

Author's answers in []

FRAZZ cartoon by Jef Mallett 4/22/10

The little girl student says "How odd that it's uncomfortable to have someone floss your teeth, but it's painless to have them cut—sever!—your hair!" Frazz thinks & she says, "Though that may not be true for everyone." Frazz responds, "Taken as a complement for my dental hygienist and not a dig at my barber."

In Sandra Balzo's series Maggie Thorsen is 1 of the owner's of Uncommon Grounds, a coffee house. Maggie's ex-husband Ted is a DDS. He left Maggie for his young RDH. I have written up the 1st-UNCOMMON GROUNDS. **Here is some background info:** Why Ted is a dentist:["I've been going to the same DDS & RDH for nearly 30 years, & I can remember talking to Terry, my RDH, about the book & thinking it would be fun to include a DDS & RDH in the book, as sort of a salute. Terry & I have every-6-month appointments that serve not only to clean my teeth, but to catch up on each other's lives. She's seen me through getting my first job, my marriage (26 years & counting), promotions, 2 kids, my OWN downsizing (like Maggy), & now book publication. I've seen her through varying chapters of her own life. I should note that Terry is NOTHING like Rachel (nor my DDS anything like Ted), any more than my friend Frank is like Frank the sheepdog in the book!) Maggie's description of Ted as a lousy dentist is...well, Maggie being Maggie. She's feeling irritable & betrayed both on an emotional & on a practical level. She spent a lot of years as the primary breadwinner while Ted got his practice up & going (another reason I wanted a dentist or someone who would need more training than four years of college), only to have him dump her when she was thinking this was the time they'd have more "couple time." 2. I thought it would be fun to have a RDH in the book for Terry. Also, I think a dental office, much like a coffeehouse, is a community of sorts, with its own stories & intrigues, so if I wanted to delve more into the relationship in the future, I could do so. 3. Tony Bruno the DDS: I wanted an older man in the office next to UNCOMMON GROUNDS, someone who is kind & caring, & a little old-school. I thought a DDS who knew Ted would be a nice counterpoint. "Bruno" is a family name on my husband's side, so Tony is a composite of some of my Tony's (my husband) uncles. Next book, I'll have to give him a RDH!]

DENTAL HAPPENINGS from the others: GROUNDS FOR MURDER 1. "That was years before I, in one fell swoop, lost my son to college, my DDS husband to his 24 year-old RDH." "As I should have guessed, with Miss Rinse-&Spit to occupy his time. Ted barely noticed the loss of either me or his 425-horsepower phallic symbol." 2. "My friend had huge teeth but not the bit 'look-at-me' choppers of actresses & actors. Unless the actor was Mr Ed." 3. "...I'd continued to work after having Eric, in part because I loved what I did, but also because Ted was just getting his dental practice up& running & we needed the money." "This was after I'd put him through dental school, of course. ..." "I caught glimpses of Ted & his bit of floss playing tennis..." 4. "'Hey, I asked myself, I may not be a 24 year-old dental floozy, but I clean up well.'" 5. "I'm breastfeeding," Janalee was volunteering..." "Still?" Sarah said, "...Doesn't that kid have teeth?" "If Sarah's choppers ran in the family, I could understand her horror." 6. "But Davy was teething." "And teething babies put things in their mouths."

