

# 'The Last Flossing'

*Divine provenance meets divine providence as the mouth/body health connection gains more converts*

By Patricia Walsh, RDH  
Editor in Chief, Hygiene Tribune

I came across Ed Sorel's illustration "The Last Flossing" in a round-about way. Sorel is one of those artists whose work might be immediately familiar to you from popular magazines, but his name likely isn't. Such is the fate of illustrators. Their hand-colored drawings are usually just an adjunct to a nationally syndicated story — unless, of course, the artist has been at it for about

six decades and is considered an institution.

Best known for his political cartoons and caricatures in *The New Yorker* and *Vanity Fair*, Sorel has iconic murals adorning the walls of the landmark Waverly Inn in Greenwich Village. The Waverly has been dubbed one of the worst restaurants in New York City by the newly elected U.S. president, so you can easily guess on which end of the political spectrum the establishment's owner lands.

The last time I had heard the Waverly mentioned was when a childhood friend



PATRICIA WALSH, RDH, BS, has been a clinical dental hygienist for more than 20 years. She is a graduate of the Fones School of Dental Hygiene, University of Bridgeport in Connecticut. She has an extensive history in international volunteer work in oral health, including being instrumental in the creation of The Thailand Dental Project, a volunteer program focused on providing educational, preventive and restorative dental care to children in a tsunami-affected region of Thailand. Contact her at [pwalshrdh@uberhygienist.com](mailto:pwalshrdh@uberhygienist.com).

gathered a group of Yale grads there to host a charity event. The place is more "old-English-pub-meets-Sardi's" than a hotbed of radical leftist anarchy. In fact, I think one of the folks among the Yale group was married to a Standard Oil heir-ess.

These Sorel-inspired thoughts had been prompted by my vacation read over the holidays: a book about Mary Astor, the Hollywood actress who first gained fame in the 1920s. Fortified by festive gourmet chocolates, I plowed through "The Purple Diary: The Great American Sex Scandal

of 1936." Published late last year, the book was written and illustrated by old Mr. Sorel himself, who is now pushing 90.

"The Purple Diary" shouldn't be confused with "The Purple Guide," by Shirley Gutkowski, RDH, whose book I also highly recommend (Shirley's book, a lovely stroll through the realities of the dental hygiene profession, is ideal for the newly minted registered dental hygienist).

But back to Sorel. Apparently, when this then-relatively-unknown illustrator was pulling up the linoleum in his Upper East Side kitchen in 1965, he came across some yellowed newspapers from 1936. The rest of us would have found bits of blue kitty litter, coffee grounds and a coupon for Cheerios. But Sorel found the basis for an obsession that five decades later manifested itself as a book. All of the old newspapers' headlines were about Astor's scandalous divorce and custody trial. The unfolding details were so sensational, Astor had knocked Hitler and Franco off the front pages.

I thought of this recently when I was interviewed by *The New York Times* after our profession's dear Esther Wilkins, DMD, RDH, passed away. It took a few days longer than I expected for the newspaper's thoughtful obituary to appear in print. Perhaps the piece was bumped by Zsa Zsa and her nine husbands. The more things change with mass media, the more they stay the same.

Just before the holidays, my boss handed me four pages of information about the new ADA code for hygiene. I glanced at the information, didn't immediately understand its relevance, and promptly tucked it into a drawer. My mind was on shopping, wrapping, cleaning, cooking, clothing and hair. ADA dental terminology was not at the top of my list.

When I casually mentioned the code update to another hygienist, who seemed equally unaware, I had an "aha" moment: I would check with Patti DiGangi, RDH. She wrote the book on codes. Literally. Before I even got the shipping boxes out with the trash and the last Christmas package wrapped, there was already an article online by DiGangi explaining D4346. She seems to know what we need to know before we conclude we need to know it. I'm not sure if Dr. Wilkins had 12 apostles or not, but she certainly has two good disciples in Gutkowski and DiGangi. They work diligently to make our profession better even when the rest of us are thinking about shopping, wrapping, baking — and decades-old sex scandals.

Most likely 2017 will bring along with it a bumper crop of patients ready to use newly acquired dental benefits. There will be plenty of people who have taken a vacation from the dentist for years who will suddenly appear on our doorsteps. They may not have any bone loss, but they sure as heck aren't traditional re-care appointments either.

