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From Laguna with Love: Laguna's charm found on the beach and in the office

By Dr. Moji E. Bagheri

I've spent most of my life on the East Coast thriving in a speedy, noisy city life. But after 11 years of practicing dentistry it was finally time to set up my own office. The only place I could settle for, other than New York City, was Laguna Beach – not just for its mesmerizing scenery, but also for its unique culture. Beautiful and creative art pieces and decorations are everywhere. I specifically like the *The People's Council* sculpture which I see every day on my way to the office. I like the three granite figures which I found out represent Everyman, Everywoman, and Youth and how the black obelisk acts like a sundial, casting a shadow on words like "happiness," "freedom," and "safety." It is very meaningful and fits the vibe of the city. Laguna is a very calm city – as if the tranquility of the ocean has taken over the city. It is the counterpoint of New York City, and yet surprisingly, I enjoy it very much. Now, when I leave my office I hear the waves crashing, compared with the honking of cabs or slamming of jackhammers from my Manhattan office.

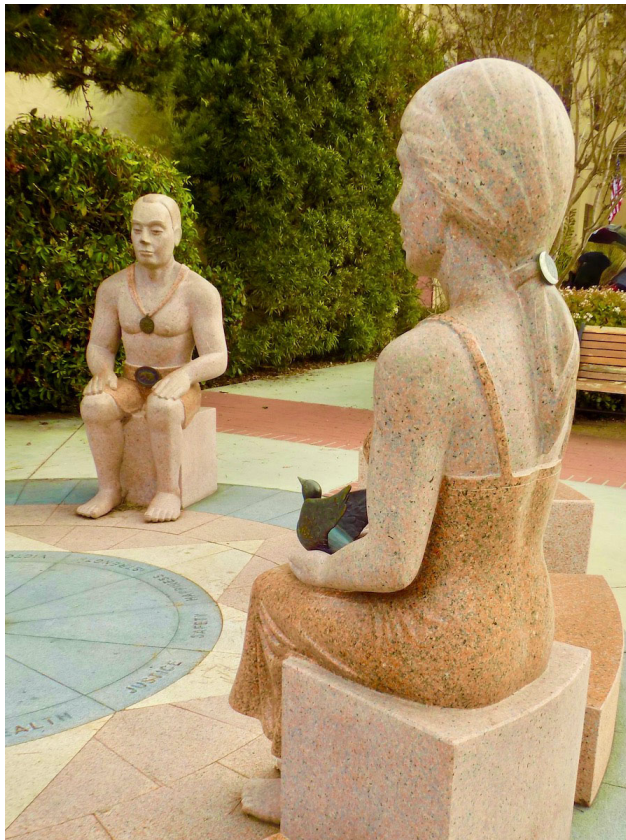


Photo by Dennis Piskiewicz

Everyman and Everywoman statues

But the most amazing part of Laguna Beach, which I got to understand after opening my endodontic office in 2020, is its friendly, caring, and down-to-earth people. I'll never forget my very first patient at the office: an incredibly kind, yet very anxious 86-year-old man, with no prior root canal experience.

He called a few times before coming to the office to acquire more information about the procedure and I was happy to answer all his questions. He also spoke with my wife, Elena, who is the office manager, a few times to confirm some details regarding the procedure. In addition, his friend, a local retired dentist, called a couple of times to address some of the patient's concerns. It was so nice to see that level of care and support from his community.

Since he was still very anxious on the day of his visit, I tried to calm him down and distract him by telling him stories about my time in NYC, my wife Elena, and our two little daughters. At the end of the procedure, he was surprised and happy – it was painless and ended sooner than he expected. The next day I called him as part of my routine follow up and was delighted to hear he was doing great and had a good experience at my office. After all, he was my first patient at this office and the success of the procedure, and his satisfaction meant a lot to me.



Courtesy of Moji Bagheri

Dr. Moji Bagheri and his wife, Elena, the office manager at Laguna Beach Endodontics and Surgery

However, his kindness did not end there. A month later, as I opened the office door, I noticed a small white envelope had been slipped under the door with just two words on it: "Thank you." I opened the envelope and there was a check for \$50 from the same patient. On the check note, written in his own delicate handwriting, was his message: "For your daughters."

I have received gifts and thank you notes from my patients before, but his offering was the most heart-warming experience I have ever had.

He was the first of many friendly and nice local patients I have seen at my office so far. I am blessed and grateful to be part of this community and to offer my services to its remarkable people.

Dr. Moji Bagheri is constantly amazed by the expansive, ever-changing view of the Pacific that he sees as he crests the hill on Park Avenue en route to his office at Laguna Beach Endodontics and Microsurgery.