

2009

Wild Onions



Wild Onions XXIII 2009

The title of our journal has raised a good deal of speculation. The wild onion is a common garden-variety weed, a hardy plant that grows almost anywhere and tends to spring up in unexpected places throughout the woods and fields and roadsides in this part of the country. It blossoms into an unusual purple flower and its underground bulb, if tasted, yields a pungent, spicy flavor. The wild onion is a symbol of the commonplace yet surprising beauty that is living and growing around us all the time, the spice that though uncultivated, unexpectedly thrives and – if we only take time to notice – enhances life.

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Wild Onions Vol. XXIII: 2009

Wild Onions is an annual publication funded by The Doctors Kienle Center for Humanistic Medicine, Pennsylvania State University College of Medicine. It is a journal of poetry, prose, photography, visual art, and music created by members of the entire Hershey Medical Center community.

Entries are selected on the basis of artistic merit, representation of the broad diversity of the medical community, and recognition of the interplay between science and creativity that is essential to medicine as a human endeavor.

Faculty and staff--both clinical and non-clinical--patients, families, students, and volunteers are invited to submit original (not previously published) literary or artistic work on all topics. Photography or drawings may be submitted in either black and white or color format. All entries may be submitted to the Department of Humanities or electronically via wildonions@hmc.psu.edu. For an unbiased selection process, we ask that identifying information (author's name, relationship to Milton S. Hershey Medical Center, mailing address, and telephone number) be listed on a separate sheet of paper and sent along with the entry. If you wish to have your entry returned, please include a self-addressed envelope.

No portion of the journal may be reproduced by any process or technique without consent of the author. All submissions, inquiries, and requests for authors and current or past issues of *Wild Onions* can be directed to Managing Editor, Department of Humanities, H134, Penn State University College of Medicine, 500 University Drive, Hershey, PA 17033.

The aim of The Kienle Center is to advance the appreciation, knowledge, and practice of humane and humanistic medicine, defined as health care that is sympathetic, compassionate, and effective. *Wild Onions* serves this goal by encouraging literary and artistic work that seeks to describe and understand, with empathy, the experiences of giving and receiving health care.

Activities of The Doctors Kienle Center for Humanistic Medicine include:

The Kienle Service Grant, co-sponsored with the International Health Interest Group, for medical students engaged in volunteer work with underserved patients.

The Doctors Kienle Lectureship, which brings national leaders in humane medicine to Hershey Medical Center.

The Experience of Care Project, which teaches medical students through participant-observation studies.

The Doctors Kienle Prizes in literature, art, and music.

The Galleries Within, an exhibit of biomedical art.

The Doctors Kienle Collection, materials concerning humanistic medical practice (located in the Harrell Library).

The Student Humanitarian Award, co-sponsored with The Association of Faculty and Friends, for a medical student.

The Mary Louise Witmer Jones Humanitarian Award, given annually to an outstanding resident.

The Nurse's Humanitarian Award, in honor of Lawrence F. Kienle, M.D.

Humanism in Medicine Awards, co-sponsored with The Arnold P. Gold Foundation, for a graduating medical student and for a faculty member.

The Kienle Cultural Series, a series of presentations in the arts and humanities.

Patient Portraits, photography exhibit by Joseph Gascho, M.D.



A Follow-Up Story

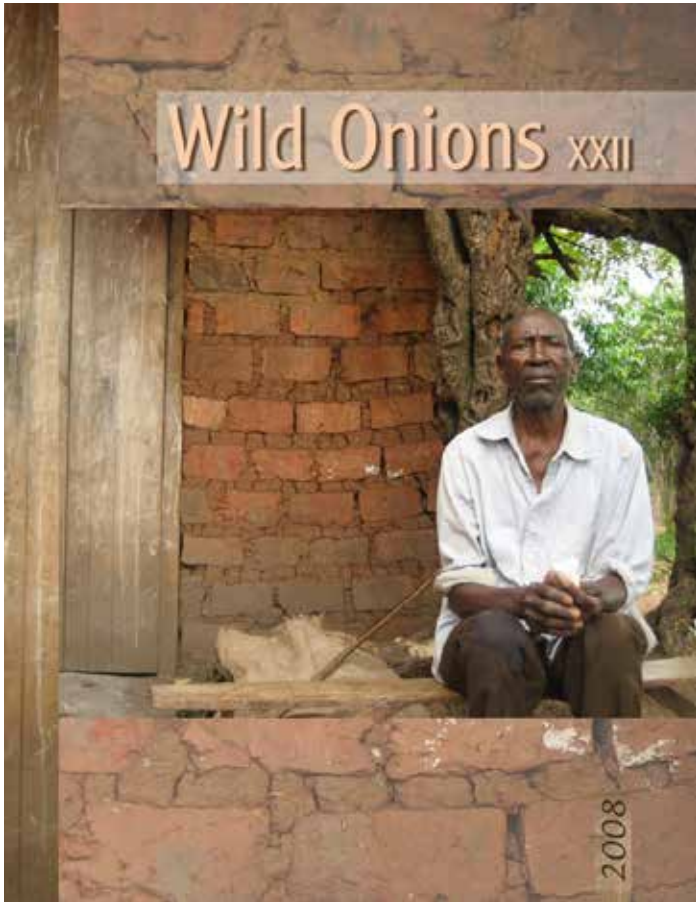
By Anna Joong

An older man sat quietly on a bench, patiently waiting for the out-of-town physician to arrive and examine his badly infected foot. I held up my camera in the form of a question, and he responded by adjusting his shirt and straightening forward to pose. Click. A moment captured, a strong face creased by lines of experience and hardship from being one of the few elder men to survive the 1980s Bush War that ravaged his country.

Last year, the judges from *Wild Onions* were struck by the story held in this man's face and awarded the photo 3rd prize in the Doctors Kienle Competition in Art as well as the honor of serving as cover art. But the story continued with the next group of medical students who traveled to Uganda this past summer. "I want you to find this man," I said handing them copies of *Wild Onions XXII* and the prize money.

My colleagues found their way to the small village north of Kampala and asked the locals if they knew the man in the photo. His face was quickly recognized, and my colleagues were saddened to learn he had passed away from cancer six months after the photo was taken. They were introduced to the man's son, daughter, and several grandchildren who were overcome by the journal cover and unexpected prize money.

