

## Foreword

by Gilbert Morris

For most men the most dreaded words in the language are, “Did you take the trash out?” or “We have to talk!” For a novelist, however, the most dreaded words are, “Would you please read my manuscript and tell me what you think?”

I get numerous requests of this nature, and being the good fellow that I am, I usually agree. One dear lady’s work was very bad, and I tried gently to put her off. She kept badgering me to read more of her work, and finally after driving me nearly crazy, she asked, “Do you think there’s enough *fire* in my work?” I heard myself saying, “Lady—there’s not enough of your work in the fire!” This was unkind, and I had to do penance by reading the awful stuff and being extra nice to her.

Walt Larimore’s work does *not* belong in the fire! It belongs in the library of every person who has had, is having, or will ever have medical problems (which means all of us!)

I freely admit I have had problems with doctors. Others may tell lawyer jokes, but *I* tell doctor jokes. I have a mental file of horror stories about physicians who have failed me, and since I have a memory like a zebra, I never forget! When I sat down to read Walt Larimore’s manuscript, even before I read the first page I was preparing the speech I’d be forced to give to Walt. “Walt, stick to doctoring people, and let *real* writers handle the books.”

Two aspects of *Bryson City Tales* gave me great pleasure: First, it gave me new insight into how doctors are made, and second, I simply *enjoyed* the fine writing.

Like most people, I am somewhat frightened of doctors. They ask me to trust them, to put my life in their hands. They

## Bryson City Tales

are powerful people, and as someone has once said, “Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.” But in this book we see the human side of one man who is humbled by his own limitations. The curtain is drawn back, and we see behind the scenes of the drama. As Walt Larimore is thrust into the cosmos of a small southern town, he makes mistakes, he rushes in where angels fear to tread, he makes enemies. Living through the very human problems of a young physician trying to make it, just like the rest of us ordinary mortals, gave me fresh insight into the world of medicine.

*Bryson City Tales* also pleased me because it is so readable. After having taught creative writing for twenty-five years and written quite a few novels, I have one criterion that I apply to writing: Is this book fun to read? I found out years ago that teachers, preachers, and writers had better do whatever they have to in order to entertain those who sit under them! And Walt Larimore has the gift. As a novelist, I harbor a hope that he never turns his hand to writing novels, for he has the talent for it—and I don’t need the competition! His fine book brings before the reader a vivid world inhabited by colorful people. We see the tragedy and the triumph of their lives, and like a master, Doc Larimore employs the old show-business adage, “Make ’em laugh—make ’em cry!”

We cry when a young woman loses her baby, but we laugh at the man of ninety-eight years who’s about to be married to a young woman and comes to Larimore for a premarital exam. When the good doctor (worried about the old man’s health) warns him tactfully that sex can be dangerous under certain conditions, the old man stares at him and says, “Well, Doc, if she dies, she dies.”

If you are seeking a book that delights and informs, you need look no further than *Bryson City Tales!*

*Gilbert Morris*  
December 20, 2001