The Gift

*By Pete Clark*

One morning in the early 90’s I sat at in my office at Colorado Healthcare perusing the *Rocky Mountain News* before beginning work. I skimmed through the news stories, read the editorial page and thumbed through to the entertainment pages, where I noticed that Gregory Peck was coming to town to appear at the Paramount Theater. That caught my attention because Gregory Peck was Norma’s favorite actor.

Norma’s birthday was coming up and tickets to see Gregory Peck live would be the perfect gift. As I wrote a short program to pull specific patient information from the mainframe to create a report needed by someone in administration, I also waited impatiently for the Paramount Box Office to open. Time crept by that morning. After an eternity it was 10:00am and I placed my call to the box office, hoping I could get front row seats. The lady who answered said front row seats were available and quoted a significant price for front row center seats. I ran through the checkbook in my head, subtracted the cost of the tickets from the balance and saw that I could squeeze through until payday. The lady said the tickets would be mailed to me.

My daughter Lori came into town to attend a training class for her job with IRS. Lori finished her training a couple of weeks before Labor Day Weekend, so Norma accompanied her back to Lyman, Wyoming. Lori had to do an audit in Jackson, so Norma went with her and had an enjoyable time at places like the Silver Dollar Bar in the Wort Hotel. Saturday of the holiday weekend I drove to Lyman. That Sunday was Norma’s birthday and I gave her a card that contained the tickets to see Gregory Peck. She freaked out as I had made sure she had seen nothing about his pending performance.

When the time came, we presented our tickets and were escorted to our front row seats by an usher. The program was well presented and very entertaining and interesting. We could see and hear everything. As we were leaving we discovered that out tickets entitled us to attend a reception to meet Mr. Peck with drinks and food included. I asked Mr. Peck why his movie *Captain Newman MD* had never been on TV. He replied, “People don’t want to look at Combat Fatigue.” The condition is now known as PTSD.

Unknown to me, Norma had picked up a stray when she went down to have a cigarette. A seventeen year old girl wanted to meet Gregory Peck, but neither she nor her parents had the money for the tickets. Norma took her into the theater and convinced the security guard to look the other way while she and the girl went upstairs. The first hint I had of something awry was when a young woman tossed her coat onto me as she hurried by. When a situation pressed the fringes of reality, I never knew what Norma would do. Life could get very interesting.