

Mouthful Of Doubt?

The True Story Of Why I'm Afraid Of All Silver Mercury Fillings

by Sean Tarpenning, D.D.S.

As I continue to practice dentistry, now for over 15 years, one thing I look for in examining and treating my patients is predictability. It's wonderful when I can help people get their smile and teeth to a point where they are stable, and predictable.

Unfortunately, all too often in people's mouths, silver mercury fillings are anything but stable. Even somewhat small fillings sometimes cause major issues.

The truth is silver fillings:

- ▶ *Rarely just "Fall Out"*
- ▶ *Are Almost Never Painful*
- ▶ *Don't "Seem" a Problem*

I'd love to tell you the story of a dental colleague of mine, who decided to remove some silver fillings on his wife, Elizabeth. He thought he was going to do them for cosmetic reasons (he was tired of looking at her black fillings, as was she). So he took some before photos with his camera so he could show off his cosmetic work.

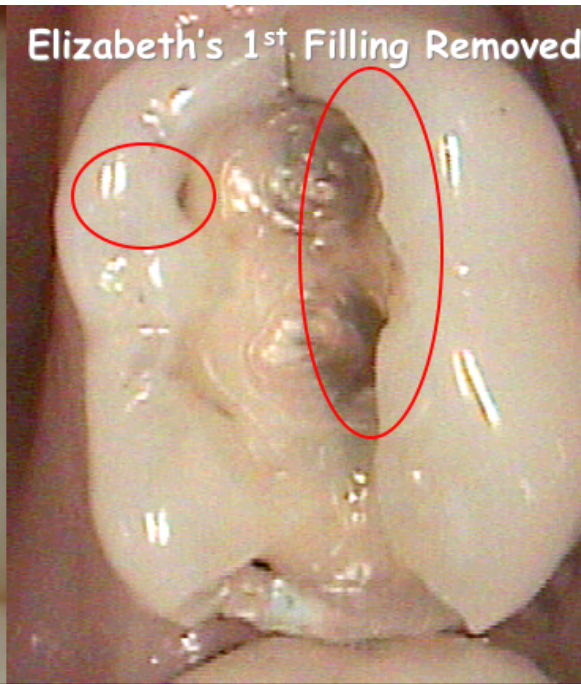
He had NO reason to suspect any problems with her 3 silver fillings. They showed NO cavities on the x-rays. They only had slight openings at the edges.

I'll let the pictures tell most of the rest of the story.

