

# Long Islander

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## As Funny As A Root Canal

*Huntington dentist appears on Letterman*

By Erin Kennedy

Richard L. Marcus, Centerport resident and Huntington dentist, recently appeared on the "Late Show with David Letterman" to demonstrate how technological and medical advances have brought ease and painlessness to the previously dreaded procedure of a root canal. Marcus, who owns a practice in Huntington with his partner, Stephen I. Shore, is also one of the founding members of Dentists for a Better Huntington.



Photo Courtesy  
Suffolk County Police Department

Marcus moved from Canada to Centerport in 1977. He said dentistry wasn't something he was initially interested in. "It's one of those things I just fell into. I started in general dentistry and I wasn't that excited about it ... a mentor of mine from Philadelphia said, 'You would probably like to do something where you have more instantaneous, dramatic results,' he said, 'You should try endodontics,'" Marcus said.

The field was one that Marcus settled into remarkably well and he truly enjoyed the process and rewards of putting people at ease and comforting their fears. "In endodontics everyone that comes in to see us is in pain and they're terribly frightened ... We welcome everybody with a handshake and by the time they leave they want to give you a hug. If you can do that, it's a pretty satisfying job," Marcus said.

Dr. Richard Marcus appeared on the "Late Show With David Letterman" on May 20, performing a root canal in an effort to dispel some of the rumors about the painfulness of the procedure.

Marcus attributes much of his success in relieving people's pain to the technology he is able to use, as well as the way his office is designed. "The way our office is designed and set up we try to use so many things that we have available today to try to calm people. We are very aware of lighting and air quality, things you might not always think of," Marcus said. Other mood altering factors include the colors of paints on the wall, the music played in the office, and even the sound quality. The partners have even had feng shui consultants come in.

Despite Marcus' serious efforts to ease people's minds and his success as an endodontist, he was surprised when someone from the "Late Show with David Letterman" called and asked him to appear. From an office built in the green room backstage, Marcus performed a full root canal over the course of the 45-minute show on Bill Buysee, a Centerport resident and longtime client.

Marcus felt that the people in the audience and those watching the show benefited from the demonstration by learning that root canals are not painful. "I think it showed exactly the opposite to what The Marathon Man showed 20 years ago... I could really tell by the crowd, people in the audience were screaming at the first injection and at the end of 45 minutes they thought, 'My God, that's what I'm afraid of?'" Marcus said. "You know that commercial 'this is not my father's Oldsmobile'? Well as my partner says, this is not my father's root canal. It's a new era in dentistry."

Marcus and Shore are founding members of Dentists for a Better Huntington, a not-for-profit group of local dentists who strive to give back to the community through charitable donations, fund drives, educational grants and scholarships. The partners also give back on their own time, sending Mets and Yankees tickets to the Northport Veterans Administration for returning soldiers and their families.

The Huntington community surely feels the impact of Marcus' work, and now so do millions of others who watched him on live television. "It was exciting. It was a little scary at first because it's so different but once I got there and I ... settled in it was definitely a memorable experience, not to have been missed."