



A Bargain After All

(Intercartoon by Earl Linthicum)

Hospital Bills—A Patient's Viewpoint

The following is an article written by a former Duke patient, Edgar Lafayette of Macon, North Carolina. In an era of rising public concern about the cost of medical care, Mr. Lafayette's story illustrates unusual understanding of what it takes to run a medical center like Duke.

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W O W! This can't be my hospital bill. It's just gotta be somebody else's. Well, let's see I stayed eight days. That would be \$126.21 a day. I wonder what in the world I got that cost me THAT much money.

First thing would be the room. I wonder what they charged me for that? The motels around here get \$10 per night, and that is only for twelve hours and I stayed twenty-four. That means it would be \$20 a day for a day at motel rates, but the motels don't have a registered nurse standing by twenty-four hours a day to take care of me.

I wonder how much she makes? Surely as much as I did before I became disabled, which was \$2.25 an hour. I only hope she makes a lot more, because it

takes a lot more training and skill for her work than it did for mine. Anyway at \$2.25 an hour that means \$54 (for twenty-four hours).

Now the next item is food. There are not many motels that serve you three meals a day in bed, and I don't think you would find one that employs a professional dietician. I don't know what all this cost so I'll just say \$5.65 per day for meals.

Now what else did I get that cost me so much money? Oh. Needles. Who could forget those needles? Surely there must have been a THOUSAND. Little ones, big ones, long ones, short ones, crooked ones, and I even think some were square.

Speaking of crooked needles, Dr. Jones bent one trying to put it into my left arm. He finally gave up and put another one in my right arm, but I wasn't surprised considering the fact that I come from some of the toughest hillbilly stock in western North Carolina. Now how much did they charge me for all those needles? Now Dr. Hunter charged me \$3 for an injection or shot as they are called by some, and being the Saint that he is, this is a long way below the national average. He recently apologized for having to charge me \$4 when he used two

different drugs in one injection. He explained that the cost of drugs had risen tremendously in the last year. So have our congressmen's salaries. Now there couldn't have been a thousand of those needles; however it still seems that way. I'm sorry that I didn't keep count. One day they took five blood samples, and I told them they were the blood thirstiest crowd I had ever seen. Five is about par for the course, so that would be 40 shots at \$3 each. And, I don't mean shots like teeing off or teeing up.

And now the pills, but again I don't know how many. The nurse brought them around in those little white cups shaped like a bushel basket. I think I took at least one-half bushel. Now I don't know what they cost either. When I left the hospital, Dr. Teague gave me three prescriptions. I had them filled at a drug store in Warrenton, and they cost me \$26. Now at that price, I couldn't have eaten a half bushel. So MAYBE it was one or two less. Even so, they must have cost at least \$150.

Now there was that green gadget on two wheels they pushed around which had a hose that connected to the oxygen line and another hose with a white mouth

(continued on page ten)