

Having To Keep Doctor Happy Is Mighty Serious Responsibility

By Monte Noelke

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MERTZON — For several months I've been trying to figure out how to condition the taxpayers' mind to the awful truth that the federal government has 175 million pounds of down and goose feathers in storage. I also wanted to find out if there still exists the possibility that taxpayers can be shocked by a bureaucratic phenomenon; and further, to ascertain whether the thinking behind this huge stockpile of pillow goods was founded in some deep fear among our leaders that some day the nation's geese would no longer produce a single plume.

However, my study along this line was interrupted when Number Five of our eight children became ill. In the stampede to the doctor's office and the distraction of admitting the lad to the hospital, all my mental notes on the previous problem were lost. In fact, after my mate and I had passed through the rigors of entering a modern hospital, we couldn't have pinpointed what section of Texas we were from, much less carry on a rational discussion pertaining to government owned goose feathers.

Perhaps it is just as well, because in the course of our trek to and from the hospital, an incident occurred which may well lead to a complete change of projects.

During the customary "don't worry" spiel of the doctor who has treated our assemblage during the past decade or longer, it was revealed that for several years the sight of us lugging the children into his office has calmed and cheered him immensely. The doctor went on to say that seeing what he calls the "Noelke Group" in his waiting room gives him faith in the future and a feeling akin to that he had as a child when he knew it couldn't be long until the arrival of Santa Claus. He stated that he often feels he couldn't carry on without us to bolster his sprits.

This sudden outpouring threw us off guard. What I mean is, while it's easy to picture my wife arising in the night to soothe a child suffering from a nightmare, and heaven knows that I personally have salvaged the morale of many a heartsick Mexican cowboy by advancing him a hundred or so of the Boss' money, the thought of bearing responsibility for cheering an important child specialist was indeed an awesome one.

This new burden grew in proportion when we began to consider that in 999 visits out of 1000 the patient is the one who receives the calming and cheering. At the very outside, all the healer of bone, tissue and personality can expect from a 10-minute call is a few crumpled \$10 bills or a sizable check. And the mender of body and mind must use this lucre to fight off the tax collectors, withstand the medicine peddlers, and satisfy dealers in used magazines.

This sad state of affairs can, and sometimes does, result in the doctor having to temporarily postpone such odds and ends as reupholstering his sailing vessel, resetting his precious gem collection or re-insulating the roof on his wine cellar.

After thinking the matter over, we began to lay plans on how we would assume our new duty. We reasoned that if the kids continue to dabble in one stateside virus after another, plus a few Oriental strains to boot, we could almost always be on hand to help the doctor. We determined that if some crisis should develop, such as an upswing in the price of 1959 Readers Digests or a weakening trend in the market for pigeon-blood rubies, we could make emergency calls at his office to fulfill our obligation.

It has now become obvious that I must turn my thoughts from such flighty subjects as goose feathers and ponder more serious matters. I fear, moreover, that the responsibility of keeping the doctor's outlook bright is just the beginning. My wife claims the druggist is showing signs of growing dependent on our visits. Who knows, we may end up being a regular Grey Ladies service for downcast medical men.