

LARRY: Were there a lot of accidents with threshing machines, doc? ~~Did you ever~~ ^{have} ~~that?~~

DR. FLATH: Oh, mostly ya. Like one time, I had a fella come in ~~and~~ for a ^{cartilage} ~~anterior~~ fracture, you know? I said, "I'd better give you a little ~~anesthetic~~ anesthetic before I set your wrist!" "Oh, no," he said, "you just pull on it. I've had the whole threshing ^{crew} ~~equipment~~ pulling on it!" So I just got o' hold of his hand and give it a good stiff pull, you know, and got it back in place and put a splint on it and away he went.

LARRY: Were there a lot of fractured wrists or sprained wrists from cranking those old Model T's?

DR. FLATH: Old Model T's! ~~We had more fractures there from Model T's than anything!~~

~~LARRY: Oh?~~

~~DR. FLATH:~~ ~~But I taught 'em to do this, you know? Always hold your hand upright 'cause~~ ^[wrapping the thumb around the crank] ~~this is what broke the wrist.~~

~~LARRY: Oh. I see the thumb, huh?~~

~~DR. FLATH: Ya~~

~~LARRY: Hooked around?~~

~~DR. FLATH: Ya, see do this!~~ Then you crank the... ~~Keep~~ ^{Keep} the thumb upright and they'd never break their wrist a 'tall that way! This is what broke the wrist, see? You get a hold of it and crank that way!

~~LARRY: In the thumb! Ya, I see.~~

~~DR. FLATH: See?~~

~~LARRY: Yes.~~

~~DR. FLATH: I do it this way then they wouldn't do it.~~

LARRY: How many babies have you delivered, doc? Did you keep track?

DR. FLATH: Over 3,200!

~~LARRY: 3,200 huh?~~

~~DR. FLATH: Ya~~ I had 2,900 when I had the hospital, so then I wrote to all the ones we could think of askin' for a dollar donation. Well, I got a lot o' dollar donations and I got some other money beside. ^[in the new hospital] So we furnished the nursery ^v that way!

~~LARRY: Oh, is that right?~~

~~DR. FLATH: Ya.~~

LARRY: When was the hospital built here, doc?

DR. FLATH: I think in '52--I think. It was opened, I think, in '52.

DARRY: When did you start practicing more in town and going less out into the country?

DR. FLATH: Well, when the hospital opened, ~~see?~~ ↗

~~LARRY: Yes.~~

~~DR. FLATH:~~ (And I started to do the work at the hospital. Well, there's one or two other men here all the time! See, when I came here, there was one other doctor here. There was a doctor in Palermo; there was a doctor in Ross; there was a doctor in White Earth.

LARRY: Can you tell me these doctor's names?

~~DR. FLATH: Ya!~~

~~LARRY: O.k.~~

DR. FLATH: Like ^[at] Ross, there was a Doctor--I don't know. Brigham came there after the second one; he was the second one there. Doctor Kennedy was in White Earth and ^{Starlee} ~~Stogee~~ was in Tioga and Doctor Ledahl was in Palermo and Doctor Hellis and Doctor Teddy Weigert--^{Weinmann} ~~Winn~~ or something like that--was in Berthold.

LARRY: Would you guys ever get together?

DR. FLATH: Oh, once in awhile we'd meet and go to a meeting or something. And then there was a doctor in Plaza too. ↗

~~LARRY: Oh?~~

~~DR. FLATH:~~ (There was a doctor in Plaza, see? With all the driving, you know, horses and so forth, you had to split the territory up until the cars come in and the roads. All we had was trails, see? Just follow the trails and rocks all over everything. In those days they didn't think of taking the rocks off the road; they'd run over the top of 'em! ↗

~~LARRY: Take 'em out of the field but not off the road, huh?~~

~~DR. FLATH: Ya.~~ (It wasn't necessary to take 'em off the road because they

didn't have to, see? And when we first started driving cars ^{like} with a Ford with that transmission, you know, and that wishbone on there, they'd knock the thing off all the time--the higher rocks, see?

LARRY: Ya.

DR. FLATH: The first car I had was ~~one~~ ^{like} like this one like that one!