BEAN THERE, DONE THAT-(Note-3 DDSs & a RDH throughout) 1 "Here's a tip" If your ex-husband's mistress-cum-missus asks for your help in proving that he cheated on *her* while he was married to you, just say no." "I don't know why I was bothering to explain. I'd started my coffeehouse, Uncommon Grounds, only because Ted (Thorsen), my former husband & Rachel's current one, dumped me for her. Ted being a DDS & Rachel (Slattery Thorsen) his RDH, they'd apparently fallen in love over the spit sink" 2. Hard as it is to imagine, I suppose Ted could have gone to a legitimate dental conference or 2 without you. Though looking at Little Miss Tooth De-Lay with her short skirt & long legs, it was pretty hard for even me to imagine it." 3. "The Slatterys were the Hiltons of southeastern Wisconsin, or so they fancied themselves. Rachel, Ted had told me when she first came to work for him, wanted nothing to do with the family business." 4. Before Tony Bruno had retired & sold the dental practice next door, he'd had regular Saturday hours. The new owners opened only every other Saturday afternoon for a free dental clinic, leaving the place dead most of the time on the weekend." 4. The woman just waved her fingers vaguely at me & continued past the shop to the dental clinic next door." "Stop in for coffee, I called after her. Make that teeth cleaning worthwhile. "She turned & gave me a self-conscious half-smile. She was younger than I'd thought, probably in her twenties, & was missing a front tooth." Are you chasing away customers again?" "Nah, just dental patients." "I think she's one of the clinic's low-income patients. She's been here the last couple of Free Saturdays." .. "There are people here in the suburbs who can't afford a dentist," I pointed out. Me, for one, now that my free ticket-marriage to Ted-had been punched." 5. "I would have paid money to see Amy perform 'Amazing Grace' on her earring using a toothpick" 6. "Who did you say Emma was?" "...Emma Byren. She & I went to dental school together." I think she is part of the dental group that bought the practice next door." She's also Sarah's DDS." "Emma's been after her for years to quit smoking. Nasty habit, smoking. Yellows your teeth, causes gum problems." 7. "Rachel already was getting out her car keys. Well, let's see, I started in the dental office 3 years ago, but we controlled ourselves for at least 2 months." Ted had been different. Often distant, but then inexplicably overly charming. I'd thought maybe it was the business. He'd stopped talking to me about it, but I knew the dental practice didn't seem to be bringing in the money. It had been. Expenses—Rachel's upkeep, as it turned out—were outpacing income..." 9. "Emma didn't live in Brookhills she only worked there a few days a month." Owning your own business is tough." Tell me (Emma) about it, she picked up her bag. That's why I threw in with the Dental Group. They own the clinics, equipment & all, so that eliminates the overhead *& a lot of the headaches. I keep telling Ted he should think about it." 10. "Yeah, like there were more beautiful raven-haired, blue-eyed Emmas that Ted had known since dental school. 'Yes, Emma Byrne.' 'But Rachel knows Emma,' Ted protested. 'She used to work for her.'..."She worked for *you*. It not only didn't stop you, but it was great cover." 11. "They're probably just waiting until it's confirmed with dental records, or DNA or whatever..." 12. "Apparently dental records had confirmed that the body found in Lake Michigan was Rachel." 13. "No, Ted wasn't the sharpest drill in the office," 14. "...I saw a couple of people standing outside the dental clinic." "Isn't the clinic usually open on Wednesday night?" 15. "The woman I'd seen going to the dental clinic the morning of Rachel's disappearance had been wearing a parka that looked a bit like the discarded one in the trash of the Hamilton." 16. "After all, you've known each other since dental school." 17. "I worked," Rachel said. "I was a RDH, for God's sake. You know how many hours we spend on our feet. You know how many of us get carpal

tunnel.” There’s a difference between getting carpal tunnel because you need to & carpal tunnel because you want to.’ I said. ‘18. “I turned to Emma. It was perfect. Rachel had started seeing you, both personally & professionally, when she worked for you. That meant that both she & the homeless woman were your patients. You could switch the dental X-rays & presto, the dead woman is Rachel.”19. “Gretchen was wearing the parka when I saw her go into your office Saturday afternoon.” 20. ‘She was the woman I saw outside the dental clinic on Saturday.’”

BREWED, CRUDE AND TATTOOED-1. “Aurora Benson smiled her best weather-slut smile.” 2. “My husband dumped me for a younger woman.” Aurora asks her, “You still have feeling for him?” “No, not really. He’s a good guy-except for the cheating part-and he *is* the father of my son. It’s just that Ted’s had a rough go of it lately & I guess I feel sorry for him.” “A DDS, right? Is business slow?” “He’s lost a few patients. It was true as far as it went, but I didn’t want to get into Ted’s soap opera of a life right then with Aurora,…” 3. “She was picking her teeth with the business end of an umbrella-topped toothpick.” 4. I’d wondered over the years, though, if I’d have been better off with Bernie the Likeable Lawyer than with Ted, the Duplicitous DDS.” 5. “Until a few months ago, the store’s space had been a dental office, the two-hair-washing sinks in Rudy’s paralleling the two spit-sinks on the other side. The original tenant, Dr. Anthony Bruno, had become my DDS after my DDS husband had run off with Little Miss Root Canal (his root, her canal.” Then Tony retired and abandoned me, too.”