During my short medical elective in Uganda, a common request from the people I met along the way was to share their story. They told me their stories of HIV/AIDS, of mothers dying during childbirth, of government corruption, but also of youth music groups, their new small business, or success in school. And so, while I only met this man for but a moment, this is a piece of his story, and I thank the Doctors Kienle Center for being a part of it.



Introduction

Kimberly Harbaugh, M.D. Department of Neurosurgery



I am honored to introduce the 2009 edition of *Wild Onions*, our yearly opportunity to celebrate humanity in medicine through literary works and art. It also serves as a yearly reminder of the need for constant vigilance in maintaining a humanistic approach to medical care.

When the Kienle Center for Humanistic Medicine was established 30 years ago, the primary threat to humanistic medicine was biomedical technology. While the potential to misuse technology remains, I would contend that there are many other potential assaults on the humanistic approach to medicine.

One of the biggest threats relates to the multiple layers of bureaucracy in medicine and society at large. Considered individually, safety checks and procedures seem to make sense and require little time expenditure. Taken collectively, these measures are often redundant, expensive, and consume a significant portion of time that could be spent with the patient.

Perhaps to make up for this loss of time, attempts are made to practice more efficiently. Care is standardized in a "one size fits all" approach with standardized order sets, billing practices, authorization of care, and broad application of clinical trial results, all based on medical diagnoses as opposed to the circumstances relating to individual patients. Unfortunately, this can lead to policies that lack common sense. While there may be theoretical reasons for these policies from the standpoint of trying to limit the costs of medicine and prevent unnecessary services, these practices are not in the best interest of the individual patient.

More and more, "quality" of medical care is being defined not by whether the physician took a careful history and did a thorough exam but whether a series of bureaucratic steps were followed. It is much easier to define a checklist than to measure true quality care. Unfortunately, this further dehumanizes the practice of medicine. From the standpoint of the clinician, patients are individual works of art. From the standpoint of the bureaucratic process, patients are the output of an assembly line. As the bureaucratic excess pervades all of society, it is important to begin looking at ways to measure its effectiveness and limit it where possible.

Fortunately, as demonstrated in the pages that follow, the bureaucracy has not completely isolated us from one another, and there are examples of humanistic medicine all around us. In some cases, the humanistic efforts are heroic. In other cases, these efforts are much more subtle. That leads us to the topic of the special section of this edition of *Wild Onions*, "The Little Things." Like a brilliantly colored dandelion growing in the sidewalk crack of a gray city street, the little things have a way of standing out and brightening even the most mundane or oppressive situations.

The hospital is full of examples of little things. I find the hallway that leads to the operating suites particularly fruitful, whether it is the final kiss goodbye before a loved one heads off to surgery or seeing one of our littlest patients being carried in the arms of an anesthesia team member while the OR crib is wheeled alongside. There are times in medicine when we have nothing to offer but little things. When a patient has suffered a devastating brain injury and no amount of medical care will bring him or her back, all I can offer the family is a hand on a shoulder, a hug, or simple words of reassurance that their loved one hasn't suffered any pain. At the opposite extreme, there is the glorious look of relief on a family member's face when greeted, after their loved one's long surgery, with the simple words, "Everything went fine."

As you peruse the pages of this publication, I hope you call to mind the little things in your past, and actively create and seek new ones in the days to come. These are the things that keep us grounded, the things that keep us connected... the things that define our humanity.

The Little Things

Welcome to this year’s Special Section of *Wild Onions*

There is so much that can go wrong on any particular day at the hospital. There are individuals on the brink between this life and the next. There are feelings of sadness, anger, and cynicism. Everyone seems so busy. There are doctors walking, quick-paced through the halls, their stethoscopes trailing behind them as they pass. But luckily, if one looks closely enough, there in the moments between the daily hustle and bustle, are the little things.

A patient grabs your hand and says thank you for listening. A child giggles as you play peek-a-boo while she waits for that inevitable shot. Your friend grabs you a cup of tea the morning after you have been up all night on call. The housekeeper is a friendly face who points you toward north when you become lost in the hallways. The cafeteria lady lets you slide by with some extra pasta on your plate – no charge. They are the little things that brighten our day and remind us that we are all here to care for one another.

In this issue of *Wild Onions*, we dedicate our special section to the little things. We can all benefit from acknowledging those memories which might often fly under our radar, insignificant and fleeting, but which also have the potential to mean so much on particularly difficult days. We have asked our editorial staff to contribute to the section by reflecting upon what this topic means to them, and you will find their responses in italics throughout the pages that follow. We hope you enjoy this issue of *Wild Onions*, and that you too can remember some little things that stand out in your life.

Michelle Quirk was born and raised near the shore in Belford, NJ. Growing up, she loved feeding the ducks at Holmdel Park on Saturday afternoons with her dad, family trips--especially to Disney World--

and tap dancing. She earned a B.A. in Philosophy from Muhlenberg College in Allentown, PA, and also spent a wonderful semester abroad at the University of Edinburgh in Scotland. In her spare time, she enjoys reading, taking pictures, writing, and yoga. She has a love of the liberal arts and looks forward to continuing her work with art and humanities in medicine. This summer, she will be entering a residency in Pediatrics at Georgetown University.

She would like to dedicate this issue to her grandmother: Nanny, you always read everything I created with my pencil from the time I was a little girl and loved every piece unconditionally. Thank you, and miss you.

John Magruder was born in Auburn, Alabama and raised in Glen Allen, Virginia. As a boy he earned his Eagle Scout award and discovered a love of poetry. John earned a B.S. in biomedical engineering at Virginia Commonwealth University. At Penn State, he has been fortunate to have a variety of experiences--including a medical mission to Mozambique--but has devoted the lion’s share of his time to the arts and humanities. John has served on the staff of *Wild Onions* for four years, and he won first prize in the Doctors Kienle Competition in Literature in 2006, and second prize in 2007. While singing tenor in the a capella group *MedNotes*, John met and befriended the lovely Kathryn Kasicky. This May they will marry, and John will join Kate at Wake Forest University Baptist Medical Center, where he will begin his training as a pediatric neurologist.



