

## HOMELESS IN PARADISE

December 20-26, 2019

### IN OUR OWN BACKYARD - Part 9



### WHAT IF ALL YOU WANT FOR CHRISTMAS ARE SOME NEW FALSE TEETH?

By Wanda Sue Parrott

*wanda sue parrott  
flashes tap bananas smile  
in her new false teeth*

**MAKING** your own dentures is a cheap option for folks who want, but can't afford, dental care.

If you've experienced do-it-yourself dentistry, do you dare share it with me so I can tell others?

According to "make your own teeth" online websites, do-it-yourself methods of home-style tooth-making are available for everyone, from kids who want their own legendary songs' "two front teeth for Christmas" to homeless adults in serious need of chompers with which to chew. Costs range from under \$10 for a single glue-in cosmetic tooth to several hundred dollars for complete upper-and-lower denture-making kits.

My recent experience as a Banana Gummer, tied to the desperate need for dental care for low-income, elderly, homeless people, drew more interest from readers than other topics this column has covered over the last five years.

Since I got beautiful new upper teeth just in time for the holidays, I decided to use my last entry in my Diary of a Banana Gummer Facebook blog in this week's column.

Enjoy it in good health!

### Diary Of A Banana Gummer

Day #92

Ending this series on a cheery note means switching my hats from writer of non-fiction to whimsical dabbler in very short fiction, which is what I used to do more than I do now.

If you wonder what to do about your own false teeth, read this little tale about Maude and Claude. It's my Banana Gummering way of wishing you great choices about your dental health, as well as a happy holiday and many more!

#### Whatever Happened To Your Old False Teeth?

(Revision of 1st draft in Hodgepodge Short Stories & Poetry literary Journal, Summer 1998)

By Wanda Sue Parrott

*Maude and Claude, twins on the short side of 100, met for their annual birthday lunch in a local cafeteria. Maude, a teetotaler, chose the place because its strongest beverage was coffee. They had stopped exchanging gifts on their fiftieth birthday.*

*Maude, who had just been fitted for new dentures she would get within the week, noticed her brother gumming his fried chicken. "What did you do with your old false teeth?" she asked.*

*"Sold 'em at a garage sale, sis. You know I change choppers ever' year."*

*Maude offered to loan Claude her dentures after she finished her roast beef.*

*"You gettin' tetched, sis? Ain't healthy to eat with someone else's teeth."*

*"I know, but you been doing it for fifty years."*

*"When I buy 'em, they belong to me. They're my false teeth. I boil 'em and scrub 'em good before I wear 'em."*

*"Well, it's not my business to ask how much you got for selling them. . ."*

*"It ain't, but I'll tell. I got what I paid for 'em of a year back. A buck for the uppers. Two bits for the lowers. I ain't never paid more than a buck per plate."*

*"They were almost new. Why did you sell your teeth, Claude?"*

*"They was gettin' too big. I bit into a sandwich and my choppers come out. Lodged in the bread."*

*When Claude averted his gaze from Maude's eyes she knew he was not telling the whole truth.*

*"Maybe you lost weight. We' re at an age where people start to shrink, Claude. Brains shrivel. I guess gums do, too."*

*"I stuffed the teeth with cotton, but it rubbed sores on my gums when I bit down. The bottom plate was cracked anyhow, so I sold 'em. I'll shop for new ones next week."*

*“How do you know they'll fit? Why spend money you can't afford to waste on mismatched dentures that might be the wrong size?”*

*Claude closed his mouth and refused to answer. Maude recognized the expression. During childhood on their Ozark Mountains farm, Claude wore his telltale cat-that-swallowed-the-canary look when he sneaked Daddy John's moonshine.*

*Maude guessed the truth. “You do try on used dentures before they've been sterilized! Don't you?”*

*“I wash my mouth out good with whiskey. It ain't killed me yet. At my age, a man's gotta have a dangd good reason to whoop it up on his birthday.” Claude flashed open his jacket.*

*Maude recognized Daddy John's old mountain moonshine flask tucked in the inside pocket.*

*She coughed.*

*Claude chortled.*

*Maude gasped, then choked to stop laughter or tears from gagging her to death.*

*After she regained composure, Maude delicately placed her napkin over her mouth, removed her dentures, and dropped them in her water glass. Maude swirled the teeth in the clear water, fished them out with her fork, and wiped them on the tablecloth.*

*Then she wrapped them in a tissue and handed the gift to Claude. “Happy birthday, brother,” she gummed. “How about a shot of corn liquor to celebrate. We're only 99 once.”*

###

Thanks for my lovely new smile made possible by Weidong “Peter” Wang, D.D.S, Ph.D. of A New Image Dental in Seaside, California and Covered California's Denti-Cal aspect of Medi-Cal as inspired by the federal 2010 Affordable Care Act (ACA) known best as Obamacare and Medicaid.

### **Other Options**

If making your own teeth isn't your option of choice, and you think you might qualify for Denti-Cal, as I did, give yourself a gift by calling 1-800-786-4346 for information on how to enroll.

Or, to first study an excellent online piece about dental care through Medicaid, read the Authority Dental post “Discover Dental Plans for Seniors: The Best Dental Care at Low Cost” by Caleb Murphy, posted April 18, 2019 at <https://authoritydental.org/dental-plans-for-seniors#act>.

He says, “Medicaid offers medical and dental coverage for low-income U.S. citizens, including senior citizens. Federal law says that dental benefits through Medicaid are optional from state to state. . .”

I suggest substituting the word “homeless” for “senior(s)” where appropriate.

Good luck and Merry Christmas!

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This column appears in the weekly edition of the Cedar Street Times at [www.cedarstreettimes.com](http://www.cedarstreettimes.com) .

Photo by Tap Bananas choreographer Lois LeBlanc

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