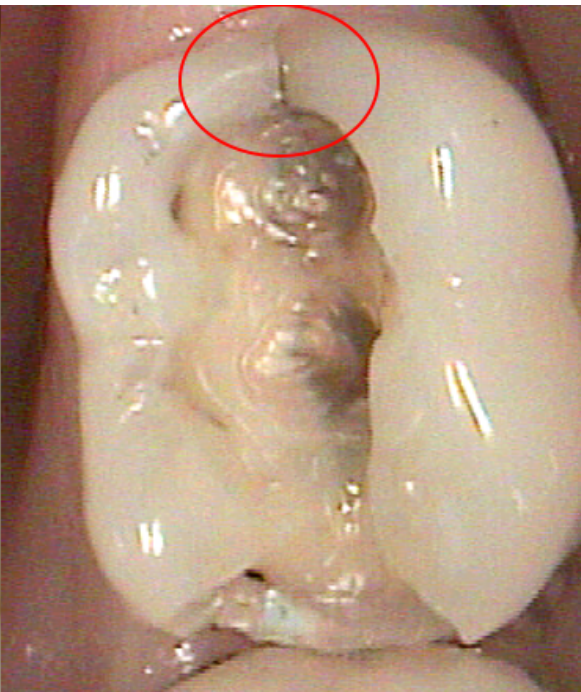
Elizabeth's 1st Filling



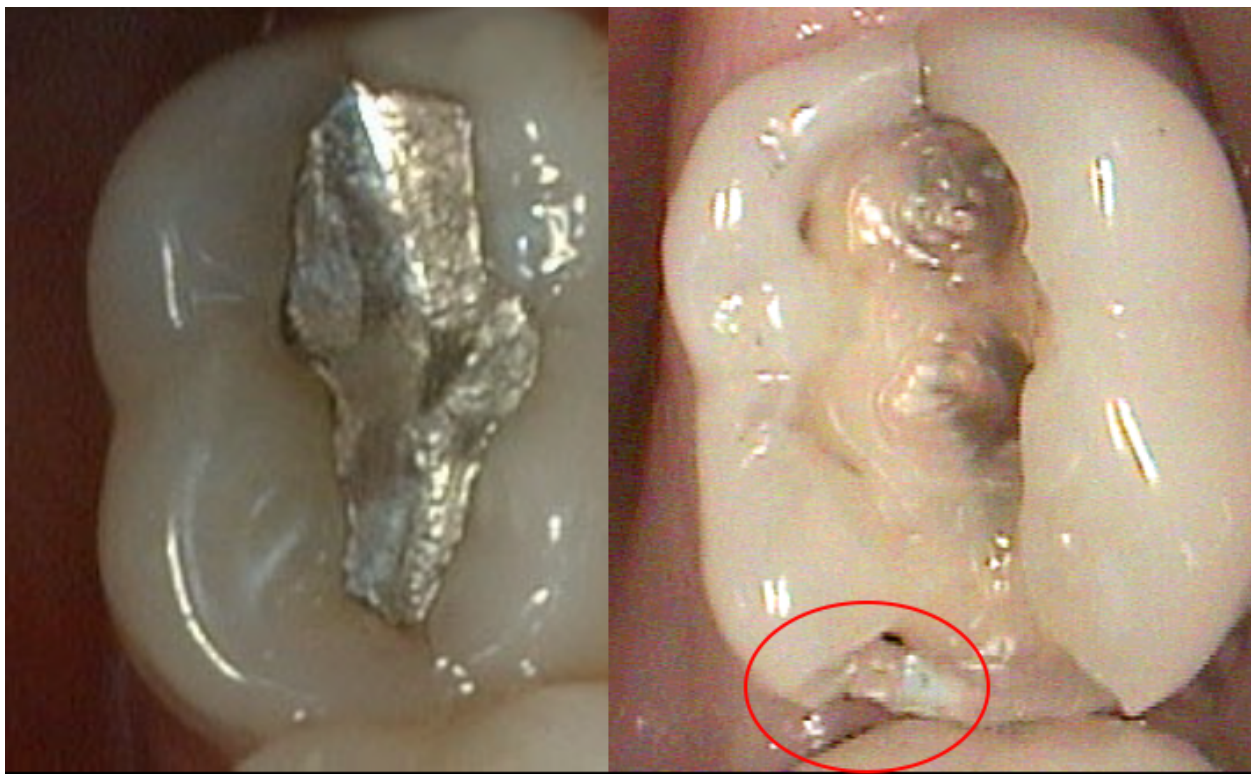