FROM THE GROUNDS UP 1. “Ah, yes. A crushed blue cardboard box, denture-cleaning tablets spilling out of it, & a used bar of Ivory soap. Proof of Kelpto Clara’s thievery.” “I pointed at the Efferdent & Ivory. ‘That woman is a thief.’” 2. “Given the size of Sarah’s choppers, the food must experience the equivalent of five minutes in a Cuisinart.” 3. I needed to work. Ted never made much money as a DDS.’ At least that he didn’t spend on drilling his RDH.”

HOTEL de DREAM by Edmund White It’s a fictionalized version of Stephen Crane on his dying bed at the age of 28 dictating to his wife Cora a story about the life of a teenage male prostitute in NY in the 1890s & 1 married men he meets. We discover the dire straights they are in financially & that technically Cora is not his wife, since she never divorced her husband.. Other authors are mentioned.

SOME DEPOSITED DENTAL:: 1. “He smiled & revealed small, bad teeth, each sculpted by decay into something individual.” 2. “He’d always been thin & his ribs had always been sharp enough to scrub a shirt on, but now his face was so sunken that his teeth stood out under his checks like a fist under a sheet.” 3. “The room smelled of cooking & body odor & raw-wood; tow of the children looked rachitic, like shriveled-up little old people with lined faces & missing teeth.” 4. “Young because his hair was shiny, his check beardless, his pores chamois-small (except on the nose, where they were inflamed around the nostrils) his breath slightly decayed, his teeth as whittled by caries as dominos by black dots.” 5. “He decided that Elliott must see a dentist to straighten his teeth & whiten them, if possible.”

White inlayed this after I questioned him about the teeth whitening & straightened back then: [“I don’t have much to add except to say that poor people then as now had bad teeth & Elliott’s bad teeth are a sign of his impoverished rural background. Since the older man is in love with him he finds even his slightly decayed teeth seductive. I must have had a source for teeth whitening but I’ve forgotten it. If you find one let me know! I know there were red toothpastes of the period that reddened the gums & made the teeth look whiter.”] (Note:Years ago, I did have a patient who used red toothpaste for that purpose. I probed my mind, but the name eludes me; however, it came from a NY pharmacy.)

A GENTLEMAN’S OFFER—Dara Girard (romance)Yvette Coulier is a Michigan dog groomer who wants to live the good life. She & friend Madelyn Garcia Tempwood opened Chic Hounds including a fancy doggie boutique. No wealthy men Yvette meets wants a commitment. She tries to avoid neighbor/recently divorced orthodontist & interested in her Elliot Walker. He had perfectly straight teeth that were white as ivory. “Unfortunately, everything else about him was crooked from his tie to his business practices. [Elliot Walker became an orthodontist for “No particular reason. When I created the character at first, I wasn’t sure what he did, professionally, but once I began writing, making him an orthodontist just seemed to fit. I didn’t want him to be just a dentist, but some sort of specialist. While I have never had a lot of dental work done, a close family friend has & I am familiar with what orthodontists do, & felt comfortable selecting this field for my character.”]]

One day she gets a mysterious invitation to the Black Stockings Society. “An elite, member-only club that will change your life & help you find the man of your dreams. Guaranteed.” The 1 thing that caught her eye on the invitation was the question, “Ready to live dangerously?” When it comes to the application section that asks about an ideal man, she thought of Elliot.” He was cute, but needy. Plus she didn’t like that he drove a luxury car although he worked at a government-funded dentistry practice. Definitely crooked.” The other 1 she thought of was a client’s nephew Nate Blackwell in NY. No one in Michigan knows about his wealthy family. He deposits his sister’s dog for her to groom, & they talk. He offers her a deal for a month involving a lot of money & the ability to meet high society & rich people.