Michelle Quirk and
John Magruder, MS IV
Senior Co-Editors of *Wild Onions*

Special Section

The Little Things



Awaiting Life
© Sherri Dale, R.N. NICU

Things that Matter

©Ananya Das, Staff
Department of Orthopaedics and Rehabilitation

She sat patiently
and listened to my rants and raves.
I complained about everything,
The food, the weather, my family!
She listened with concern;
sleep lingered on her eyelids
painting pale purple shadows
beneath the gentle eyes.

She patted my hand reassuringly
and straightened the sheets.
I complained about everything,
The machines, the needles, the pills!
She listened with a smile,
her sleep-deprived eyes
crinkling with warmth as she said,
“Don’t worry, you’ll be better soon!”

All of a sudden I didn’t mind
lying flat on my back all day.
Someone was there
to comfort me
about the big things that matter
and the little things too...

(Why I Never Write About)
Tender Moments

©P.R.J. Smith
Husband of Diane Smith Anatomic Pathology

Not worth plundering
Small and leaf like
Bringing small bare feet to mind
Knocking on wooden sidewalks
A shifting like a stem in wind
Or a body nonchalant in sleep
Or the relay of a letter
From the quiet postman’s hand
Arriving in smallness
They bear a stamp of sticky paper
That dissolves in the rain between lips
A remembered smile the solitary detritus

Soft smallnesses
The addition and not taking away
and then a fading without tears
Like villages quiet and poor in gold
These are, like leaves in still water,
Not worth plundering

Nonna

©Rosanne Lamoreaux, B.S.N., R.N. Hemophilia Center

It is the smell of her Italian soups I remember the most,
As I often imagine her now, standing in my kitchen as a ghost.
Sometimes I feel that she’s here and I’m intruding on her territory,
Even though she often told me, when the time comes, I should not worry.
So, when Alzheimer’s disease eventually stole her mind, body and soul,
I moved into her house, the one place on earth I had always felt whole.

Every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday on the stove a boiling pot,
She was always careful to add the right seasonings, when it was hot.
What type of soup will she be making today, I often thought,
As I walked through her door, with a smile, and a happy-go-lucky trot.
Never once realizing that the day would ultimately come,
When my whole world would feel as if it were coming undone.

She was always there to listen and offer sound advice,
Never once criticizing, as she carefully cut the potatoes twice.
She listened to my childhood, and later adult dreams and tales of woe,
Often remarking, “Don’t ever let it stop you from trying, Roe.”
So, these days as I slowly dice vegetables, add tomato sauce, and beans,
I think only of the happy times with her and not the later sad scenes.

I stand at the stove where she spent so much of her time,
Believing that life moves so quickly it should somehow be a crime.
Minestrone and pasta fagiolo are two of her soups I vividly recall,
As I close my eyes and see her clearly in my head, as I did when I was small.
She always acted as if my entrance into her house was the highlight of her day,
And that being a warm and loving grandmother was living God’s way.



Reflecting Pool

©Lauren Massaro MS IV

Letting Go

©Jeannette Landis Daughter of Susan Landis, C.R.N.P. Anesthesiology





Fiery Furnace
Arches National Park
Utah

© Georgia Brown, M.S., R.N.
Public Health Sciences

Time Capsule

© Julie Elizabeth Uspal MS I

I was six years old with all my worldly treasure before me
my three brightest red crayons
Lawrence with his frayed ear, no left eye
a photograph of us on that homemade rope swing
the ground will hold these treasures
you declare, throwing up dirt like confused rain
and a note sending my regards (be kind to me!) to the future
I clutch the box to a taller me
impatiently peer in and feel control of all time
you dig deeper and deeper into the soil. . .
I was 20 years old and they were digging deeper and deeper into the soil
they will bury you here under the sway of the red maple
they will bury you here because no one could figure out what was wrong with you
they will bury you here because the doctors didn't know what to do
they will bury you here because I couldn't make you better
once again, I yield my treasure to the ground. . .
now I am 23 years old and dig deeper and deeper into pages
among stacks and stacks of library books
someday I hope to know what to do for someone else's grandma



Caesar

© Lauren Massaro MS IV

Vacation

© Benjamin H. Levi, M.D., Ph.D.
Departments of Humanities and Pediatrics

I like vacation
It passes flutter-flutter
Every lunch
Peanut butter

Dr. Levi wrote this poem at the age of 4.

Destiny

© Judy Schaefer, R.N.
Kienle Center Member

A strange thing for us to do
but we were in a foreign country
with stiff new passports in our pockets
And strangeness was more than welcome
The elderly hitchhiker looked tame enough, slightly boggy
Moist with smells of new mown sweet hay
and mothy wool
Once in our hired car, his brand of English, if it was that,
was not ours. He sucked in great heaves of air and sighed
out grey round stones
Sounds that rolled forward over our shoulders,
as his eyes stayed on the road
He watched the windshield from the shadows in the back
seat. We pretended some kind and nodding comprehension
but we never understood
And yet he signaled effectively enough
for us to stop, open the door and let him boggle out
at the crossroads, some five miles later
Brown woolen hat tip and toothy smile
Some gratitude was expressed
some agreement on a fine day

I decided when I grew up I would have a waterbed and a big, big comfy couch. I still don't have those things, so maybe I am not grown up quite yet. I also thought grown-ups had a normal daily routine, and I imagined they were not prone to sudden sweeping daydreams in which they became ninjas or the person who is best at everything! I do have a routine, but I probably couldn't nail down exactly what it was, because it's still peppered with moments where I am zillions of miles away, saving the world or just spending time, possibly by a "watering hole." I may be well on my way to being "all grown up," but I decided I'm not too worried—even in the most practical of grown-ups, I find myself catching the tiny shining light in their eyes which means they still dream, too.

Abby Podany

Something for April

© Dwayne Morris
Medical Office Associate Coordinator
Outpatient Services

When I need a gift for April
I search within my heart
And give to her something from which
She'll never have to part
Silver and gold have their place in life
But nine times out of ten
When it's Something For April
It's not that kind of gem

She'd rather hear a story
Eloquently told
Or hike through mother nature
Wonders to behold
And if you can make her laugh out loud
She'll make you laugh that way too
When it's Something For April
It's usually something for you



To Know

© Frank Tarby Patient

Lord! When I was a boy I was taught to love you with all my
heart and soul... and I did.
But I don't know you.

