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The World is Full of Kind People, All Ready to Help

By HAROLD HARTLEY

Times Business Editor

CRANBERRY ISLES, Me.—The doctor breezed in. He always seemed to be in operating room clothes. He was doing from four to six operations a day, anything that came along. When they are emergencies they will not wait.

He did everything. One day I saw him pitch in and help a nurse make a bed. Not many doctors do that, at least not the chief of staff.

He had a pair of tinsnips in one hand and a screwdriver he said he borrowed from his son's tool kit. He pulled the brace out of the package and I saw the "cage" for the first time.

"It only weighs about three pounds," he said. "Stainless steel. It has two worm-screws on the back. We'll tighten it from day to day." He did.

THE PRESSURE points broke the skin, made ugly sores. So he lined it with lamb's wool. The lanolin in it healed the skin breaks.

Digestion gets out of whack. Hiccups follow. And they hurt. So do sighs and yawns.

When i had so much trouble with food they rolled in a stand with a bottle of dextrose and a long rubber hose. I was to get my first intravenous feeding which turned out to be a four-hour lunch.

They stuck the needle in a vein in my right foot and held it there with adhesive tape. That is all there was to it. Effortless. No chewing. No cutting of meat. I had a meal without having to lift a finger.

I kept trying to tell them that if I sipped whisky that that would stop the hiccups. The nurses twinkled. They thought I just wanted a drink. But as soon as I got them to let me sip whisky through a glass tube the hiccups went away.

THERE WAS a Scotch-Irish nurse from Pennsylvania in her high forties. She bought the first whisky. She asked, "How do you want it?" I said "Just put some cracked ice in a glass and pour the whisky over it."

She returned with a glass that was as close to thimble-size as any I have ever seen. I said, "Do you call that two ounces?" She giggled, "Who ever heard of two ounces of whisky?"

The next day I took it up with the doctor and he changed the portion.

One of my best nurses was Mrs. Robins Thatcher, wife of the Episcopal vicar at Southwest Harbor. Her husband came in twice. The first time he held my hand and said a prayer. The second time I was so far under I did not know what happened.

I kept watching the sugar maple outside my window. The trees turn early in Maine. But that was all I could see. I could hear the French language radio stations from Montreal and could picture the pulp barges pushing across the mouth of Frenchman's Bay at night. I thought I heard them whistle. But later I learned they were using an old boat whistle as the town curfew. It throbbed at nine each night, like a bullfrog.

One night Marie Gray, a graduate nurse from St. Joseph's Hospital in Ft. Wayne, came in and said, "Let's get cleaned up. You've got company coming."

A FEW MINUTES later Mrs. Ruth Rhode, who publishes the INDAC for the Athletic Club, and her son, Bill, 14, and Katie Cleaver of the Continental Optical Co. stepped in. I was not exactly comfortable and showed it.

They talked awhile and asked about eating places. I told them about the Lobster House. Afterward I wondered if I had made a mistake. For if they had gone to Testa's, right in Bar Harbor, they could have had a "Moscow Mule," made of vodka, Schweppes's ginger beer and lime. I later learned they did all right at the Lobster House, too.

The strangest visitor of all came the day I was leaving. She was trim in gray-blue wool to match her eyes. She wore a permanent smile and sat very straight on a chair, like an actress.

"You don't know me," she said, "and I have come to bring greetings from a person you have never seen. I'm Mrs. Allen Griffen. I live in Bar Harbor.

"I met Parker Wheatley in Boston," she said. "He is in educational radio. His mother has been sending him your column from Indianapolis. She sent him the piece about your fall. He asked me to come and see you.

"He wants to meet you. He wants to locate in Indianapolis in radio." I said, I would see what I could do. "How old is he?" I asked. "About 50, our age," she replied.

I TOOK a closer look at her, trim and straight and pretty. And I sat up a little straighter when the compliment landed squarely on my vanity. I may have trouble remembering Mr. Wheatley's name. But I will not forget hers.

As I got ready to check out I got to wondering about the bill. There is a rule that hospitals will not let you out until you have paid.

Last July I had just updated my Blue Cross policy. I always have bought all I could buy. It is one of the best investments I have ever made.

When I left the hospital Blue Cross paid \$318 and I paid \$211. But when I arrived home in Indianapolis I had a call from Blue Cross. They wanted to see my hospital bill. They thought I had more money coming.

So Farris Deputy at Blue Cross wrote me a note saying he was adding \$91 more to help toward the hospital bill. And of the doctor's bill of \$250 Blue Shield agreed to pay \$100. That took the edge off.

I DO NOT count it a bad summer. I had more flat bed rest than I could get in any other way. I had good food when I could keep it down, even a cocktail before dinner toward the end which I am told almost never happens in hospitals, except this was a private one and they can do as they please.

But my greatest reward was in learning how much kindness there is in the world.