

Rehabilitate and Restore

Improve dental function and aesthetics with a smile makeover that gives you healthy teeth and restored confidence.

Richard Puckett was an 18-year-old soldier serving in Vietnam with the 1st Infantry Division when he developed pain in his front tooth that required dental treatment. With no running water or electricity, the camp in which his unit lived and worked – located in an area known as the *Iron Triangle* – was quite spartan, and, “as you can imagine, dental hygiene was not a high priority at that time,” he acknowledges.

The military dentist did what he could for Richard with the equipment he had on hand. “He operated out of a tent, and all of his equipment was basically operated from one generator,” Richard remembers. “Basically, he drilled a hole in my tooth to do the root canal ... but he didn’t have the stuff to pack it with and seal it off. He said, *When you get back to the States, you can have a dentist finish the job.* Basically, I served about six months over there with a hole in my mouth.”

When he returned to the States in 1966, he had the tooth repaired and crowned. By last year, however, after more than 40 years, that tooth and its root canal system were both failing. So Richard, a retired financial officer originally from North Carolina, turned to Stephen G. Blank, DDS, in Port St. Lucie.

Richard, an avid golfer, discovered Dr. Blank after “hearing his name mentioned in the community here, St. Lucie West,” and reading about him in a recent *Florida Health Care News* article. “I read where he had restored somebody’s teeth,” he recalls. “It was a gentleman about my age, and it showed the before and after [photographs]. I said, *Boy, that’s quite an improvement!*”

Dental rehabilitation

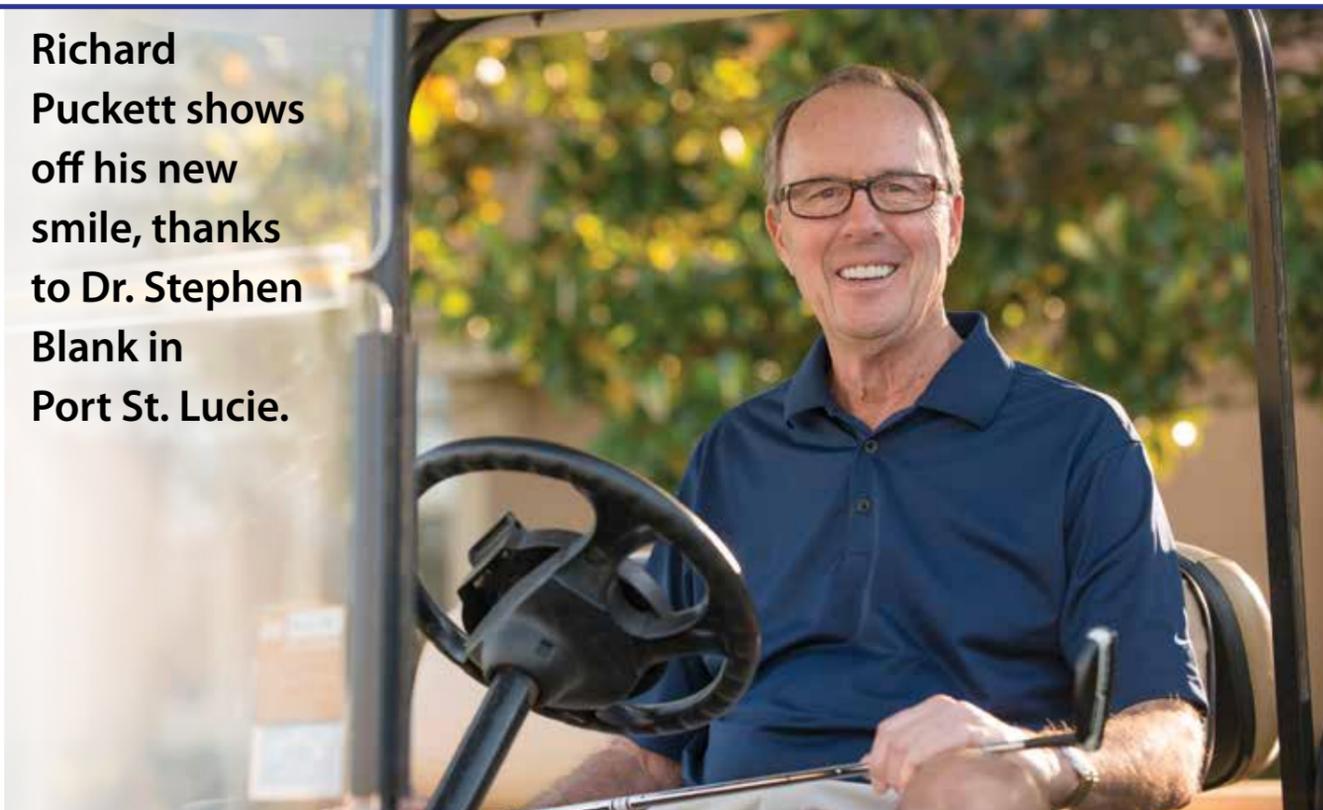
Richard visited Dr. Blank late last year, and the dentist discovered that not only was Richard’s front tooth failing, but several of his other teeth needed treatment as well.