Elizabeth's 1st Filling Removed



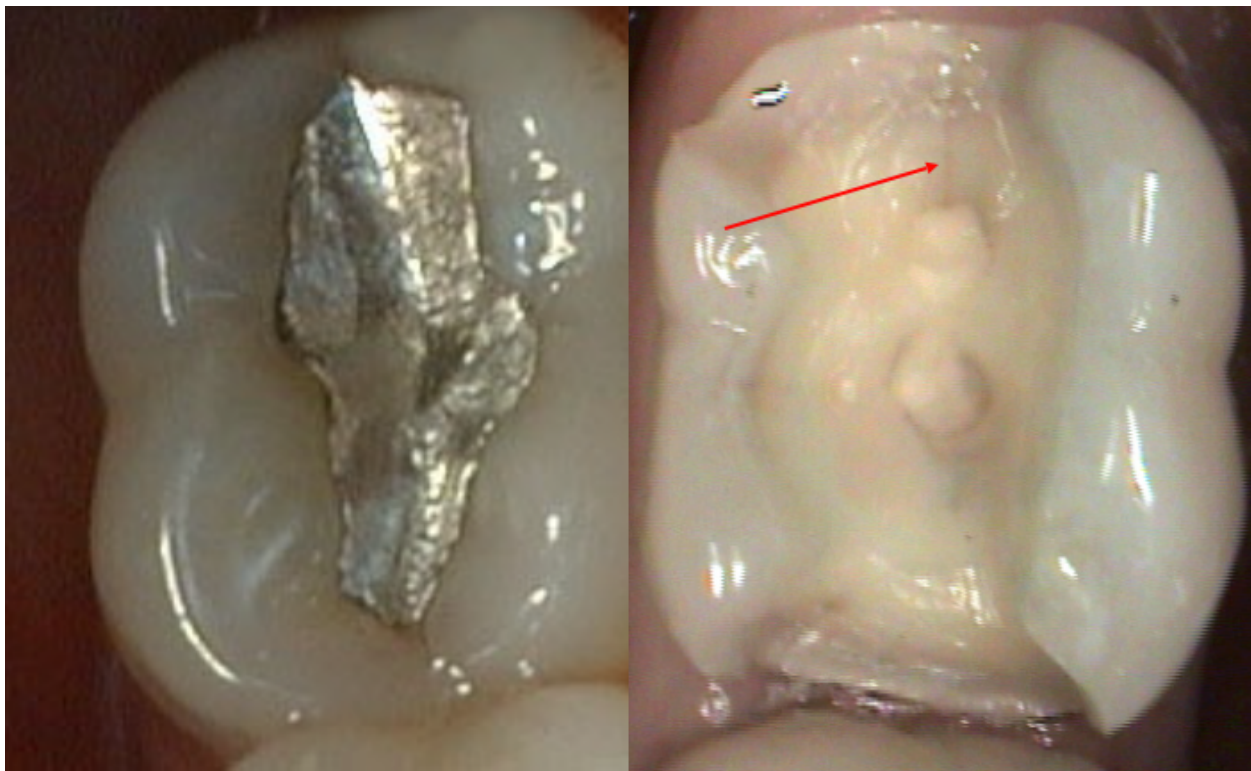
Decay UNDER Cusps Hollow Tooth Out from the Inside