I was taught to have faith in you and to glorify in your good
works..... and I did.
But I don't know you.

I was taught to pray to you and to ask for anything I needed...
But I don't know you.

But as my days went on, I saw a baby smile and take his first
step, and saw the love that poured from his mother's eyes.

I saw a rose in full bloom, and touched it.

I heard children laughing in the backyard.

I was awakened by a robin and his lilting springtime song.

I saw a stately tree reaching its branches toward heaven with a
crimson color you wouldn't believe, with nuances and shading
no artist could fully capture.

I saw a brook laughing over the rocks on its tear through the
quiet woods.

I saw a very old couple walking, holding hands.

I saw a beautiful sunrise and a more beautiful sunset.

I walked the beach and heard the roar of the ocean as it made
its never-ending quest to attack the sand.

I bared my skin to the sun and felt the warmth travel through me.

Then I closed my eyes and thought of all I had seen, felt, and
heard...

Lord, maybe I do know you.

Apple a Day

© Jolene Esposito
Research Coordinator Department of Medicine

When the Shadows Come

© Alexandra Brandt Age 9
Granddaughter of Jeanne Brandt
Department of Humanities

In the evening
When the sun winks its eye
The sky is ablaze with colors
Like a rainbow coming to life
When the shadows come
The owls sing their lullaby
Which is carried upon the wind
And swooping around in the fading sky
Bats flutter and whirl hoping it will be dark soon
When the shadows come
The sun puts on its colorful nightcap
And the moon carefully adjusts it
Then cradled by pink and orange
Comes the cape of the night's blue
When the shadows come
Flowers whistle in the wind
Whispering their secrets
It is a peaceful song
That tells you
When the shadows come

The Celestial Light in Their Eyes

© Sigmund J. David Husband of Patient

My young neighbor held out a bottle
Containing a dead firefly,
Telling me sadly,
"It died last night."

How could I ever explain
To the five-year-old girl
They usually do not last the night.

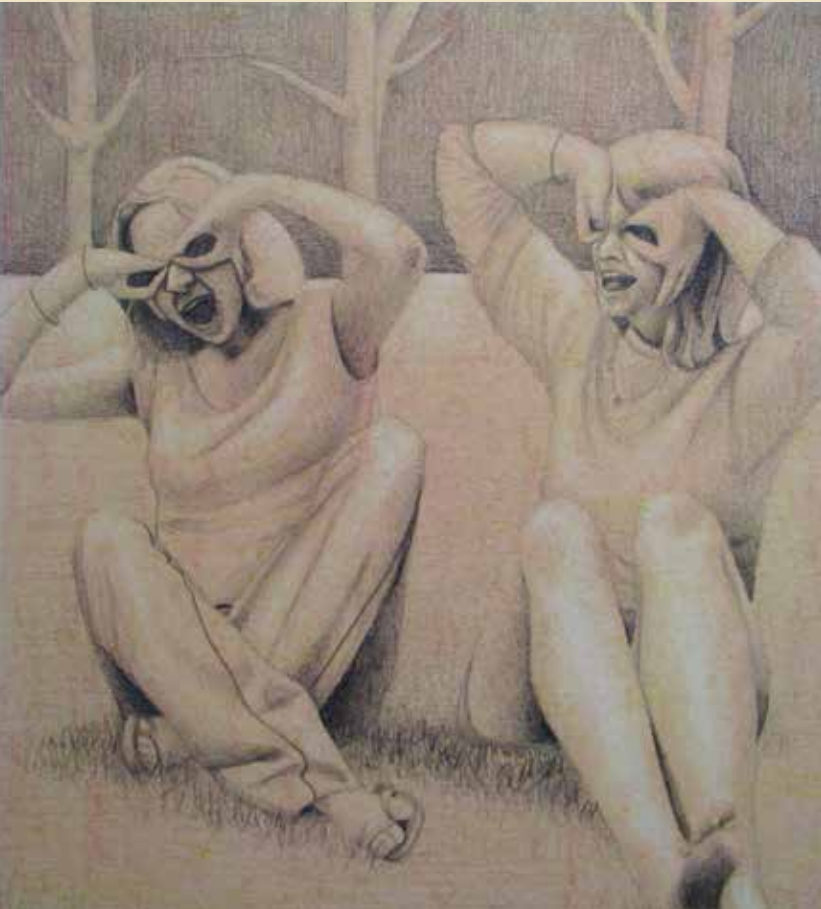
I wanted so much for her
To see it glow again.

I wanted to hold her hand
And recapture the innocence I had lost.

I walked away
With the image
Of her clutching
The glass bottle tightly.

God bless the children
Who have not forgotten
The miracle of the commonplace

And may I always be able to see
The celestial light in their eyes.



Laughing Girls

© Jeannette Landis
Daughter of Susan Landis, C.R.N.P.
Department of Anesthesia

A Doctor's Ode

© Martha Peaselee Levine, M.D. Departments of Pediatrics and Psychiatry

I call them my girls
but they're not, really
They belong to ED—
their eating disorder
They run until bones break
They stuff vacant, aching holes
until stomachs ache and heave
They deny themselves
food, and the freedom
to make mistakes
But isn't that the biggest mistake?
Perfection is a myth, a fairy tale
that even they don't believe.

I want to remind them
when they use words
always, never, everyone, that
those are black and white words.
I want them to remember
that the world is filled with countless
colors and even gray is beautiful!
Gray is fog, swirling among trees,
a Persian cat's silky fur, a wolf's
lush coat, rain clouds nourishing
the Earth, the churn of ocean waves
the sleek, slippery skin of dolphins in
those dark waters who chatter and leap
and aren't afraid of monsters hiding
in murky depths, or, at least, not so afraid
that they don't eat and leap and live.