“When we did our examination, we found more areas of concern,” explains the dentist. “It was just teeth that had worn out over the years. He was still able



PHOTOS COURTESY OF DR. BLANK

Richard Puckett shows off his new smile, thanks to Dr. Stephen Blank in Port St. Lucie.



FHCN PHOTO BY MARC EDWARDS

Stephen Blank, DDS

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to function with them, but they were definitely getting beaten up – meaning the protective outer layer of enamel was wearing off in many spots and exposing the softer, inner portion of the tooth.”

Richard opted for an implant to replace the tooth the dentist in Vietnam had treated, so Dr. Blank referred him to an oral surgeon. Once the implant was in place, Dr. Blank created a temporary crown; while the implant healed, he worked to rehabilitate nearly all of the other teeth in Richard’s top arch and a few in his bottom arch.

“We replaced and updated the dentistry on his back teeth to bring those up to speed,” Dr. Blank says. “Then, after six months of healing, we went back and restored the front six teeth as individual crowns, including the one that used to be his root canal tooth that had failed.”

Richard’s extensive dental rehabilitation work certainly improved his look aesthetically, but his primary objective was to restore the function of his teeth. “At age sixty-eight, I wasn’t going to enter any beauty contests,” he says with a laugh. “It was more for functionality, but the cosmetic just happened to be a part of it.

“I’ve always had a more subdued smile, so really the imperfections in my teeth did not show that much when I did smile,” he adds. “But it’s vastly improved over what it was, and certainly I can smile wide now and not have any fear that anyone’s going to see any discolored teeth. Now, everything matches perfectly

because he did it all at one time and got everything back the way it should be.”

Thorough testing

Dr. Blank stresses that though many cosmetic dental procedures help patients’ smiles look better, in many cases, like Richard’s, the procedures are also instrumental in improving function and preventing further dental damage.

“Not everyone needs everything at the same time, but eventually you need to do something,” says the dentist. “It’s like having a car, where you repair it and maintain it, and sometimes you actually have to replace things.”

Before a treatment plan can be put in place, Dr. Blank’s patients undergo in-depth testing and evaluations. The 1.5-hour exam includes a complete oral examination, including TMJ, bite and soft tissue evaluations; computerized periodontal measurements; digital x-rays; an intra-oral video tour; oral hygiene fitness evaluation and more.

“It’s not your typical five-minute dental exam,” assures the dentist. “The foundation is to build a good dental relationship that will allow you to achieve the best oral health possible and, with proper care, maintain that level of health for a lifetime.”

Richard says that the exam was like nothing he’d ever experienced.

“He uses all kinds of computerized equipment, and he measures every single tooth and photographs it from every

angle,” he reports. “He knows exactly the angles and symmetry, the geometry of your mouth, your teeth, your jaw. I’ve never had an exam like that.”

Individual service

In addition to detailed and in-depth dental care, Dr. Blank offers his patients individualized and *personalized* attention. “He’s not what I would refer to as a ‘wholesale’ type of dentist,” Richard describes. “He doesn’t run from room to room. When you are his patient, you are his patient. He has a small staff and they take very, very good care of you. It’s the way dentistry should be practiced, and to be honest, I’ve never been to a dentist like him in my life.”

Dr. Blank even calls his patients at home after procedures to ensure that all is well, and he often gives them his cell phone number in case there is a problem. “He wanted me all through this process to be able to get in touch with him nights, days, weekends, holidays or whatever,” notes Richard.

“I’ve never had a dentist so thorough and so dedicated.” **FHCN**—Melanie Casey



Stephen G. Blank, DDS, is a 1982 graduate of Northwestern University Dental School in Chicago. He has since completed intensive continuing education studies. Dr. Blank has studied TMJ under Mark Piper, MD, DMD, at the Piper

Education and Research Center. He has completed the course continuum at the Dawson Center for Advanced Dental Studies. Dr. Blank was a clinical instructor with the Hornbrook Group, teaching dentists from all parts of the country in live, hands-on courses on the various aspects of smile design, occlusion, full mouth reconstruction, and complete patient care. He is a facilitator/mentor with the Dental Boot Kamp program. Dr. Blank enjoys teaching dental teams around the country.



Scan the QR code for Dr. Blank’s contact information.

SNAP Instant Dental Imaging

Dr. Blank and his staff look forward to meeting the readers of *Florida Health Care News*. For more information or to schedule an appointment, please call (772) 878-7348. His office is located at 184 NW Central Park Plaza in Port St. Lucie. Ask how you can see your smile enhanced with SNAP Instant Dental Imaging. You will be able to see your new smile before you make any decisions.



Gold Medal Winner

Dr. Blank was awarded gold medals by the Florida Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry (FACD) Scientific Session competition, which is designed to reward excellence in clinical cosmetic dentistry. The FACD is an organization devoted to seeking improvements in the science and art of cosmetic dentistry.

Visit the office website at www.PSLDentist.com or call (772) 878-7348.