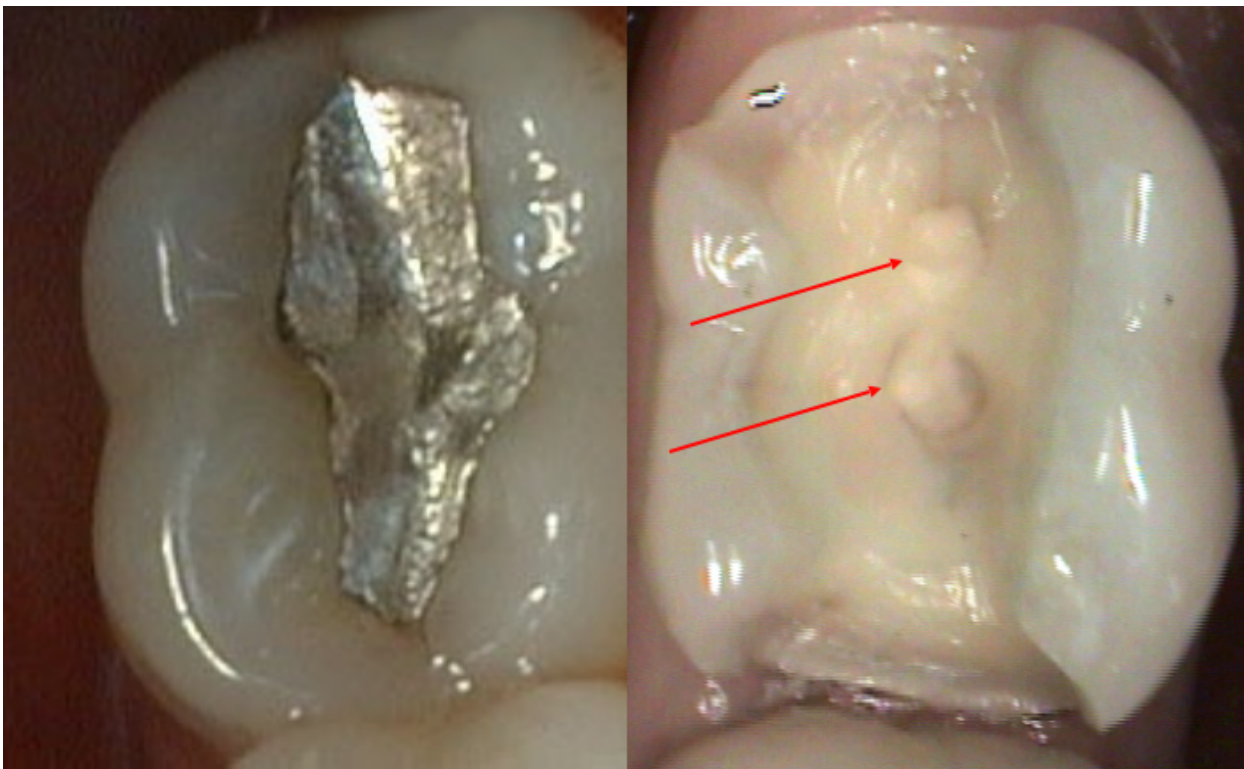
Metal Expansion Caused back Wall Crack



Decay Got Between the Teeth and Broke Through