Come, I want to tell them, dance like the dolphins
Stretch like that Persian cat and purr in contentment
Tip your heads back and howl with the wolves
Let your black and white judgments out into the night.
Let them out because they are shredding your souls.
Once released, those criticisms will swirl as a magical fog
to the moon whose craters were formed by other women
giving up their aching wounds. Fling out your hurt, your anger, your pain.
It will craft stars in the night. Suddenly you'll be painting with colors instead of just black and white.
You'll fashion monarch butterflies who will soar to Mexico; robins who will herald the coming of spring.
Imagine a world without color, that's what you're living now—come grab a handful of sunshine.
It might burn for a moment, but the pain won't last, and it won't be more intense than what you're living now.
Come, find beauty in the jagged cracks of a sidewalk, the lightning gash of a tree where moss grows, the sparkling
center of a geode whose true beauty wouldn't be seen if it stayed locked away.
Don't keep your beauty from yourself or from the world.



Nature's Elegance

© Andrew Messiha MS IV

Tucked inside is your **true voice**.
Listen, listen. It's the sound of a river, a raindrop, a hummingbird wing. Listen, listen.
Come, now is **your turn to sing**.

Winners of The Doctors Kienle Competition in Literature

Prizes are awarded yearly to authors of prose or verse works that are considered to be of exceptional artistic and humanistic merit. An outside judge determines awards, which range from \$100 to \$300. This year's judge for the Kienle Competition in Literature is Maria Vaccarella, Ph.D.. Dr. Vaccarella received her Ph.D. in Anglophone Literatures from 'Sapienza' University of Rome, Italy. She currently coordinates a program for Inter-Disciplinary.Net, a not-for-profit network promoting innovative global research and publishing, based in Oxford, United Kingdom. While the depiction of cancer in literature is a distinctive thread in her work, her current research centers on the socio-cultural construction of the epilepsy discourse in contemporary Europe. Dr. Vaccarella has just been awarded a prestigious Marie Curie Research Fellowship at King's College London, United Kingdom, where she will spend two years completing a discourse analysis of epilepsy, aimed at clinical application.

First Place

61 M, Systolic Click, BAV

© Joseph Gascho, M.D. Department of Cardiology

Whoever sent you for this test
Was smart to think the sound she heard
Was from a malformed valve:
Two cusps instead of three.
She'll tell you when you see her next
About what lies ahead:
In fifteen years or so,
An artificial valve.
But will she tell you that the pipe
Beyond the valve
Could crack at any time?
She will not know just what you want to know.
Some facts I wish I didn't know, like you.
My valve's bicuspid too.

Judge's Comments:

This poem is written from the perspective of a cardiologist who is reading an echocardiogram, and its structure is vaguely reminiscent of a Shakespearean sonnet—three quatrains and a final rhyming couplet—in which the last two lines often sum up, comment on, or in some way reverse what occurs in the lines before. The cardiologist imagines the office visit during which the problem was discovered and then wonders what will transpire during follow-up appointments between the astute physician and her newly-diagnosed patient. Slowly opening up to more complex implications, the poem raises the question about how much to tell the patient—about a physician's need to intuit how much information the patient will want to know because s/he finds it helpful, and at what point too much information merely becomes a source of anxiety. The real magic of the poem is the overturning of the perspective in the last two highly condensed lines, which leave an intense acoustic trace, or sound-memory, thanks to the rhyme. The poignancy of the cardiologist's empathic response to the patient he does not know is that he, too, suffers from a bicuspid valve. Unlike the patient, he knows all too well that his own heart "could crack at any time."

Second Place

Dr. S.

© Sara Wasserman MS IV

He was my pediatrician. Wife, son, practice in suburban Philly.
Sketched a bunny on my forearm, tuberculin test as the nose.
Rejoiced in my “firsts” like father for daughter: crawl, word, step.
Children, parents exposed their most intimate.
He listened.
One day, left his wife.
Moved in with a man.
Word got out.

Never practiced again.

Judge’s Comments:

This piece is in the form of “micro-fiction,” a story that is told in very few words (often 55 or fewer) and focuses on a single powerful image. Written from the perspective of an adult who now understands the mysterious disappearance of her beloved pediatrician when she was still a child, she reflects on the extent to which a physician’s personal life affects his medical practice. This doc is one of the pillars of the community: children are not afraid of his exams; parents feel his genuine interest for their children, so much so that they tell him their most intimate secrets. More than just a doctor, he serves as a father figure and something of a spiritual guide to his patients and their families. His life-altering choice costs him his reputation, and he is forced to stop practicing medicine. Longer sentences and affectionate terms at the beginning give way to telegraphic, matter-of-fact fragments toward the end. Here, the choppy rhythm feels, ironically, like reading a quickly scribbled patient history or even a newspaper obituary (the death of a career here). The author uses bare-bones biographical facts to underscore the fact that in the end, only the outward actions matter, not the physician’s proven skill or his intentions as a whole person . . . precisely all the things he embraced in his patients. The gap between the penultimate and last lines visually represents the empty silence in which this doctor’s world changes. The long pause, indicated by the empty line, makes the end rhyme (man / again) blunt and explosive. The reader is left to wonder: what makes a good doctor? To what extent must a physician share the values and lifestyle of his patients?

Third Place

Private Emergency Department, India

© Sural Shah MS IV

Sohana’s abdomen was aubergine, her leg mangled to bone.
“She’s three. A lorry crushed her.”
“She needs surgery.”
“We have five daughters. Please.”
We take in her mother’s faded plum sari, her small gold pendant strung on black thread.
“No charity,” the doctor apologized.
The public hospital was too far.
Her father carried her home.

Judge’s Comments:

Like “Dr. S.,” this micro-fiction is a small narrative portrait. Its setting, just like its language, is very realistic. The little girl’s painful, aubergine (grayish-purple) abdomen mirrors her mother’s faded plum sari; these colors, against the backdrop of black and gold, lend a strong visual texture to the piece. The piece is richly musical, too, like a poem—especially in the opening line’s repeated open sounds of “a / ah / au” that contrast sharply with the harsher “b” and “g” sounds. In the next three lines, the predominant sound is a long “e,” anticipating the pleading that culminates in line four with the word “Please,” italicized to indicate the desperation of this family. Also striking are the half-rhyme of “lorry” and “sari” and the pun on “sari,” echoing the “sorry” implicit in the doctor’s apology. In its brevity, this piece evokes an atmosphere of composed, resigned poverty that Western people cannot easily conceive of.