~~LARRY: Oh, is that right?~~

~~DR. FLATH: A~~ two cylinder car, no windshield, no top and ~~acetylene~~ ^{acetylene} lights on it.

LARRY: How long did you have that one, doc?

DR. FLATH: Well, my uncle had it at Churchs Ferry and he said I could have it if he--he had a Ford then. And I could have it if I brought it up here, **A**nd I brought it up here and I used it for about three years and then I got a little Buick--a little Buick Roadster.

LARRY: When did you get this car from your uncle--what year?

DR. FLATH: 1911.

LARRY: And you had a car ever since then?

DR. FLATH: Ya, ya, I had a car ever since then.

LARRY: Were those first cars dependable?

DR. FLATH: Well, they were pretty dependable. This one here had chain drive on each wheel, no transmission except a disc--a big steel disc--and then a fiber wheel runnin' against that. ~~and~~ The further out you pushed the fiber wheel, the more speed you'd get.

~~LARRY: Oh, I see.~~

~~DR. FLATH: See? That was done by.... You increased the speed, see, by pushing that out.~~

LARRY: Did you ever break down out in the country?

DR. FLATH: Well, sometimes. I had a Buick one time; I lost a front wheel off.

~~LARRY: Oh?~~

~~DR. FLATH: Ya, that's all.~~

~~LARRY: But you wouldn't use your car in the wintertime--not in those early~~

years?

DR. FLATH: Not in the early years! We used it until sometime in December sometimes--we could use it, see? Now ~~that car~~ you'd have to have lots of clothes on and then I had a rug that had feet in it. You could put your feet right in it, overshoes and everything and then a big sheepskin coat, see, and cap and drive her that way 'cause ^[the cab] ~~the~~ was wide open, see!

LARRY: Yes.

DR. FLATH: And after I got this little ~~roadster~~ that didn't have a top on, ~~and~~ then I got a four-cylinder one. They put out a four-cylinder one for awhile. That had a top and everything on; I used that for quite awhile.

LARRY: How long was it before cars had heaters in them?

DR. FLAFF: Well, the first heaters, they put 'em on the exhaust pipe and they put a cover on the exhaust pipe and had it transmitted into the cab of the--that's the first heater. It wasn't really a heater a 'tall, but it's just that the air heated comin' off that exhaust pipe!

LARRY: That would be kind of dangerous, ~~too if they got....~~

DR. FLAFF: No, that wasn't dangerous! That was outside the mechanism, you see? The exhaust pipes would come out of the side of the car and then back to the muffler, you know? Well, that was hot there, you see.

~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ LARRY: But I mean if you ever got exhaust into that....

DR. FLATH: No, you wouldn't get any of that exhaust in there 'cause it went out through the muffler! ~~and~~ But that was just over the side of the engine, see. That would transmit some warm air into the cab; that's the way it was first done and after that we got some heaters in the cars.

LARRY: Would ^{You keep} ~~they have~~ a livery team ~~or a team at the livery barn for you~~ or did they have a bunch of them?

DR. FLATH: They had a whole bunch of 'em! A lot of people would hire livery to take 'em out, you know? Take 'em from Stanley to way down to the river to the ranch or someplace, you see, or take 'em out to the country. They had... ~~These~~ livery people kept the barn for the farmers to come in and feed at noon or overnight and then they'd have horses they'd rent out.

LARRY: Do you think that's a weakness of doctors today--that they're not spiritually involved?

DR. FLATH: With some doctors I think ~~it~~ ^{it} is; I think ~~it~~ ^{it} is. I think it makes quite a bit of difference if a doctor is a good Christian man and one that isn't a good Christian man--that don't ~~take any~~ active in church or anything! I think ~~he~~ ^{the} isn't as good for the community as a man that is interested. He can't be as loyal to his patients--I don't think.

LARRY: Can you get a terminal patient ~~reconciled~~ ^{reconciled} to his own death or her own death?

DR. FLATH: Well, that's pretty hard to do. Most people when they die, they become unconscious. ~~They lose their sense of consciousness~~ and they just drift away, see? They're aren't very many people know their death is approaching! When they do, those people want to die, see? They're ~~anxious~~ anxious to die because of suffering, see, and they're anxious--anything to end it, see? Anything to end it!