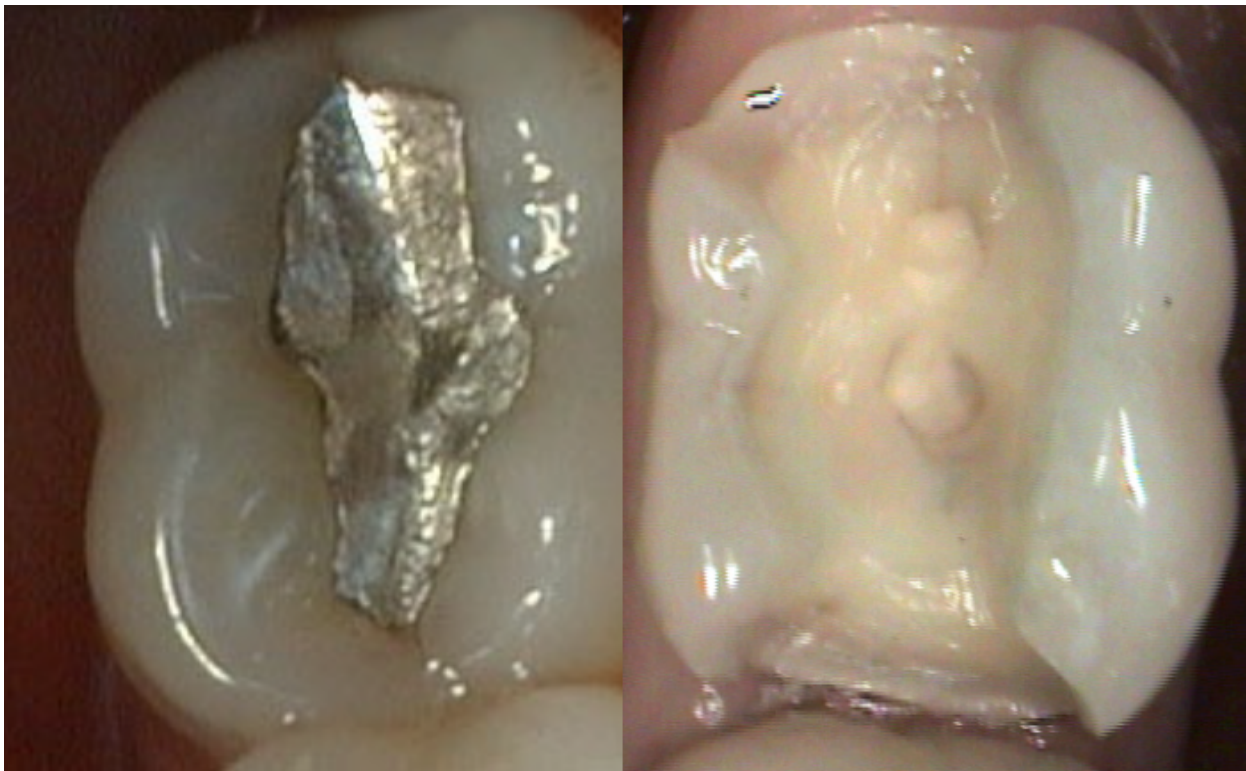


Fractured Through Base of Tooth



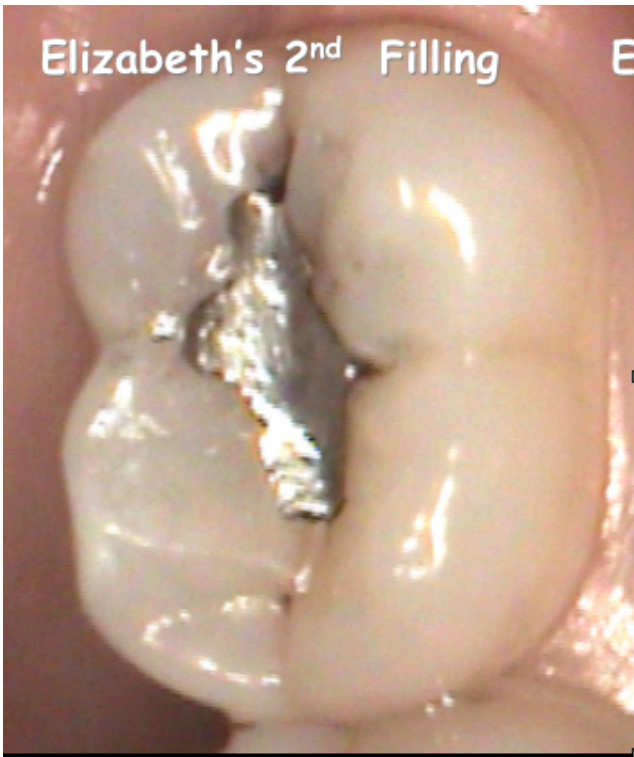
When Decay Gets Near the Nerve...

