

the cinders there was always excess that fell on the shoulders. It was this way on most of the surfaced roads in town.

On the afternoon of the accident this eleven or twelve-year-old girl was riding a horse bareback on a surfaced road. She had the reins knotted over the horse's neck. Suddenly the horse shied at something and unseated her. As she fell, one leg caught in the knotted reins. The startled horse started to run, dragging her through the loose cinders at the side of the road. Someone saw what had happened and ran out in the road to stop the horse. But for two blocks she had been subjected to the merciless abrading action as she turned and twisted in the cinders.

When I saw her I was fearful for her life. Her chest, back, arms and legs were deeply abraded. Her left femur was fractured. Her face was macerated and she had cinders packed under her eyelids until they could not be moved. We wrapped her in wet towels and headed for the hospital. After stabilization we anesthetized her and went to work. It took a half-hour to wash all the cinders from her eyes. We scrubbed with a soft brush to get rid of as much dirt and debris as possible and then the slow, painful process of suturing. We just kept approximating and trimming whatever was available. Several hours later we applied antibiotic ointment, put her on sterile sheets and placed her leg in straight traction. We monitored her carefully and from the first she started to improve. There is nothing that will take the place of a strong, youthful body when it comes to healing. The leg healed, the skin healed. She later required some plastic surgery on her face and chest but when you think of the injury she sustained, her scarring was unusually slight. She grew into a beautiful young woman and is now the mother of a growing family.

This girl's mother was a special person. She and her husband had raised a nice family but this woman was an original. She was sensitive and leaned towards the arts. She would say some unusual things on occasion. Like the time she ran a stop sign in town and was stopped by the local constabulary. Her reply when questioned was, "Oh, officer! You can't give me a ticket. I haven't got a driver's license."

I saw her as a patient for the first time when she came in with a breast mass that had been present for over a year and had produced pronounced nipple retraction almost surely indicative of carcinoma. She was deathly afraid of what she would be told and that is why she put it off so long. She had a sister later who did the same thing with a carcinoma of the uterus that was symptomatic for nearly a year before she got up enough courage to be seen. By then it was too late. The outcome was out of anyone's hand by the time she was seen and the agony of a death like that is most distressing for a family.

Marva

No story would be complete without a tribute to Marva, who was my most faithful and trusted office nurse for the first fifteen years I was in practice. She only quit when her eyesight began to fail. I credit her with molding my office practice so I could live with it.

Being the only physician in a small community can be exhausting, but Marva used



Marva Palmer

to tell people that they were not to call me at night. I heard her tell one patient, "If you need to be seen you get in here before five o'clock. We killed one doctor in this town and we don't want to kill another." She did not countenance deadbeats and had very little patience with malingerers.

Marva was a throwback to an age when the art of nursing was much more important than the science of nursing. She was one of those gray-haired ladies who had taken care of people most of her life. If it wasn't family, it was friends. She knew everyone and most everyone was comfortable with Marva. I've often realized that many people came to see Marva as much as me, because her positive manner was a healing influence with or without my treatment. I could find no fault with that for she never stepped out of her authority.

Life had dealt Marva a few bad hands. She had never had children. There had been miscarriages along the way, but she could never carry a pregnancy through to term. I think this is why she devoted herself so completely to the service of others. Her husband was a good man and good to her, but he was not at all interested in traveling or visiting. Whatever Marva did she had to do on her own. Ace ran a pool hall and beer joint for several years in Hurricane and probably had about all he wanted of people or conversation by the time he got home. His pool hall was a no nonsense place and if anyone got out of hand, he was asked to leave. He was one of these individuals who never had anything good to say about people, but who go on day after day doing their job in a quiet and unassuming manner. In the final analysis when the judgment books are open, like Abou Ben Ada, "his name led all the rest." He died many years later of a heart condition. In the final days he never changed much. He was quiet, undemanding and never wanted to impose on my time. Such a gentleman. Marva was very considerate of Ace and at least he was company for her in the evenings.