

Editor's Note: *The author writes, "For the last 17 years I have been living in a remote part of N. California and providing medical care to my rural patients. This poem depicts a visit to one of those patients. I've been a Family Practice physician for 50 years, write in the mornings and drive out doing home visits in the afternoons driving on a winding mountain road."*

Country Doc

Post Office, two-pump gas station and general store.
Wonder bread, Miller High Life, sandwich meat. Videos.
Honeydew, CA. Population 489.
Two hours from the 101. Three or four recluses
per square mile of fir forest. Ex-cons in Panther Gap,
born-again in New Jerusalem, and a few old hippies
smoking pot and tending their gardens.
One day I get a call from Gladys who lives in a double-wide
with her elder- husband she met on the internet.
Frank's sick. Four months, and I'm sick of taking care of him.
Could you take a look? I'm not exactly a mainstream medico
punching out evidence-based diagnostics on my Palm Pilot
but still, I got the call, so I grab my Merck Manual, black bag
of antibiotics and Vicodin, get into the Toyota pickup
with my dog Henry and head for King's Peak
on a one lane logging road. Four wheel drive all the way.
Frank's on the recliner and I smell cat shit, wood smoke,
and fried meat. Bottles of vitamins everywhere,
he's got yellow eyeballs, wears Depends, and his toes
are like Vienna sausages. Wet rales in both lungs, atrial fibrillation.
Frank, you're going to die unless you get to the hospital.
A week later he's back from town, normal sinus rhythm,
31 pounds drained out the catheter, breathing easy
and walking to the outhouse.
Doc, you saved my life.
Yeah Frank, me and the hot shots at the County Hospital.
Next time, don't wait until your feet explode.

Peter Nash
Aptos, CA