

6SHORTGRASS.DOC

My geographical location is unimportant. Laptops give and take away from a writer's work. We can set up, for example, on this Christmas week in a sunroom in a nursing home miles from home or the office the day of a holiday party, or be lucky and be out of reach on-line.

The register in the front entrance hides my location. Nowadays, I always sign in as "Red" at nursing homes. After you become admission age, it's best not to leave permanent tracks. I also keep a pack of cigarettes in the trunk of the car on purpose, to make phony announcements in the waiting area that I'm going outside to smoke.

The tip-off you have passed into being a prospect is when the nurses in the rotunda begin to pause and look through the charts when you pass by. Leave immediately if a white cap says, "My, didn't you get dressed early today." Should one say under her breath, "I don't remember seeing him at breakfast," scram!

Those ol' gals working there deal too much in patients' memory losses to keep accurate time. At a retirement banquet, a whole row of young nurses may stand up for a 30-year pen a few years from post-graduate time.

For people unhappy over how fast time passes, they might try a morning in this sunroom with wheelchairs

rolling in and out, maneuvered in the main by grey-headed ladies. At this moment, five are parked to visit on couches in the part of the room closest to the door leading to the main hallway. No one passes or comes in without causing a comment on the upcoming party or the past breakfast.

My hearing aids are set on "zero minus 10," yet their voices blast my tired ol' drums behind the aids. Something makes this laptop blink at times.

All is audible. These ol' gals have the volume to drown the loudspeaker. No one asks what the other wants for Christmas, only if she is going to the Christmas party two doors away from the sunroom at two-thirty.

A lady just joined them in a red hat and bright white dress. In the melees to settle down comes: "Woke up on the wrong side. Do every morning in this place. Eggs can be cooked better outdoors than in this joint. Cold coffee and imitation jelly - that's the menu."

She (new person): "Ruthie, I like your hair better the old way. Your face is too fat to wear your hair that short."

Ruthie: "My hairstyle is a private matter. I get lots of compliments on the shape of my face."

I do want a cigarette even though I haven't smoked one in 30 years. Those toxic tar boogers cut down on the

nursing home stay. Goat Whiskers the Younger and his mom, Aunt Ella, checked out way early from smoking, without a week's confinement.

The little bit of ice on the sunroom's window screen brings back a Christmas under a windmill up at the Clay Water Hole and Young Whiskers. Weren't any nursing homes in focus in those days. Aunt Ella packed us a lunch of thick sausages and cheese from her home in Canada; Young Goat Whiskers brought along his new 20-gauge Remington to shoot ducks.

We had not an inkling that humans were not sent to pull windmills with ice on the tower legs the day after Christmas. It wouldn't matter if we had. The ducks landing on the pond had as much say-so as we did.

Young Whiskers was big enough to break rods and most joints of pipe with help. Cowboys had to work on windmills. Everybody in our world knew that.

The Clay Water Hole mill pumped into a natural pond on dry Spring Creek. Wells all up and down the draw were 120-150 feet deep. This meant pulling six or seven rods and six joints of four-inch well pipe in 20-foot joints on this occasion. Further, on a makeshift rack in the back of a half-ton pickup, Young Whiskers and I hauled two joints of pipe to Angelo to be re-threaded.

Incredible but for sure, we hauled 40 feet of four-inch pipe on that six-cylinder jitney. The man who helped us unload at the pipe shop asked if the roads were pretty icy to be hauling pipe. One or the other of us replied, "Not if our daddy told us to haul pipe."

We finished the job in two and a half days. We were able to turn the mill on two and a half weeks after the thaw.

All that was 60 Christmases ago. Inside this home is warm and clean, yet ... yet out under that windmill tower Young Whiskers and I were free. Free to breathe fresh air.