Hence the need for D4346. Prior to this code, we would be looking at a wall of calculus but no bone loss to back up

AD

*Taking the stage to present a winning approach to comprehensive cosmetic dentistry education:*



**THE LEGENDS**

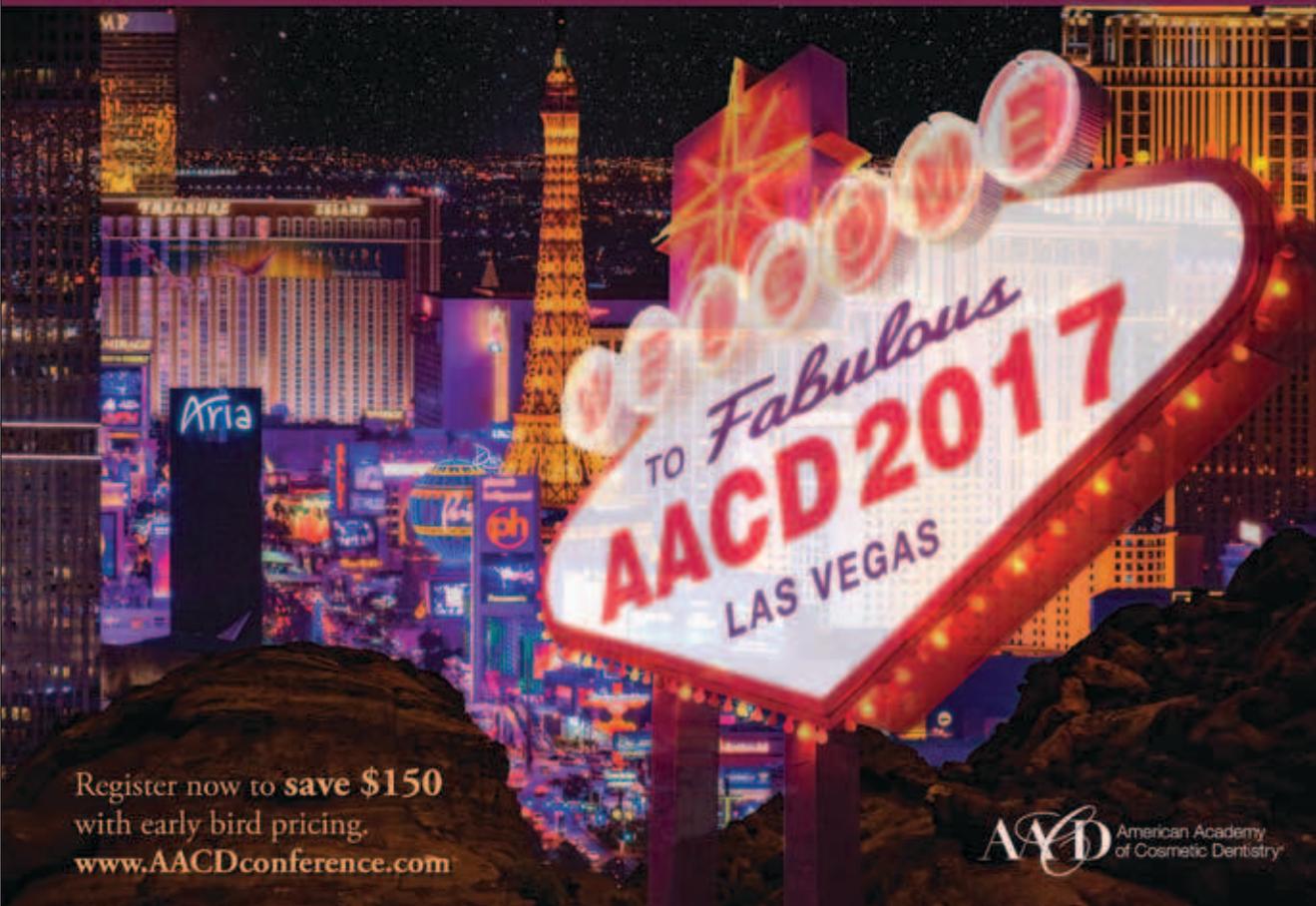


*The Illusionists*



**THE HIGH ROLLERS**

**Tuesday, April 18 - Friday, April 21, 2017**  
**The Venetian Hotel Resort & Casino**  
*33rd Annual Scientific Session*



Register now to **save \$150**  
with early bird pricing.  
[www.AACDconference.com](http://www.AACDconference.com)

 American Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry

► See FLOSSING, page A18