Honorable Mention

Reflections on Hearing Seamus Heaney

© Anthony K. Sedun Son of Yvonne Sedun, R.N. Pain Clinic

Seeing you the other night startled me back to my senses.
Fifty yards or so away, your height still measured no larger
than my ugly thumb—no matter what they say.

As you shared your life’s experience, the temptation in me
grew to capture and restrain your breathing and your brogue
to the little journal—stiff as starch, covered with sandy cloth—I brought.
After all, you stood taller than your human frame
allowed: the haled Irishman already canonized
the world over for your abilities to carve endearing figurines
with words—and I? A homesick man of twenty-three
struggling to describe the palsied pulses of my breathing heart, hot
for the hearth of simply being heard.

Sometimes notes just counterfeit the cache of lived experience;
I was not about to cheat myself again.

And so I listened. With the rest of them
I tried to talk back to you by ways of satisfying sighs,
polite applause, eager—puddled—eyes, and
furrowed brows readied for the spoken seeds
you scattered through the shifting, warm
dirt earthen fields that watched
you in the dark.

Standing there up on that caverned stage,
leaning gently forward against the thin
wood podium—you could just as easily
have been a farmhand taking five
against your dirty spade.

And so it was. Beneath the umbrella of two
spotlights—yellowing and dull—your accolades,
accomplishments, and critical acclaim
all receded into the soft black cherry curtains
flanking you on stage. You became
for me right then a fellow traveler
along the rural route. A stranger’s face,
yours became a friend’s I stole
from fame.

Judge’s Comments:

This poem is a bright, fascinating mix of autobiography, creative writing, and critical appreciation of a famous poet’s art. This is an “occasional poem,” written to commemorate a particular occasion—in this case hearing in person the writer’s role model, Irish poet and Nobel laureate Seamus Heaney. Much of Heaney’s work centers on life in rural Northern Ireland, where his family farmed, tended cattle, and cut “turf” for fuel. This poem alludes to these recurrent themes in general and particularly to what is perhaps Heaney’s best-known poem, “Digging.” Observing his father digging in flowerbeds as an old man, Heaney recalls two decades earlier when his father dug for potatoes, a staple Irish food, and, before that, his grandfather cutting turf in a local bog. Heaney claims he has no such finesse with spades like those of his ancestors, but he does have a pen, and he will “dig” with that to unearth things that sustain life. Heaney’s august talent coupled with his genial demeanor create within our observer a poignant blend of awe-struck admiration and wistful companionship in the journey of the life of a writer. Our poet does all he can to connect with the world-famous poet from his anonymous spot in the audience, “speaking” to Heaney silently and taking on Heaney’s images for use in his own poem. The poem also addresses one of the great tensions of lived experience: do you write it down, take notes and pictures and therefore lose the moment? Or do you just “absorb” the moment at the risk of losing your thoughts for posterity?

Winners of The Doctors Kienle Competition in Photography

Prizes are awarded yearly to artists of photographs and original artwork that are considered to be of exceptional artistic and humanistic merit. The awards range from \$100 to \$300. This year's judge is Seamus Carmichael. Seamus was born in Northern Ireland in 1955 and attended Art College in Belfast. Since graduation in 1979 he has worked as a teacher and printmaker, and in 1981, received the N. Ireland Art Council's Rome Prize. Marriage brought him to the U.S. in 1984, and he lived in Philadelphia and Long Island prior to coming to central PA. He works at the Circulation Desk in the Harrell Library at HMC. He is on the board of the Lebanon Valley Council on the Arts, teaches Graphic Design at Lebanon Valley College, and Art History at Harrisburg Area Community College where he organizes the exhibition series at their Lebanon Campus.

First Place

Dragonfly Rests

© Susan Landis, C.R.N.P. Department of Anesthesiology



Judge's Comments:

The dragonfly image was one of my favorite photos from the huge selection that we received. It remained a favorite, because it has vibrant color contrasts and catches an attractive insect at rest. Technically, this kind of photo would be done using either a telephoto or macro lens, both of which create narrow depth of field, so the picture needed to have very good focus to be a winning image.

Second Place

Red

© David Banyas Clinic Coordinator Behavioral Health



Judge's Comments:

My second choice is an almost abstract photograph of various red things on a red grating. The composition of the group and the intense color appeal to the painter in me. I like how it reads almost as a red lace background in some ways.

Third Place

Medical Experience

© Ken Smith Staff Multimedia Solutions



Judge's Comments:

On a more medical note, the photo awarded third place achieves a sense of drama from the way the photographer has added blur to the image. Whether this was added in the moment of its creation by zooming as the shot was taken, or later in an image manipulation program matters little. The blur focuses our attention on the concentration of the medical care-giver as he reads the instruments attached to his patient.

Winners of The Doctors Kienle Competition in Art

First Place

Nude

© Jeannette Landis Daughter of Susan Landis, C.R.N.P. Department of Anesthesiology



Judge's Comments:

I awarded first place to the work called "Nude" which takes a discrete female nude and sets it against a wood grain background. The artist then starts to take liberties with the image by having hand shaped sections of the ground invade the figure.

Second Place

Columns of the Body

© Albert Sudol Son of Malgozata Sudol Department of Medicine



Judge's Comments:

"Columns of the Body" was a nice surrealistic approach to the figure, characterized by a good strong drawing style.

Third Place

Snacktime

© Peter Sudol Son of Malgozata Sudol Department of Medicine



Judge's Comments:

And finally it was nice to see an honest to goodness painting with real, sticking-out-from-the-surface paint texture, to give us a sense of the juiciness of our food.

Wild Onions XXIII 2009

Please enjoy the literature and visual art that follow the lovely picture of *Wind*. These pieces represent the collected emotions and impressions of our hospital's patients, students, and professionals.

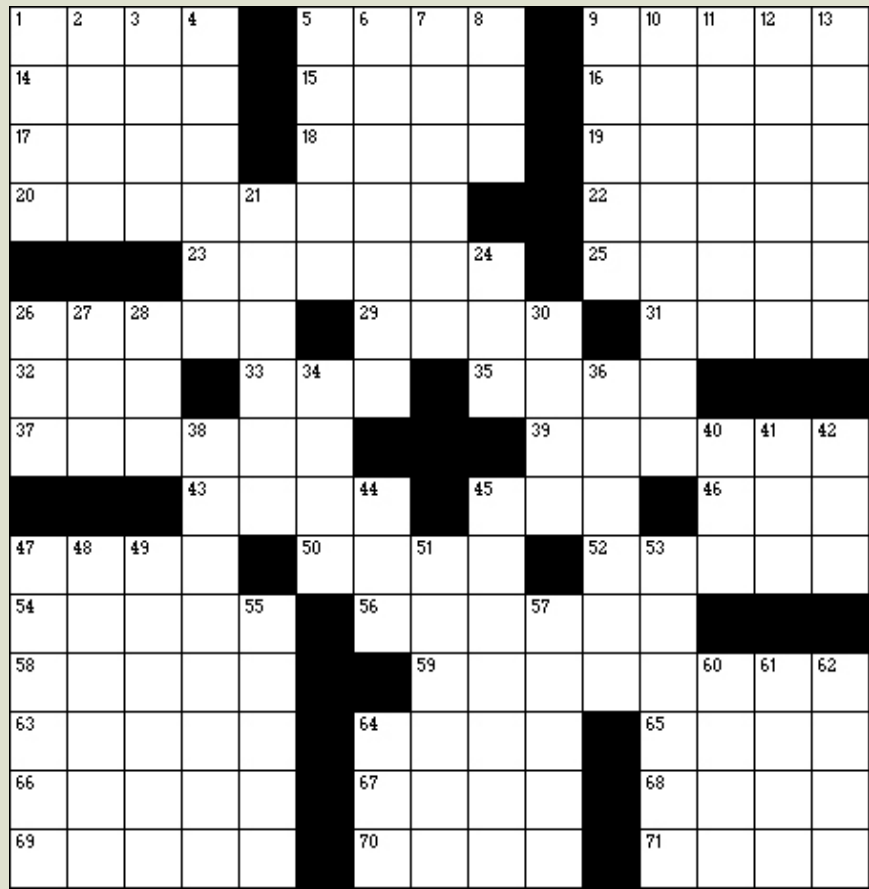
Wind

© David Banyas Clinic Coordinator Behavioral Health



Penn State Hershey Children’s Hospital

© Barbara E. Ostrov, M.D. Department of Pediatrics



Across

1. Amphibious mil. vehicles

5. Musical comp. type

9. Unit for Older Pediatric In-Patients

14. Hotcake restaurant abbr.

15. Consumes

16. “___ war of words” - public debate

17. 7TH Floor place for babies in peds.

18. WWW access system

19. UPG Site with Pediatricians

20. Former Address for East Campus Peds Site

22. Thanarat, former Thai premier

23. UPG Site with Pediatricians

25. Steak type

26. Rodeo need

29. Saravan, Armenia: former name

31. WWW- based bullies

32. Places for Surgery for Pediatric Patients

33. Former Chinese diplomat Wellington

35. Knight Rider TV show Firebird robot

37. Become angry

39. Readies to shoot pool

43. Very soon, poetically
45. Baby rat

46. Outpatient site with Pediatric Specialties

47. 7TH Floor site for Child Life Activities, with 67 across

50. Thick, like twine

52. Makes a living

54. Large artery

56. 7TH Floor area for pediatric family support, with 59 across

58. Poison plant that can cause a rash

59. SEE 56 ACROSS

63. Asp

64. Ancient Hebrew measure similar to a bushel

65. On the ocean

66. Moth who makes large tentlike webs

67. SEE 47 ACROSS

68. 7TH Floor Place for Adolescents to get support, with 48 down

69. In-Patient Site for Pediatric Pts. to Recover Post-trauma

70. Taylor and Coulter

71. Pronoun for Pia in Parma

Down

1. Presidential nickname

2. ___ Tzu dogs

3. Spanish 1 counting word

4. Rejects, as a boyfriend

5. Re-color a faded shirt

6. Delivers directly

7. Pied-___: temporary home

8. Whispering call

9. Inpatient Unit for Oncology and Immunocompromised Pediatric Patients

10. Taste just a little

11. Former Israeli coin

12. Stitching

13. Certain relatives in Rouen

21. Small Japanese inn

24. German Red Cross abbr.

26. Piece of wood

27. “We ___ Penn State ! “

28. Speedy aircraft, in the vernacular

30. 7TH Floor site for the sickest pediatric patients

34. Smell

36. Pepperidge tree

38. “You ___ bow” - performance teacher to students

40. Big ___, California region

41. Former TV station that merged with The WB in 2006

42. Desktop computers, for short

44. Neither partner

45. Author Thomas: “The Crying of Lot 49”

47. Role of quarterbacks

48. SEE 68 ACROSS

49. Spiritual capital of Ireland

51. Leader of modern sculpture

53. Linked to something unlike itself, as a stamen to petals

55. Tangy

57. Last name of two presidents

60. Enzymes suffixes

61. Certain jeans

62. ___ Farber Cancer Institute

64. Age

See answer key on page 50



Autumn Day

© J. S. Reid, M.D.
Department of Orthopaedics

*learn listen record
half smile a break in the clouds
together we start
Mariel Herbert*

Seeds To Be Sown

© Barbara Hoffmann, M.D., M.B.A., C.M.D.
Department of Family & Community Medicine

Dedicated to my grown child who is a Cancer Survivor.

Youth and energy unencumbered
Passion followed by peaceful slumber
Marriage and mirth
With the promise of birth...The seed was sown.

Gardens and flowers
Playing for hours
Brilliant and alert
Despite the hurt...There were seeds to be sown.

The tumor enlarged, the symptoms worse
Such is the cancer, a vile wicked curse
Surgery, chemo considered
Radiation the choice...The seeds were sown.

The faith of a mustard seed
Tis all that you need
The odds are for death
The hope is for cure...Seeds must be sown.

Cancer once hidden
Is now cancer ridden
Seed from me, child now grown...From the seeds that were sown.

Living in Hope

© Jennifer Marie Keeley Patient

What is this thing called hope?
Hope is looking past today...
Hope is dreaming about a tomorrow...
Hope is willingness to try things a new way.

