

# Sculpting, architecture and dentistry

**MANY OF YOU WILL REMEMBER RICHARD MITZMAN AS A RESTORATIVE DENTIST OF GREAT REPUTE. TEN YEARS AGO, HE GAVE UP HIS PRESTIGIOUS PRACTICE TO BECOME A SCULPTOR, BEFORE CHANGING DIRECTION AGAIN TO STUDY AS AN ARCHITECT. RICHARD IS NOW A DENTAL PRACTICE DESIGNER**

**Tell me about your early dental career.**

I graduated at University College Hospital (UCH) in 1967 and went straight into general practice because I wanted to buy myself a car. After six months I realised how much I still had much to learn and decided I needed to get back to dental school.

**How did you go about that?**

I had always got on well with Professor Prophet and was lucky enough to be given a house job with him. I was fairly unique at that time, being his first houseman who had actually been in general dental practice.

**Where did you go from there?**

After my spell at UCH and a further six months in practice, I met Dr Max Walter - a long-established and respected private practitioner in the West End. He persuaded me that my future lay with him as, at that time, he was looking for an associate, but he insisted I study for my DDS at the University of Southern California - I accepted with great alacrity.

**Was it difficult to gain entry?**

Not really, Professor Prophet gave me such a good reference I did not even need to sit the entry exam: I went over there in late 1969. I studied under the Dean - Professor Ingle as well as Niles Guchet and Rex Ingram. Being the first student they had taught from England I only did restorative dentistry.

**Was there anything you found inspirational there?**

Yes, I discovered gold onlays - my first sculptural experience. I made onlays for nearly all my patients and completed 200 of them by the time I finished. I gained my DDS after only 15 months and then returned to London. I joined Max Walters' practice and in three years had doubled the practice size.

**What did you learn from working with Max?**

I learned practice management, patient management and diagnosis and found him to be a great mentor. Sadly, after three years he died and I was left to cope with both his and my own patients. The most difficult aspect was having to deal with prosthetics, endodontics, periodontics and removable prosthodontics. I solved this problem by taking on four associates in each of the specialities, all of whom had American degrees.

**So you ran a very successful practice then?**

No, in fact I found I had never worked so hard for so little as the practice overheads were very high. So I began to develop my own practice management ideas.

**And you only used gold for your restorations?**

No, I completed some amalgam restorations in the practice. An amalgam done really well, under rubber dam is fine. And remember in some patients amalgam lasts, while in others it does not. However, I am sure gold is still the best

material and the three quarter crown the best restoration. One can keep the margins away from the gingivae and preserve some natural enamel. Rex Ingram taught me to do three quarter crowns which could not be seen by careful carving to alter the light reflection. However, the amalgams I did were very much influenced by Jacobson who did huge sculpted amalgams.

**Yes, I well remember the beautiful amalgams you placed way back in the 1970s - it was little wonder you were called the Amalgam King. Were you well settled in practice?**

Not really, I have always enjoyed finding a problem and solving it, so in 1981 I set up Baby Orthodontic Products, which introduced the orthodontic soother and teat steam steriliser for baby bottles. Fifteen years ago, I started Compudent with five colleagues and Indra Patel. These software programs were based on practice management techniques for running successful private practice. Compudent is still going strong though I am not now involved with it.

**How did you move into sculpture?**

I was busy in the practice and was doing a lot of lecturing. I felt I could be do this for another 20 years, it all looked very predictable. I had never given anything else a chance and wanted to see what would happen if I sculpted full time. I was able to sell the practice,

