

PORCELAIN VENEERS: 80 YEARS IN THE MAKING...

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I recall my first veneer case back in 1962 under the supervision of Dr. Pincus. As there were so many uncertainties regarding the technique of bonding veneers to the teeth, I was pleasantly surprised to find that 15 years later my first veneer case was still holding up and looking good.

Veneers are thin custom made (0.3 to 0.5 mm) porcelain laminates that are permanently bonded on the teeth. They are the most esthetic and durable option for changing the size, shape, position, forms or color of your teeth, especially when multiple teeth are involved and bleaching has not accomplished the job. Veneers are used to close gaps, straighten minor discrepancies, replace worn edges, discolored and severely stained teeth. They usually cover the front part of the tooth and slightly wrap over the biting edge.

There are two types of veneers. Porcelain veneers are made in a laboratory and composite veneers are fabricated in a dental office. The composite veneers were very popular in the early 80's and have fallen out of grace quickly because of discoloration, chipping and fracturing making it a high maintenance procedure limited to one or a few teeth.

In the last 25 years, enormous progress has been made in terms of dental materials for porcelain veneers. There are dozens of different porcelain and systems available to the dentist today. It is up to the cosmetic dentist to determine for each case the appropriate material based on the patient's bite, teeth grinding, clenching, and amount of discoloration. Veneers have become increasingly popular; they are very predictable and durable when properly made and are today the best way to redesign a smile and perform a cosmetic makeover.

In the last year or so I was reading and watching on TV that one of the latest trends in dentistry was the "snap on smile"... it made me smile.

They are plastic temporary veneers snapped or glued over the teeth made from a mold of the mouth. Again this is Dr. Pincus' work from the 30's resurfacing again as the latest trend in dentistry. Funny, right?

The French say the more it changes and the more it remains the same. This is not always true, but for the snap on smile they have a point.

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■ Shirley Temple flashed a dazzling smile "On the Good Ship Lollipop" and Judy Garland's pearly whites gleamed as she went off to see the wizard. Yet, who would have dreamt that photographically many of Hollywood's finest were dental cripples?

Indeed some of these picture perfect teeth on the big screen were a result of my mentor and partner the late Dr. Charles Pincus' pioneering work back in 1926 on porcelain laminates. Today, they're known as veneers.

At the time this Beverly Hills practitioner's patients in the makeup department heads from Warner Brothers, Columbia, Century Fox and MGM. The studio had a problem figuring out how to photograph the stars properly. Dr. Pincus was called into the studio to look at screen tests and had to decide what to do to improve their appearances. After many trial and errors, he found that he could bake at high temperature these thin porcelain facings on platinum foil, just like it is done today to create porcelain veneers.

These Hollywood laminates were removable and only used when stars were working on camera or making personal appearances. They were kept in place by moistening the inside of the veneers with denture powder.

Fifty years later, Dr. Michael Buonacore discovered a way to bond composite material to the tooth with acid. The combination of Dr. Pincus' porcelain laminates, the bonding of Dr. Buonacore, and the adjunct of a gluing agent by Dr. Raphael Bowen gave birth to the actual veneers in the early 80's.