LARRY: Doctor, there's a lot of discussion now ~~in medical circles and on television and so forth~~ ^{letting} about people who are in intense suffering and have no hope of recovery ~~of letting these people go~~. What do you think of that?

DR. FLATH: Well, I always thought that we should do everything we could to keep a patient alive. I don't think that.... I think when they're going to die anyway, we may do some efforts to keep 'em alive, but gradually let it occur. Gradually let it occur, but I don't think we should stop just then because they're gonna die! Because I think it gives 'em a little more hope if you do something for 'em anyway and show an interest that you're trying to help them! That's what I always thought!

LARRY: Doc; what kind of philosophy of life do you have? Are you an optimist? ~~Do you have ultimate faith in mankind because a doctor must see some of the seemier sides of life too beatings?~~

DR. FLATH: Oh, I've always been optimistic about life and I have an interest in living. I've lived longer than I ever expected to and I'm

thankful for it! As long as I can get ~~as long~~^{along} as well as I do I'm happy about it!

LARRY: Why did you stay in North Dakota? ~~At some point in your career gone to Chicago or, you know, a big city and made much more money?~~

DR. FLATH: Well, I felt that after I ~~got~~ started a practice here I wanted to be loyal to the people here.

LARRY: ~~If you ever go to a medical convention, doc, in California or Florida or anywhere in the United States and somebody asks you where are you from, doctor?~~ Do you feel apologetic in saying you're from North Dakota?

DR. FLATH: No, I should say not! I'm from North Dakota and I'm gonna stick up for it too!

LARRY: Has it been a good place to have a practice and have you enjoyed North Dakota?

DR. FLATH: I've enjoyed it very much, ya!

~~Question: How much?~~

LARRY: Up until the 1930's, ~~doc, and this is kind of a personal question that you don't have to answer.~~ what would you make a year?

DR. FLATH: Oh, about 2,500 to \$3,000.

LARRY: ~~But~~ then the bottom ~~kind of~~ fell out of everything in the '30's?

DR. FLATH: It did, ya! I'd make that much clear ~~about~~ⁱⁿ profits! See, when I came here, I had a contract for \$150 a month to pay and I had to pay my rent and I had to live! I had to pay my livery and all the expenses besides, see? Well, this credit business ^{was} all over the country! They'd expect you to carry their account 'til fall. Some would pay and some wouldn't pay; some couldn't pay, see! Well, then came the drougth and the banks closed and we lost a lot o' money. And then the drougth came after that, so ~~it~~ it was pretty tough for awhile, but I stuck it out! ~~the~~^{by} the ~~40's^{40's} we started to pick up and the people got money again and we got pretty fair fees! Our fees were always low, you know? We got pretty good recovery then. Then, after the hospital come they put on Medicare and all this; we didn't have any poor people to take care of. The poor people you'd just~~

take care of 'em and forget it; take care of 'em and forget it! See, we'd ~~donate~~ ^{donate} it; but when Medicare came, they ~~payed~~ ^{paid} it all! That's the reason the doctors couldn't save anything! I couldn't save anything before that.

LARRY: So you would go out and call on people knowing that you weren't going to get paid?

DR. FLATH: Oh, yes, lots o' times!

LARRY: How much money would you estimate, doc, you have in back bills?

DR. FLATH: Oh, I could never tell! I've had as many as eight confinement cases ~~and~~ ^{from} one farmer--I never got a nickel for it!

LARRY: And you just learned to accept that? ~~kind of?~~

DR. FLATH: Just accept it! What are you gonna do?

LARRY: Ya.

DR. FLATH: This one particular farmer when the Frazier Bill came in, he took the Frazier Act ~~as a banker, you see,~~ and turned everything in and I never got a nickel, but I never refused to go! Some doctors would refuse to go!

LARRY: Did ~~they~~ ^{people} ever take advantage of your good nature?

DR. FLATH: Oh, I 'spose they did! I don't know, but I never refused anybody! When they called me, I went day or night! I wouldn't say, "Wait 'til morning," or this! I'd go right away!

~~LARRY: Is that one of the reasons, doc, why you don't worry too much about dieing because you've lived a pretty good life?~~

~~DR. FLATH: Well, probably that's it! I don't worry about dieing; I'm ready to go anytime.~~

LARRY: