

Down By The Berry Patch

"The Doctor"

Rita Luks

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When we needed a doctor in the daytime, we made the fourteen and a half-mile trip to Caro. At the eleven-mile mark, just as the car rounded the curve at Tagget's corner, it was time to sing out, "Three and a half miles to Caro!" You couldn't announce it before the curve, or after you were around it. Sick or healthy, none of us kids ever missed the exact opportunity to chant, "Three and a half miles to Caro!"

Dr. Savage was our doctor. If he wasn't in, we had to see Dr. Merrill. It was first come first served during office hours, so you never knew how long you'd have to wait.



When I was finally old enough to drive, even when I was in the car by myself, I never missed singing out as I rounded Tagget's corner. One time I took Bruce to the doctor because Daddy didn't have anyone else to work in the Snack Bar and Mother was at conference in Saginaw. When Dr. Savage looked in my brother's ear, he told me Bruce had good reason to be crying so much. He explained that his ear was so red it was as painful as an inflamed appendix and then he put his ear-examining tool into my hands and instructed me to look in the ear myself. I should have asked to look in the ear again when I took him back for a check up because still I only know what an infected ear looks like.

Mother and Daddy had gone to New York City and I was in charge of taking care of Dza Dza. He only wanted Daddy to give him insulin shots and wouldn't consent to having Uncle John come from next door to do it while they were gone. Daddy taught me how to give the injections and Dza Dza would sit out on the porch while I gave him the shot. Then he got really sick. I knew it wasn't from the diabetes because he was running a high fever. Uncle John told him he needed to go to a doctor and Dza Dza refused. Johnny said, "He's stubborn and we can't make him go."

The next day I made up a story and told Dza Dza that Al called from New York and told me to tell him he **had** to go to the doctor and if he didn't go Al would be mad at both of us. He decided that if **Al** called all the way from New York to say he had to go he would let me take him. Dr. Savage explained why Dza Dza had to have penicillin every four hours around the clock. I wasn't sure how much of it Dza Dza understood but I set the alarm clock and every four hours, day and night, he took the pill I offered him.

When my parents came home, I explained how I got Dza Dza to go to the doctor. Daddy was surprised I got him to consent and thought it was a good joke on Dza Dza. Dza Dza didn't laugh. He let me know he was furious at me for tricking him. Then he had Daddy take money from his account to buy me a \$50 savings bond because he told Daddy I had saved his life.

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Photo Caption: Walter Alexander Luks; Rita's third child.

If someone in the family needed a doctor at night, Mother or Daddy called Dr. Savage and asked him to make a house call. As soon as they knew he was coming, they started calling around to find out who else in town needed a doctor. When Doctor Savage finished examining the patient at our house, they would give him the list of other patients waiting for him. Before he left, he would always give my parents some kind of medicine to administer. It was usually something that had to be mixed in a glass of water. One time when Judy's throat was sore, she had two glasses of medicine by her bed. The glass that was full of orange medicine made me think I'd rather die of a sore throat than have to drink whatever that was.

I grew up knowing Dr. Savage was always right there when you needed him. When I was pregnant with my third child, I moved back to the Caro area. I waited until my turn to see Dr. Savage. There was comfort in returning to the doctor who delivered me and then took care of me for the first eighteen years of my life. Now he would deliver my child.

I sat back and explained that I had special concerns for my baby because I was Rh negative and my husband was Rh positive. I also expressed concerns about possibly giving birth at the sparsely equipped Caro hospital and asked if he ever delivered babies in either Bay City or Saginaw.

He told me he couldn't see the use of delivering babies in a hospital where they were prepared for complications of risky births. He said, "You work and work to save the baby's life and you'd probably just end up with an imbecile."

I walked out.

Dr. Savage never sent me a bill.

Dr. Guigino delivered my normal son in Bay City. The birth was normal.

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