

## Jack-o-Lantern Smile

*By Marilyn Reeves*

I know a lot of folks are put off by the subject of dentures – although many of us senior citizens have them. But if you're one of those who feel it's not good manners to talk about them, you may be excused from reading this, and I hope you'll excuse me for pursuing the topic.

When I was in my 20's, my dentist told me I had perfect teeth. They had grown in straight, I had a nice smile, and barely even the suggestion of a cavity. But by the time I was in my mid-30's – due to years of smoking – I developed periodontal disease, which did untold damage to my teeth. I went through the rounds of root canals, crowns and bridges. And by the time I was in my 60's, I was wearing a full upper denture and a partial plate down below.

For over 20 years I had a great dentist and a wonderful hygienist named Julie who helped me maintain the teeth I had left. But then, a couple of years ago my dentist had the effrontery of announcing his early retirement (probably planning to take a trip around the world on the yacht which I believe I financed personally). And since he was virtually irreplaceable, I hadn't found a new dentist until a few months ago, when I once again started having problems with my teeth.

The new guy, who was referred to me by my son Tom, seemed to be knowledgeable and willing to work with me financially. He was also a nice person – which goes a long way with me. In the past I had been to a few who weren't.

On my first appointment, after they x-rayed my remaining teeth, the Doc and I sat down to discuss all the work that needed to be done. First, he was going to have to extract both of my lower 'eye-teeth,' then repair the cavities in the remaining seven natural teeth I would still have left in my head.

It took several appointments to accomplish all those procedures, but once all the work was done, he sent my existing lower partial into the lab to insert plastic replacements for the two teeth he had pulled. So I went around for nearly three weeks with a jack-o-lantern smile!

The timing couldn't have been better, however, as during this time of Covid, I had to wear a mask, anyway. I just had a real problem chewing without any bottom eye-teeth or molars. I couldn't even eat cold cereal. I had to soften it the microwave before I could chew it.

But, happily, I got my reinforced partial back just before Thanksgiving. I not only had a brand new smile, but was able to eat the delicious meal that my daughter-in-law Mary brought over to me, having packed all the goodies in small containers. All I had to do was heat it up (once the power came back on!) and enjoy.

But the best part was being able to visit with her and Tom – albeit for just a few minutes – out in the parking lot when they dropped off the food. That really put a smile on my face. It was the nicest thing that's happened to me in a very long time.