

The Boynton Beach Doctor's Strip Mall

From the Boynton Beach Chronicles

By William Rabinowitz

Since when do you mean the real isn't funny?

You think I made this up? You just look with eyes open....



We went out to the Pancake House for an early dinner. The fat layers around our middles had thinned to dangerous levels. The Pancake House is next door to the Boynton Beach Doctor's Strip Mall. You park your car at one end and move on down the line.... It is always an entertaining day.

First stop is the Podiatrist, the old foot and ankle guy, Dr. Horowitz. You go in and take off your shoes and socks. He works on your bunions and the green grassy things growing between your toes. A shot of Novocain, who feels anything anyway?

Next stop is the dentist. Open our mouth and hope that the Novocain Dr. Whitehead just injected you with finds its mark real soon. Your feet are deadened and now you are dead from the head up too.

But now the real serious medical docs come along, the dermatologists, the gastroenterologists, the internists, the plastic surgeons, and ... are more doors down the way.

What is an elderly Boynton Beacher supposed to do?

The folks here are old.

All this getting up, getting down, fixing your shirt, adjusting your pants, tying your shoes, straightening your hair, standing up, laying down, getting up and getting down, undress, dress, one doc's office after another. This may be a doctor's strip mall but even if all the docs got together and pooled their resources there is not enough Advil to go around for the strained backs, arthritic fingers and swollen joints that have to shuffle along with their walkers and canes from office to office.

When you're a Boynton Beacher, most of us are giving Methuselah a run for his money. Your eyesight is not so good; your hearing is...what did your say? So who gives a darn anymore anyway? You have seen it all, the neighbors have seen it all and so have the docs...

The practical real estate planners of the Boynton Beach Doctor's Strip mall put in a Dry Cleaner's with Alterations just as you finish with the Dentist. Progressing down the strip mall, the sign on each front door is mundanely uniform in large block letters; welcome, sign in, take out your Medicare card, have a seat. Assuming you can pay, the guard at the receptionist barrier buzzes the electric lock letting you in to the inner sanctum of exam rooms.

"Take off your clothes and wait." You are ordered. "The doctor will be with you in five minutes."

It is more likely thirty minutes before the doc shows. They know.

If it takes forty three minutes for the average Boynton Beacher to get dressed in the morning, what makes them think they can get undressed in five?

What is a Beacher supposed to do? Get undressed and then dressed to walk ten feet to the next office to be told take off your clothes and wait for the doctor who will be with you in five minutes thirty minutes from now. Who the heck is going to bend over and tie your shoes?

Certainly, you hope the doctors or the nurses are going to do it? The doctors went to medical school so they can tell the nurses to do it. The nurses tell the receptionist to help. And the receptionist suddenly does not speak English. She should get a sore back?

Boynton Beachers are practical, logical and reasonable. After the dentist, before they hit Doctor's Row, that is where the Dry Cleaner is. You go in, take off all your clothes and instruct the Cleaner you will pick them up after the doctor visits down the row.

Beacher skins are delicate. It is very important to remind the Dry Cleaner, "lite starch", on the unmentionables. Alterations will be needed if the plastic surgeon can do something with the Dunlop problem they developed because of the Pancake House. (It's the Pancake House fault.) The seamstress is alerted.

The Dry Cleaner's gives you a little white hospital gown with two tie ribbons your arthritic fingers can't reach anyway. Out the door you go, grateful it is Florida and 75 degrees outside. The dermatologist, first stop next door, has to check out that rash that has been bedeviling you.

The dermo guy pronounces, "It's something you ate".

He moves you on to the office next door, the gastroenterologist. She tells you, after more needles, finger pokes where it does not feel good, hummms and ahaaas, "Your meds are out of balance". So you grab the flap in back of your little gown and get on to the family general practitioner, next office on the mall walk.

Dr. Sengupta confirms it is not your meds that are the cause of that ugly rash on your, don't ask where. He thinks it is that jelly roll hanging over your belly of layered fat on fat. Best to grab the flap of your little white gown again, time to go see the plastic surgeon. Dr. Sengupta hurries you out the door. His waiting room is full of Medicare paychecks.

The plastic surgeon, Dr. Sturgeon (for real), looks you up and down like a piece of lox. "The jelly roll", he pronounces in his best politically incorrect bedside blunt manner "is definitely the rash culprit – one layer of fat hanging on top of another and jiggling away".

Dr. Sturgeon, the surgeon, assures the Beacher he can help with an office body alteration.

"Liposuction" he proposes. "We can call the Dry Cleaner and have those size 44 pants taken in to a 38."

Boynton Beachers might have bad eyesight but the glint of a liposuction horse needle is enough to easily scare the jelly roll off of a geriatric frame. Forget the needle. Where the cardiologist? When it comes to needles, a Beacher moves pretty fast.

A panicked call to the alternations gal at the Dry Cleaner is individually self-prescribed.

"Have those 44 pants let out to 46 with an elastic waist" is the plaintive plea.

Grab your flap and out the door.

Carmella has been around the block of this strip mall more than once. She had finished with the pants and hour earlier. The shirt and the unmentionables have been washed, cleaned, pressed and over-starched.

Putting their walkers into high gear they herd for the Pancake House.

This is an emergency. Orders are placed without even looking at the menu; a large stack of emotionally therapeutic pancakes stuffed with cherries, topped with blueberries and whipped cream. Everyone here is from the WWII generation and very patriotic.

It has been quite a day. Forget Dr. Sturgeon, the plastic surgeon. Forget the other Docs. They all got a hold of your Medicare plastic payment. They are happy lambkins. There they are, sitting, joking and porking at the Pancake House, happily at a table across from you pouring extra syrup and packing on the butter...on the Government's dime...or is it your dime?

Life comes around. They will get their turn someday you know. Age does have some wisdom.

"Pass the butter pecan syrup please."

It all works nicely and sugary comfortable. Next week, the rash has moved from one unmentionable area to the opposite side. The Beachers repeat the whole cycle.

One, who remembers having been to the Boynton Beach Doctor's Strip Mall the week before? And... and two, who will not do anything to get out of the house, power walk up and down the Publix Grocery aisles, nibble free samples and drink flavored, vitamin enhanced water from little specimen cups.

Life in Boynton Beach is grand.



"Kind of drafty, must have forgotten something."

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