

OCTOBER 5, 1978

Across the street from the doctor's office that I', visiting, workmen are completing a big hospital building for San Angelo. Enough hammering and grinding is screeching and banging against mortar and steel to assure that everyone living in the vicinity will need a hospital room by opening day. These San Angelo doctors are plenty smart by keeping their offices open so close to so much noise pollution. The high blood pressure and high tension business will be brisk after this siege of racket is over.

Squawmen have a difficult time finding a healer capable of treating them. Unless we are able to make an appointment with a northern doctor experienced in parching up hockey players, we are out of luck. The behind the stable variety of veterinarian can keep us going for short periods but without a doctor who has treated the stick and puck wounds of a hockey match, few of the local physicians know anything about tomahawk cuts or burns from rawhide thongs.

Carelessness put me in the doctor's office. Child Who Sits in the Sun and I were coming home late the other night. The inside rear dual went flat on the trailer. My old body just wouldn't stand anymore punishment, I'd played 30 straight games of snooker. My back felt like I'd been laying bricks underneath a foot bridge.

In spite of the exhaustion, I went ahead and held a flashlight for her. I must have drowsed. Just as she was tightening the lug, I let the light hit her in the eyes.

As much as I know about Indians, I didn't realize they were so sensitive about light shining in their face. My hat brim kept the jack handle off my ear, but the blow that hit my shoulder was so severe that the ensuing pain weakened my eyes, so much so that the prescription was drawn from a fine pair of glasses.

Somewhere at some time, I tripped going between the trailer and the pickup. My best hunting light got lost in the fight, and the dog riding in the back didn't show up at the house until the next morning.

Now I'm not saying that doctors don't help squawmen. They do. By checking around town and finding out which doctor is currently being treated by his wife for, say, a golf course habit or a case of racetrack fever, you can find some mighty compassionate doctors to relieve the throes of marital combat.

Years ago I had a mysterious back ailment that defied diagnosis. Saddling a horse was impossible, and I had to have an arm rail to dismount from the pickup. After seeing a dozen doctors, I happened to find one who'd slept outside on a cellar door die to the storm inside his lodge. He told me to level the door and stop sleeping on such a slant. In a fort-night, I restored to good health.

I've sat here today so long waiting for the doctor that the pipe ashes on my shirt-front have turned to volcanic rock. Air hammers rage and the cables squeal to high torment. Next time she changes a flat on my trailer, she can do it in the dark. Peace is hard to find among the tribes.