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THE EDITOR'S CORNER

A Profile in Courage

The annual Damon Forum covers much more than the Damon appliance system and treatment philosophy—it's billed by its sponsor, Ormco, as "the nation's largest privately sponsored orthodontic event". Of particular note at this year's event in Phoenix was the introduction of a new clear aligner system, the Insignia Clearguide Express. Based on the Insignia Advanced Smile Design software, which is already in use by practitioners around the globe for the fabrication of individually customized brackets, the new system can purportedly produce as much as 2.5mm of tooth movement. Because virtual movements can be performed directly on the computer screen without having to call or e-mail the design technician, the clinician has more control over the process of diagnosis, treatment planning, and aligner fabrication. As many as 20 aligners are generated, but they are shipped in small batches to allow for midcourse corrections. Progress is monitored throughout treatment by the use of thermoplastic bite-registration wafers that can detect any deviations from the intended tooth movements. The objective is to facilitate on-time case completion with more predictable results. While the presentation at the Damon Forum was quite convincing, I look forward to receiving manuscripts for consideration that support these claims with hard evidence. The proof, as they say, is in the pudding.

Along with the clinical presentations, the Damon Forum featured a celebrity guest speaker: the utterly remarkable Bethany Hamilton. At age 13, while surfing off Kauai, Hawaii, Bethany lost her left arm just below the shoulder in an attack by a 15-foot tiger shark. Most of us would have been reluctant to go back in the water at all, but Bethany resumed surfing less than a month after the near-fatal incident. Now 22, she is regarded as a strong competitor on the world professional surfing circuit. Her story has been told through her book, *Soul Surfer: A True Story of Faith, Family, and Fighting to Get Back on the Board*, and the subsequent feature film, *Soul Surfer*, and she has developed a worldwide following.

When Bethany took the stage in Phoenix, I expected

a stock, rah-rah “inspirational” speech. What I witnessed instead was a genuine, down-to-earth young lady completely devoid of any airs or attitudes—one whom any parent would be proud to have as a daughter. She modestly recounted the horrendous encounter with the shark in an on-stage interview by an Ormco executive. Later that day, several of us orthodontic editors were invited to private interviews with Bethany, and this was where she really impressed me. The session began with a review of her orthodontic treatment by Dr. Patrick Turley of Manhattan Beach, California. Pretreatment records showed a Class III dentition with severe upper crowding, ectopic upper canines, and an anterior open bite—all resulting in a decidedly unesthetic smile that detracted from her natural beauty. Her face and smile now, several years post-treatment, are gorgeous; it’s the kind of treatment outcome that would delight any orthodontist.

During my interview with Bethany, she told me that she had always been self-conscious about her smile and that, prior to treatment, she usually covered her mouth when she was talking or being photographed. I cringe when I hear that from any young person, boy or girl, who has an otherwise beautiful face. With some hesitation, I asked Bethany if she had been more embarrassed about her crooked smile or her missing left arm. She put me at ease with a giggle, saying that she was never self-conscious about the missing arm, but that her “ugly smile”—in her words—was almost socially crippling to her. When you see her now in her promotional photos, dressed in elegant evening gowns, she displays a radiant smile emanating from a naturally attractive face, overriding any other aspect of her appearance. She is a remarkably beautiful young lady, inside and out, and her smile caps off that beauty.

There are many reasons I love being an orthodontist. It’s a wonderful lifestyle, we generally work with patients at a fascinating time of their lives, and we provide a service that is both socially and functionally beneficial. Meeting Bethany, hearing her story, and seeing her smile profoundly accentuated my pride in my profession.

RGK

New Contributing Editors

JCO welcomes two new Contributing Editors to its board: Drs. Neal Kravitz of South Riding, Virginia, and Sarah Shoaf of Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Both have been reviewing articles for us for several years, and we will appreciate being able to draw on their expertise on a more regular basis. Following are brief biographies:

Neal D. Kravitz, DMD, MS, received his undergraduate degree from Columbia University and his DMD from the University of Pennsylvania, where he was valedictorian; he completed his orthodontic residency and earned a Master of Science degree in oral sciences at the University of Illinois-Chicago. He is currently a clinical faculty member and research adviser at the University of Maryland and Washington Hospital Center. A prolific writer and reviewer for several dental journals, he serves on the clinical advisory board for Incognito lingual brackets and lectures on both lingual orthodontics and early treatment. Dr. Kravitz is an ABO Diplomate and maintains a private practice near Dulles International Airport.

Sarah C. Shoaf, DDS, MEd, MS, is a native of Winston-Salem. She completed her undergraduate work at Wake Forest University with a major in physician assistant studies and earned a Master of Education degree at the University of New Orleans. Her dental degree is from the University of North Carolina School of Dentistry; she received her orthodontic certificate from the Eastman Dental Center, along with a master’s degree in biochemistry/genetics from the University of Rochester. A faculty member at the Wake Forest University School of Medicine from 1992 through 2009, she is considered an expert in cleft and craniofacial deformities and sleep disorders. Dr. Shoaf has a great interest in forensic odontology and is often called on by area medical examiners to make dental identifications. She is an ABO Diplomate and has recently opened a new orthodontic practice in Winston-Salem.