

SEPTEMBER 13, 1984

For the past couple of days, I've been here in San Antonio with my son that had the bad horse wreck, getting progress reports from his doctors. No one has rated my progress. I just trail along behind him and his nurse, catching elevators and making the best of the 1982 issues of U. S. World and Business Reports that seem to be required reading for the sick and their families.

Like I've probably told you before, the hospital is also a medical school. At any one time a patient may find himself being examined by two or three students and a professor. In case you are seen down here, I'd suggest having a commonplace illness or injury, or you might end up being the class assignment or some eager kid's homework.

I do owe a lot to medical science for treating my son. Yet I've looked and looked and haven't seen a sign of a caged rat or a rabbit hutch. You sure do see lots of people coming in and out. I want to pay what I owe the profession, but I'd prefer to use money instead of donating an earlobe or maybe a layer of my eyelids.

One thing I have to relearn every time we come back here is to be serious with the young doctors. At their age, their careers are the most sacred ground to be found on this cold earth. I have to have our nurse ask my questions. As many doctors as I know, I can't say when they reach maturity. The ones I know around San Angelo act pretty mature in their 40s, but I never get to know them as well as their stockbrokers and real estate agents do, or not in the same light anyway.

At the first appointment yesterday, the physical rehabilitation specialist suddenly decided we needed to see an orthopedic surgeon we'd seen before. The problems were that this guy was busy on a case in the operating room upstairs and wasn't going to be free until today.

While the young rehab doctor was talking on the telephone, in what I thought was a whisper, I asked my son's nurse if a surgeon felt like he needed to sneeze, or maybe go to the bathroom, could he just mark his place with a piece of white chalk, or hold his place with a good stout band aid. Believe me I wasn't being smart mouthed. I have an awful time keeping up with pages and numbers and such like.

I suppose that using a stethoscope so much must have toned up that young doctor's hearing. From the way he scowled, you'd have thought I'd asked to borrow his phone to call up a chiropractor, or flashed a voodoo charm. I wished now I'd told him that I know how hard it is to practice medicine. In the days when the Boss had all those sickly polo ponies, we lived with a bottle of penicillin in one hand and a syringe in the other. Unlike humans, those horses were highly priced animals and you'd better believe their owner wouldn't stand for any messing around. I'll bet a six-pack those cutting doctors have a way of taking a break. When I was proof reading applications years ago for the Land Office, we used a lot of improvised book markers to work those big files. I am going to look further. I'll let you know when I find out.