

by Mary Wood

Doctor.

What does that word do to you? Does it instill fear in your heart, make you quake in your boots? Does it make you think fondly of an old man who has taken care of you for years? Or does it make you wonder what all the fuss is about, because you haven't seen one since you were 12 years old?

My husband hasn't seen a doctor in six years. He says he will only if something goes wrong, and then he'll see a vet, as he thinks they are more basic. He is healthy as a horse, so to speak, ^(though he doesn't look like one) so who am I to force the issue?

On the other hand, he insists I see my doctor as often as I am required to do so, and because I have diabetes, it is rather too often for comfort. Until I was 17, I had, at the most, an annual check-up, but since becoming diabetic I must see my doctor every other month. (And how expensive it is to not be well.)

I've had both good and bad experiences with various doctors, like most people. I'm still alive to tell it, so I guess the good outweighs the bad, but the latter were frightening occurrences.

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I had all four of my wisdom teeth (how unwise they are to come in ~~just~~^{only} to be painfully extracted) taken out a few years ago, in the best diabetic hospital the city of Boston had to offer. Because of hospital rules about certain doctors for certain floors, my own doctor was prevented from attending me, and I was assigned to an intern who, I must assume, didn't know his ankle from his elbow. I shall refer to him as Dr. A.

My roommate was a ~~human~~^{human} vegetable, which made eating difficult, and I was attached to an intravenous (IV) solution of glucose to keep my diabetic blood sugar level at the normal rate, until I could retain my food. Eventually I did eat a meal, and notified the nurses that it was all right now to take out the IV. Dr. A refused to authorise this, however, and after several hours of feeling my blood sugar level rise to ~~unhealthy~~ dangerous heights, I stalked down to the nurses' station, IV and all, and demanded to speak with my own doctor, since Dr. A didn't seem to be very capable. I threatened to rip out the IV myself and walk home, though it was past 11:00 p.m.

That got results, and Dr. A had the chemistry lab take a blood sugar test. As I suspected, it was 300 points above what it should have been, and I could have

(more)

slipped into diabetic coma because the "authorities" would not listen to their patient.

I believe my own doctor reprimanded Dr. A, so *I hope* something like that doesn't happen to someone less timid.

I must say, though, to balance the picture a little, that another doctor I had gave me physicals and medicine at no cost when I was in school and had no money to spare. And the physician I am with now is wise enough to let me regulate myself, because I am the one who knows best how I feel, what I need.

Still, if I hadn't got diabetes, I would probably not see a doctor at all, and I might then be less healthy than I am.

This is a subject about which I could go on and on, but I will close now with this: Be kind to your doctor, and he will be kind to you.

End.

by Mary Wood

"All right, young lady, come along with me," said the police officer, taking my arm.

I was sitting in a downtown Boston Howard Johnson restaurant, minding my own business over a cup of coffee as I rolled a cigarette.

"But officer," I said. "This isn't what you think." I handed him my tobacco pouch and cigarette papers. "Want to try one?"

His gruffness flinched into doubt and his hand dropped weakly to his side. "No thanks," he said. "Do you always roll your own cigarettes?"

"No, just when there's a cop around," I said, joking. "Yes, really I do. It's relaxing to roll them, and Drum tobacco is much better than Camels or Pall Malls."

I've had some interesting experiences as a result of rolling my own, both with policemen and with dope-smokers.

Once in a parking lot, while waiting in the car for my husband, another car pulled up with two bushy-haired young men in it. I had just gummed a cigarette together and was about to light it, when one of the men pointed at it and grinned, his eyebrows raised.

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Pretending it was a marijuana cigarette, I inhaled deeply, held my breath, then gasped it all out and pretended to be faint, my eyes unfocussed. The two men laughed and gave me the peace sign, but the joke was on them. I don't smoke dope.

Several years ago, a flying Dutchman (he works for KLM airlines) taught me to roll cigarettes in Ireland, and though I never expected to quit the habit altogether, I did think it would slow me down. It did, for a while, but after I got proficient, I smoked as much as if I had ready-mades.

When I have trouble finding my particular brand of tobacco, I cut off the filters of my husband's Winstons. Believe it or not, those are a lot stronger than the ones I roll, and they taste like poison.

We all know, of course, that smoking is poison, but we get to choose our own poisons, don't we. I admit that I am addicted to my smoking habit, but I'm sure my horrible cough has prevented a few people from trying it out, so I serve my purpose.

I've met old-timers who tell me they used to roll their own, and they ask me why I don't use a rolling machine. Many of my friends have kindly given various types

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of them to me, but I have discarded them all. The cigarettes come out looking too professional and tightly rolled.

Recently there's been public outrage in regard to smokers, and some of them have had their lighted cigarettes squirted with water or the butts cut off with scissors by irate citizens. I believe that this is an appropriate reaction if, say, a smoker thoughtlessly pollutes the air of a small enclosed space like an elevator, but otherwise it is a felony, assault and battery. One's cigarette is private property, even an extension of oneself, and if someone else tampers with that cigarette, he is trespassing personal space, private property, as it were.

I'd better close, or I shall get irate, myself. If you see someone on the street smoking what looks like a joint, don't judge too soon. S/He may just be rolling her/his own.

Till next week, then.

End.