



Harry Golden's "Only In America"

WHILE I WUZ AWAY

(Note: This column was dictated by Harry Golden in the hospital where he is recovering from a gall-bladder operation).

And don't kid yourself, I have been away. And I shall be away a lot longer than I supposed, another four or five weeks here and then probably into a self-care program run by the hospital wherein I can work for a few hours and check back in at night.

But I have a comfortable room in Charlotte Memorial. I overlook the broad lawn dotted with azalea shrubs that stretches to the ever-busy parking lot. I am told the hospital itself from the outside is an architect's dream and from the inside a doctor's nightmare.

"Why?" I asked my doctor.

"Because in the hallways, you can hear patients belch," he replied.

"Maybe that's because of the hospital diet," I ventured. But he looked at me so sternly, I thought he was going to discourse on my weight again; so, in the words of S.J. Perelman, I went away from there.

It's cruel and surprising how an infected gall bladder can take you away from th-

ings. When I came into the hospital, a day after Christmas, the Red Guards were tearing up all of China. When I read again I found large groups of the Chinese were tearing up the Red Guards. I mulled this over, wondering if I was focusing and then decided I was. All I could think of the situation was that they should all have a gall bladder infection.

When I packed my razor blade, bathrobe and slippers, I remember there was a great to-do about William Manchester's book on the assassination. Mrs. Kennedy and several law firms were suing Mr. Manchester, a publisher, and Look magazine all of whom were represented by several more law firms.

Since then, however, I discover the whole issue has resolved itself into a suit between Look and several German publishing houses, I don't know whether it was my weakened condition or the speed with which law suits can deteriorate, but I fell asleep dreaming Look wanted to publish a story "Save the Berlin Wall."

I suppose if the doctor analyzes the quality and portent of my dreams he will subtract the Jell-O from my diet, the last of my gus-



Bell-McClure Photo

HARRY GOLDEN, PHOTOGRAPHED IN CHARLOTTE (N.C.) MEMORIAL HOSPITAL IS CHEERFUL AND RECOVERING. HE LOST 45 POUNDS THE HARD WAY, UNDERGOING AN OPERATION WITH COMPLICATIONS.

tatory joys.

If you think the Red Guards and battalions of lawyers are hard-hearted and ruthless, you should deal with a grumpy doctor who has played handball and tennis all his life and skips lunch so he can attend to patients. I asked him wasn't it time for me to resume a regular diet and he said, "No."

"The hospital food is unappetizing," I said.

"I don't care if you never eat again," he answered.

When I am fully recovered and not so much in love with

sleep I may devise a Golden plan to put all the gall-bladder doctors behind the Wall.

Take away my Jell-O; I don't care.

The truth is that I am sick. I have already lost 50 pounds. And any work is fatiguing, immensely fatiguing. I can indicate what I want to say and my associate and son, Richard will often have to fill it in. He will by-line these columns from time to time. What I have to say about hospitals, health, and doctors, however, is right out of the horse's mouth.

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