

The Story...

The first time I ever heard “the story,” it was told by my Dad. Dad actually wasn’t speaking to me, but I remember his telling of having a tooth removed and all of the drama that went along with it. I must have been old enough to know that I might want to be a dentist some day. Back then, I didn’t know what I know now and the story seemed very plausible. Things have changed.

Today, the removal of teeth (dental extractions) should be *atraumatic*, without trauma. In plain terms, it shouldn’t hurt. We have a variety of dental anesthetics, sedative drugs, nitrous oxide laughing gas, and advanced instruments to help make patients safe and comfortable. If a person has any reservations about dental surgery, they have the option of going to a dental specialist to be put to sleep. Dentists are certainly not perfect, but, from what I hear, we’ve come a long way.

The story is almost always told by men. Women, as a rule, are much tougher and less prone to exaggeration. This is why women carry and birth babies. If men had work eight pound packages of joy out of their bodies, every kid would be an only child.

I’ve never heard “the story” told by a dentist. Also, the various techniques described in “the story” have never been taught in any accredited dental school. In other words, “the story” is often a colorful tale told by a colorful character for the amusement of others. I’m sure there is often some shred of truth, but embellishment makes it much more interesting. In short, it’s usually a good story...

“There I was, stranded in *Old Mexico/Downtown Austin/Saudi Arabia* and my *upper/lower* back *right/left* tooth started hurting. Actually, it had bothered me for two *days/weeks/years*, but I’m *tough/brave/lazy/scared* and didn’t want to go to see my regular dentist. When my *wife/Mom/girlfriend* tried to call my hometown doctor, he was *fishing/on vacation/playing golf* and could not see me for three days. I was forced to go see someone new and *he/she* wanted to pull my tooth right away. The dentist didn’t believe in anesthetic, so I *took a shot of whiskey/prayed/called my wife crying* and told the *doctor/barber/ex-convict* to go ahead. Before I knew it, *he/she* grabbed my tooth with *channel-locks/rusty pliers/a vice grip* and began to *yank/pull/squeeze*. After a bit, the doctor had *his knees in my chest/me in a headlock* and wouldn’t quit. Finally, my tooth *broke/shot across the room/was removed* and I received *twenty-seven/thirty-eight/ninety-nine* stitches. The doctor told me I had *extra long roots/very dense bone/very masculine qualities*. I never complained or said a word, until *now/my next dental visit/the office Christmas party.*”

Every great story has at least a little truth. Until next week, keep smiling.

-Please send comments to Drs. Parrish at www.ParrishDental.com.