DENTAL DIPS: 1 Elliot appears a few other times. Once as Yvette is opening her door, so does Elliot & before he can say anything she says, “No, Elliot. He responds with, “I wasn’t going to ask you out.” He just wanted to tell her about a man that had come by. 2. Her friend Lewis, on the phone, asked Yvette if she was going to see Nate. She responds, “I’m seeing him tomorrow. He just called me to confirm, you know, like a six-month dentist appointment.”[For reasoning: Dental offices are known for sending reminder postcards or leaving messages to remind their patients about their six-month checkup. I used the phrase as a comparison, to show how dependable the call was to confirm the meeting, and to make sure she didn’t forget.”]] 3. Yvette coming back from a trip, enters her apartment. Elliot looks out his & says, “So, you’re finally back.” We discover Yvette was called “mush mouth in high school.

Anthology--ROMANCING THE HOLIDAYS-LOVE STORIES THROUGHOUT THE YEAR--Deborah Shelley’s **FALLING IN LOVE**- examines Tovah Levy finding true love. Tovah is the only DDS & Jewish person in River’s Edge, Kansas. Dressed in a harem costume, she’s on her way to do the Jewish holiday Purim story, for the Women’s club, bringing her baked cookies. Since basically everything is in walking distance, her car’s battery isn’t fixed yet. David Benjamin, driving to his nephew’s bar mitzvah in Wichita was having problems, too. He thought taking the scenic route would be good, but didn’t plan on his auto breaking down. His sister isn’t going to be happy that he will be late. Unfortunately, his cell phone isn’t working Walking along, he finds a postman who directs him to the towing company. While on foot Tovah hears a kitten cry in a tree. A rainstorm is coming. & she has to help him even with her fear of heights. As she starts to climb, David comes by. She exposes

what she's trying to do, & gets him to volunteer the rescue even with his fear of heights. As he tries to grab the cat, the branch he's on, breaks, & down he goes. She asks him if he lost any teeth, & how does he feel. He needs a doctor, so she calls for help from someone's house.

She volunteers to go with him in the ambulance. After she leaves, he gets his tests results. Add a chipped tooth, a cracked 2nd tooth & a loose one to his medical injuries. It's confirmed; he'll see the DDS tomorrow. The good news was his car was being towed in. He discovers Tovah is the DDS his appointment is with. The receptionist leads him into a room David feels would be cozy if "not for the dental chair & the wicked looking instruments lined up on the tray beside it." Having crutches, he speculated how he was going to get into the chair. He didn't want to open his mouth for Tovah when she wanted to check it out. He contemplates if he'd be a toothless wonder by the time she finished with him." She reassures him she really is a DDS.

DENTAL COMPOSITES: [[Deborah Shelley aka Deborah Mazoyer & Shelley Mosley. Shelley disclosed they "chose dentistry as Tovah's profession because it's an excellent profession, but, as you know, it's rare to see it in a novel. It's even more rare to read about a woman dentist. As the time we wrote the book, I had a great female dentist, Beth Ripp, but she retired to adopt and raise children."]] 1. "Tovah signed, As River's Edge's only dentist, seeing to the dental health of the people there was not only her responsibility, but also her pleasure. (Tovah) 2. "Muttering a word she never used in the dental office, at least when her patients were around to hear." 3. "It was going to be all over River's Edge that their dentist was running around in a sleazy little outfit with a strange man." 4. "David touched his teeth with his tongue. Everything hurt, so it was hard to tell which tooth was which. Except for the loose one. It felt as though it would fall out at any minute." 5. "She waggled her eyebrows at him & picked up a particularly lethal looking dental weapon from the tray." "Well, it looks as though you're going to need two caps for sure, but I'm going to have to take x-rays to see the full extent of the damage."

MURDER TAKES THE CAKE—Evelyn David... The week before Thanksgiving is murder for everyone, but especially for P.I. Mac Sullivan. He is desperate for paying clients, he needs dating help, & he's praying his goddaughter makes it to get married. His friend, could it be something else, Rachel Brenner's son would rather be skiing with his girlfriend's family than spend the holiday with her, which leaves her vulnerable to have to eat with other people which she doesn't want to do. Throw in someone is stealing caskets where she works, even thought they are listed on the inventory. This isn't going to be an easy holiday for them to scrape by.

DENTAL DIDDLES: 1. "Have you checked his incisors?" 2. "I wasn't there either. In fact no one was. Myra Bird had a dental emergency,..." 3. He'd had to start keeping a toothbrush at work so he could erase any telltale evidence on his breath before walking into the house." 4. The report says they had to identify her using dental records."