

Cowboy Medicine

By Natalie Whitfield

Inspired by my time at Memorial Hospital of Sweetwater County

I grew up where boots met dirt,
When the roosters crowed it was time to work.
Until one day there was no porchlight,
Just crickets chirping in the still of night.

I sat in a chair by my Papa's bed,
With worried thoughts that began to spread.
Just days before, I'd watched him ride,
To feed the horses, full of pride.
Then came words I couldn't understand,
A myocardial infarction, a hospital band.
The doctors spoke in foreign ways,
Told us he had numbered days.
But in that silence, seeds were sown—
To speak the tongue, I'd one day own.
From porchlight dreams to sterile halls,
I chased this dream through countless calls.
Now years have passed, and here I stand,
In rural medicine, just as I planned.

Out in Wyoming, skies stretched wide,
A cowboy with a weakened stride.
The nurses whispered when he walked in,
His boots were cracked, his face worn thin.
“*He had it coming,*” they would say,
But cowboys don't just break that way.
They're grit and steal and hardened bone,
And pain they often face alone.

They'll wave you off and tip their hat—
“*Just patch me up, I'm fine with that,*”
Knocking loud on death's own gate,
They'll turn to you, smile and say,
“*I'm doin' fine, don't make me stay—
got cattle to round, got hay to lay.*”

And though they'll never stay too long,
You'll stitch them up and send them home.
You'll speak the words their kin don't know,
Then watch them rise and gently go.
That strength can mask a world of pain,
And still ride out through wind and rain.
And when they leave, they stay with me—
the spirit of a cowboy,
wild and free.

So, here's to cowboys, and all they survive,
And the doctors who keep their spirit alive.
That know that medicine's not black and white,
It's porchlight dreams and rural nights.