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Three or four months ago, a guy rented the coliseum in San Angelo to present a program he calls *Dead Doctors Don't Lie*. I wanted to go hear him. His cassettes come in the mail. The one I listened to insinuated that he had discovered a cure for about everything going around this day and age, except maybe the widespread, eternal epidemic of insubordination by teenagers and the wider-spread shortage of parking spaces in the cities.

Two of my friends went to his program. They said he carried on for over two hours. Had tables outside selling courses of his pills for big money, like \$200 a month. His pitch is that doctors don't live as long as their patients. Somewhere in his spiel, he eludes to how long bushmen live in the jungles eating roots and leaves, the kinds of roots and leaves he happens to have compounded into his remedies. He also pulls off heady stuff about the powers of his medicine and the insignificance of other vitamin manufacturers.

Once you reach the time of life when surgery means more than taking out your tonsils, or a chest pain means more than heartburn from eating green watermelon, guys like old Dead Doctor catch your attention. In the old days, we had to rely on charlatans on the radio from across the Mexican Border and medicine shows to promise miracle cures.

Around the barbershop in Mertzon, long debates were held about potency of the snake oil and rheumatism liniments

that outfits like Doc Thornton's tent show foisted off on the citizenry. All the shows held local beauty contests based on so many votes per bottle of medicine and a grand prize of a diamond ring to the winner. The prettiest girl always ended up being the daughter of the mother most in control of the family's bank account. The other shine boy and myself wondered why all those loafers around the shop needed medical attention when the most strenuous thing they did was shift their weight in a cane bottom chair to aim tobacco juice at the spittoon and hit the floor we had to mop, but shine boys were supposed to be seen and not heard.

After herbal remedies were released, ground palmetto stalks and shredded ginkgo biloba bark became so popular, naturalists started worrying that all the herbs are going to be pulled up and compounded into pills. I fell right into the herb craze. Had to cut back on the first Ginkgo Biloba capsule I took to improve my memory. Thirty minutes after swallowing it, the New Year's Eve Dance of 1952 came back as clear as the images from a beveled full length mirror. Once the shock subsided, I reduced the dosage to half a pill dissolved in a cup of hot water. I haven't had any trouble since then, but I sure advise watching overdoses.

Weekend guests left a bottle of St. John's wort at the ranch, an herb purported to improve the disposition. There must be a lot of ill-tempered folks in San Angelo as the pharmacy where I trade has literally hundreds of bottles of St. John's wort on inventory. Wives are good customers after

the football season ends. A couple of capsules of St. John's wort broken open and sprinkled over the old man's soup or on his hamburger patty helps keep the peace around the house until the basketball season gets going. Also, it doesn't hurt to keep a few spare fixes around on Sundays when the in-laws come around to visit.

I asked my druggist who was monitoring the side effects of these new products. Like all those bottlers of pills and mortarers of potions, he has a smart mouth. He replied: "Why, you are the guinea pig." So I suppose if dried sunflower petals or dehydrated pea vine starts making me blind, they'll suggest I take orange carrot weed and smoky fire bulbs to restore my eyesight. And if I don't like what I am seeing, I can pop a couple of St. John's wort and change the scene.

All this business has made me health conscious. The Tobacco Institute made me more frightened by claiming one charcoaled steak is as dangerous as 600 cigarettes. The first summer I lived alone at the ranch, I am sure I grilled 15 ribeyes a month. That's 9000 cigarettes every 30 days, or 15 packs every day. My salvation was that the corn cob pipe I smoked in those days required such a high level of compression and dramatic stage of decompression to stay lit that my lungs bellowed too much for cancer to get a start.

Hasn't been much said about ol' Dead Doctor and his crusade. However, if anybody is so naive as to believe the

Tobacco Institute, I see a great future and plenty of room  
for lots of guys like him to come on the stage ...