

## Le Médecin Malgré Lui

He was just a passing tourist sipping Coke in Bock's Walgreen Pharmacy when a bleeding, bawling youngster was brought in. At once, the husky, crew-cut stranger took charge, ordering needle and thread and taking twelve neat stitches in the child's badly gashed leg. Before he was finished, a dozen neighborhood folk had requests in for his services, and by day's end the man from the soda counter had made five house calls. Like wildfire the word raced through tiny (population: 1,160) Groveton, Texas: "There's a doctor in town."

This reaction was anything but surprising, for Groveton, 115 miles northeast of Houston, had lost its only doctor three months before. Within a week the stranger had hung out his shingle and the townsfolk were refurbishing their small clinic for that nice Dr. Reid L. Brown.

Brown charged only \$3 for an office visit and \$5 for a house call (or no fee if the patient couldn't afford one); he answered calls at all hours of the day and night; he favored medicare; his handwriting was perfectly legible. With this

kind of background, the new doctor seemed too good to be true. Last week the people of Groveton learned that kindly Doctor Brown was indeed a fraud.

He was, as it turned out, not Reid L. Brown at all, but one Freddie Brant, 43, a grade-school dropout and ex-paratrooper who had spent more than seven years in jail for bank robbery. After his release in 1956 Brant worked for eight years as a hospital and lab aide, including a stint in Chattanooga, Tenn., as X-ray technician for the real Dr. Reid L. Brown, whose identity and credentials he used for three years in Terrell, Texas, and then in Groveton.

All might have gone well for Brant had not a drug company become suspicious about simultaneous orders for medicine from the two Doctors Brown. Even so, some 1,400 satisfied patients came to his support with a petition asking that forgery and perjury charges filed against him be weighed against the service he rendered. "If he isn't a doctor," said a woman he saved from suicide, "then he should be." At the weekend, one of two grand juries in the case agreed: it refused to indict "Doctor" Freddie Brant.

THE DUKE ENDOWMENT  
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CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA 28202

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PLEASE REPLY TO:  
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January 2, 1968

Dr. E. Harvey Estes  
Department of Community Health Sciences  
Duke University Medical Center  
Durham, North Carolina 27706

Dear Harvey:

I enclose a clipping from NEWSWEEK of December 25, 1967 which I thought might interest you. It certainly emphasizes the need for general practitioners and also the value of your Assistant Physicians who have had hospital and laboratory training, even though it was in jail.

Perhaps Bob Woodhall is correct in his statement that "Any Corpsman can handle general practice," which I do not think is true unless supervised by a physician.

With best wishes, I am

Yours sincerely,



W. C. Davison

mc

Dictated in St. Croix, V.I.

*Dear Dave, I saw the article in another weekly about the cf-book holder. I agree with your opinion regarding the suggestion, and would hope that we will never train "second class doctors" to work independently. I believe that the M.D. must closely supervise and accept the responsibility for the assistant's work. Without the latter, I am afraid the first will not be done. Thanks, EHE. St. Croix district.*

*Please call Dr. Woodhall's office - all of his calls answers come to Dr. D.*

January 4, 1968

Dr. W. C. Davison  
The Duke Endowment  
1500 North Carolina National Bank Building  
Charlotte, North Carolina, 28202

Dear Dave:

I saw the same article in another weekly about the ex-bank robber. I agree with your opinion regarding the supervision, and would hope that we will never train "second class doctors" to work independently. I believe that the M.D. must (1) closely supervise and (2) accept the responsibility for the assistant's work. Without the latter, I am afraid the first will not be done. Thanks, and I hope you find St. Croix pleasant.

With best regards.

Very truly yours,

E. Harvey Estes, Jr., M.D.  
Professor and Chairman

EHE:lf