Design Catalog, magazine photos or prints of cases previously done in our office. If I am planning to bring the maxillary anterior teeth out facially, I do a composite mock up and send an impression and photos to the lab. A symmetry bite is also helpful for the wax-up. This way, your temporaries will closely mimic what you envisioned for the final case. If the temporaries don't meet the expectations of you or your patient, adjustments can be made, an impression taken and photos shot for the lab. The laboratory instructions for the finished case will be even more detailed. Personally, I use my own form that is a 3- 8" x 11 page prescription for my larger cases.

### Shape

- The primary consideration should be the shape of the patient's face. Contrary to what you may think, you don't shape the teeth to offset the shape of an individual's face. For instance, long narrow teeth on a round face look unnatural.
- Don't drastically alter the shape of the restorations relative to the patients existing tooth shape. Patients have a difficult time adjusting to drastic changes. Along the same lines a person with very little surface texture and anatomy in their existing teeth will wonder why their teeth are all "bumpy and rough" if you go hog wild on the surface anatomy and mammelons in their ceramic restorations.
- Vocation and personality need to be considered. You wouldn't put square teeth and pointed cuspids on Mr. Rogers would you?

### Shade

- This is where listening to the patient is probably most important. Your temporary shade can be the key to patient satisfaction. Case in point. I had a very outgoing, high profile patient who insisted that he wanted a "natural" shade for his smile. Knowing his reputation, I suspected we had two different ideas of what "natural"

would look like. I used a bleach shade for his temps, handed him a mirror and said, "I guess these are too light for you." His response was "Oh no I don't want the permanent ones any darker than this." Saved by the temps!

- Skin tones and sometimes hair color are a crucial consideration in shade selection. A perennially tan person might not want the unnatural appearance of an 030 shade but someone with a pale complexion can easily pull off an 030 or 040 Empress shade. Ruddy complexions are the most difficult to shade match to a tooth color. Personally, I find Empress to take on an almost blue gray hue when paired with a ruddy complexion. This is when I may switch to Authentic porcelain.
- Don't forget to consider vocation when choosing shade. Would you pick the same shade for an engineer as you would for a car salesman?

### Case Studies:

**Barbara:** Words that come to mind when you meet Barbara are soft, feminine, "fluffy". She is an aesthetician who shuns the sun but is no stranger to facial enhancement procedures. For her I chose very light oval teeth (especially the lateral incisors) with "soft" canines. Each time I see her the first thing that comes to mind is how well her teeth compliment her facial features and suit her personality. Barbara agrees.



**Angie:** Angie is my dental assistant, tall, very tan, with angular facial features. We chose dominant central incisors (like the model, Nikki Taylor) pointed canines and a lot of mammelon development and translucence for a youthful appearance. Perennially tan, the 040 shade actually looks even lighter.



**Dennis:** This pleasant patient is the owner of Bob's Red Mill, a multimillion dollar business supplying various stone ground flours to natural food stores across the country. He desired an updated but natural looking smile. Dennis' countenance is featured on the business' advertising materials. He traditionally appears with his trademark round spectacles and a bow tie. When he's in the office the topic of conversation is usually shopping and other areas of "girl talk." Would I give him big square aggressive teeth? No, the teeth we chose were softened but not so much as to be feminine and a shade more in the natural range of color. His latest publicity shot looked great.



**Maurice:** Maurice was the patient who wanted the "natural" shade but loved the 030 temporaries. Known as "The Enforcer" when he played for the NBA, would you give him the same teeth as Dennis? Of course not. We gave Maurice a very square aggressive tooth shape in a shade that few people other than Maurice could pull off.



Standard of care dictates you be a master mechanic, but also allow yourself to think like the designer of the automobile. Even though, you're required to be a craftsman, for true success you most also be an artist. Possess the skills of a general contractor along with the vision of the architect.

"To love what you do and feel that it matters. How can anything be more fun."

Author, Katharine Graham