Root Canal May be Needed



So Little Remains After Decay Removed

Elizabeth's 2nd Filling



Elizabeth's 2nd Filling Removed



Large Area Underneath was SOFT



Remaining Tooth After Decay Removed

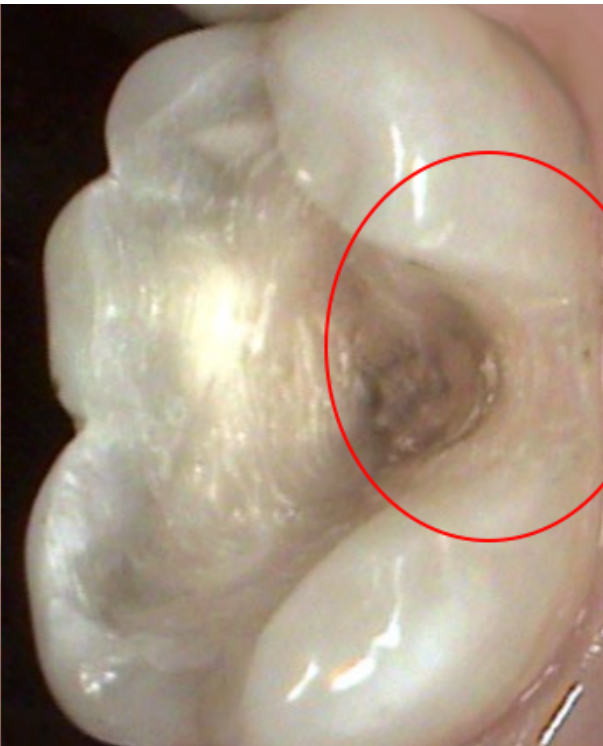
Elizabeth's 3rd Filling



Elizabeth's 3rd Filling Removed



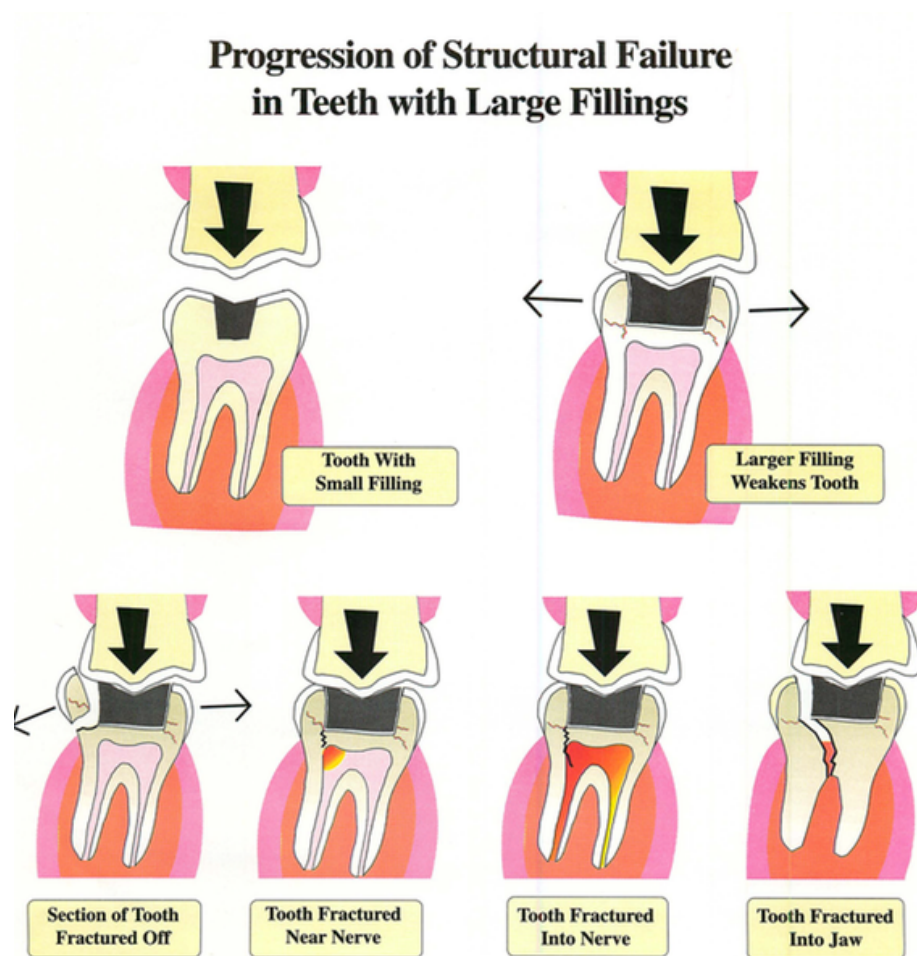
Metal Expansion BROKE Right Through Wall



Whole Section Lost Due to Weakening by Fracture

To a dentist who is working on his wife, this is a horrifying experience. Yet, honestly, we see these things everyday. Unfortunately, sometimes it's after the tooth has cracked or broken. You see silver mercury fillings get cavities underneath them which tend to eat away the remaining good tooth structure.

Stress fractures from the filling, and it's expansion also jeopardize the tooth. I'll show you this in a cartoon.



As you chew on these silver fillings they cause cracks to form. At some point one of 4 things tends to happen. If your lucky, a part of your tooth breaks off (and you have no pain). If you're unlucky, it cracks near the nerve and you get a sensitive tooth. If it cracks

into the nerve, you get a toothache - and a root canal is required to save the tooth. In some cases the tooth fractures into the jaw and is not savable, so it needs to be pulled.

So whenever I meet with someone with silver fillings I always urge them to consider having them treated. Sometimes, if they're small enough we can restore them with another white, bonded filling.

If they take up more than 1/3rd of the tooth, the tooth loses over 50% of it's strength and in these cases we recommend a dental crown.



Dental crowns protect the teeth from further flexing and fracture, and when caught in time can help prevent teeth from needing root canals, or needing to be pulled (ouch!).

New dental materials can make crowns look extremely natural AND strong. We do finally have the best of both worlds!

With good care a dental crown can last a long time. How long? Well I always ask people how long will a new Mercedes Benz last? The answer is, a long time IF you get it's oil changed regularly, don't abuse it, etc. The same with a tooth. If you take good care of it and brush, floss, limit sugar intake and get regular preventive care appointments and checkups, it can last a long time.

Thank you for reading this report on why I hate silver mercury fillings. I hope it helps you understand and care for your dental problems better.

Dr. Tarpenning is a dentist at Hebert Dental in Eau Claire, Wisconsin and has authored a book entitled "Get Your Smile On! Your Guide To Extraordinary Dental Care" in 2013.

For more information you can reach him at 715-835-0606 or by e-mail at info@hebertdental.com



