



All I want for Christmas is my two front teeth

By Dr. Eric Gustavsen, Published in the Walla Walla Union Bulletin 12/16/11

Perhaps it was a case of foreshadowing but when I was young, I liked a Christmas song by Arthur Godfrey. "All I want for Christmas is my two front teeth". I'm not sure if it was the snappy record jacket with the gap-toothed kid in the stocking or the way "Mr. Godfrey" tried to whistle in the song. Perhaps it was the fact that there was a word in the song that was "verboden" around our house. "@%\$^~ oh gee how happy I'd be, if I could only whittle". Whatever the reason, this is the song that I most identify with my early memories of Christmas.

Of course now days the song means something completely different for me as a dentist. It conjures up images of front teeth that need some attention. Obviously hockey players come to mind but also people with some chipping, stains, or old style caps. I think you know the type of caps I'm talking about. Those front teeth seemingly veneered with a chiclet and having the added distraction of that dark line above them.

As a recently graduated dentist in the late 1980's, one of my first patients in private practice was a handsome young man who had been out running his large yellow retriever. As luck would have it, the dog saw something fascinating and took off pulling his master along by the leash. This young man tripped on an upraised piece of sidewalk, breaking his 2 front teeth. Upon examination we informed him he was going to need crowns (caps) on these teeth. His response: "Are those the fake looking things with the black line

above them? Can't you do ANYTHING else?" At that time there were few options strong enough to last that looked as beautiful as natural teeth. In an interesting side note, this young mans' brother showed up at my office the following day. The brother had assumed the duty of exercising the dog. He was tethered to the dog and was minding his own business when the dog led him over the very same rough patch of sidewalk. The result: three broken teeth. I never did hear what became of the dog...but I heard his littermate made it big in the movie Marley and Me!

Perhaps you know someone who had to have crowns on their front teeth many years ago. Maybe they had an accident, like getting run over by a reindeer. You will be pleased to know that dentistry's research department has developed a new line of beautiful porcelains that are essentially as strong as the natural tooth was. The main reason they look so natural is because they allow light to pass through them, just like the original tooth. Old style crowns, commonly known as PFM's to dentists, by contrast, have a metal thimble with porcelain on top that blocks the light, making the root look black when the gums recede. In most cases new crowns can now be made that will be undetectable. Even by your wife!

Have a look at these before and after pictures.

So, if all you want for Christmas is your two front teeth, talk to your dentist. They would be happy to help you with your grown up Christmas wish!



Before shows dark edges and unnatural looking old crowns



After shows natural looking new crowns