Hope is full of magic
and hope is always free.
Hope can't be found in a prescription
and it can't be pumped through an IV.

Hope can cast away the shadows...
it can even sparkle within our tears.
Hope can tame a constant worry
and even dissipate our nagging fears.

Questioning every answer...
even when you feel doubt...
this is living in hope –
this is what life is about.

Modern Knights

© Julie Elizabeth Uspal MS I

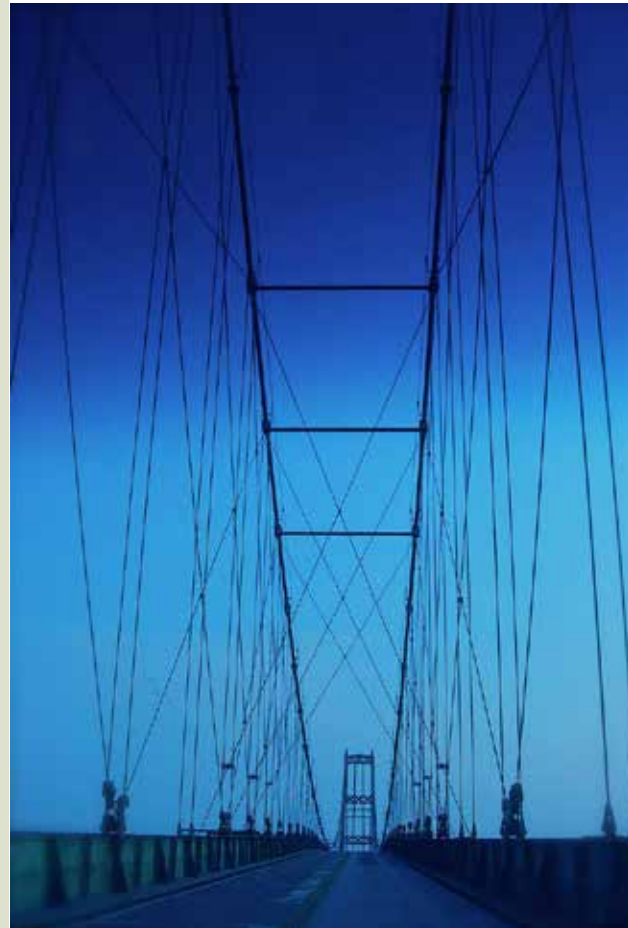
they say chivalry is dead
but I don't think so
not the kind of chivalry we need anyway
forget metal-clad equestrians
history can keep its jousting, its polished helmets
modern day knights don't need those things
to know real bravery
I think chivalry is Katy
who shuffled from medicine to medicine
hoping each was an elixir to cure the panic attacks
finally gaining some freedom at 20-something
and 20-something pounds as a side effect
then, one day, she put down the magazines
put away the scale
picked out a new red dress
and went dancing

I think chivalry is my dad
with his maps spread out on the dining room table
checking his tents, his propane tank
feeling the stiffness in his joints as he inspects the lanterns
pausing only to take his antibiotics
I remind him the site needs running water – *I am a lady after all!* –
and he laughs and plans on and on
because you have to do what you love
despite the ticks

I think chivalry is my mom's mom and my dad's dad
who each lived the word *malignant* in a different way
one traveling the globe for a cure
hoping to find her answers in Argentina
the other completely without needles or whitecoats
spending his time with his grandbabies
watering his fat tomato plants
both with very different opinions
both very real knights.

"Walk with kings but never lose the common touch."

Clay Hess



Maine Bridge

© Dan Shapiro, Ph.D.
Department of Humanities

Wild Onions XXIII 2009

Today I Will

© Blake Chin-Lee MS I

Today I will walk.
Maybe tomorrow I will be sitting
the ground, my feet won't be hitting
my legs a rest that is fitting,
but today I will walk.

Today I will sing.
Maybe tomorrow I will be silent
to noise, I will be defiant
on peace I will be reliant,
but today I will sing.

Today I will reach out.
Maybe tomorrow I will hide my hand
won't help those who cannot stand
watch them slip away like grains of sand,
but today I will reach out.

Today I will be your shoulder.
Maybe tomorrow your tears will fall
your sadness binding against a wall
your heart crying a lonely call,
but today I will be your shoulder.

Today I don't look toward tomorrow.
The whims of the future I cannot follow.
What dreams and pains will it swallow?
Will there be more beauty or just sorrow?

I don't know

Because today I don't look toward tomorrow.



A Place for a Tail

© Susan Landis, C.R.N.P.
Department of Anesthesiology

With a quick wit and an easy smile, she seemed almost too healthy to be in the hospital, and yet there we were, working on her algebra homework together. Between every two or three problems, she would pause to tell a joke from the dog-eared paperback on her bedside table. The chemotherapy had taken away her hair, but clearly not her sense of humor.

"The thing is," she later confided as we searched for Xs and Ys, "it's not the best, but it can't always happen to the other kid." Can you imagine? Living with the knowledge that your body is not working the way that it should, understanding that you face challenges others never will, and still, after everything, thinking that it can't always happen to the other kid.

I am still amazed.

Julie Uspal

A Chaplain's Visit

©Doris Nolan Chaplain Resident

Even though the nurse on the floor said that this patient could use a visit, I was hesitant because she also said the patient spoke only Spanish. A visit to this patient required enhanced precautions; so as I put on the yellow gown, the face mask, and the blue gloves, I prayed for the right words *en español*.

The patient had a very peaceful presence. She lay in her quiet room in the very middle of the bed, with her blanket arranged neatly around her and her hands folded in an almost prayer-like manner.

In Spanish, I introduced myself as the chaplain and asked if she would like a visit. She said she would. As is my custom, I began the conversation by asking her some simple questions to get to know her, questions about her length of stay, how she was feeling, where she lived, and her family. I knew that she lived at a distance, and she told me that her family was able to visit only on the weekends, and so she missed her children a great deal.

Then I turned the conversation to matters of faith: Does she feel God's presence in her life? Does she pray? Does she feel that God hears her prayers? Her responses reflected a strong faith -- a faith that gives her hope as she battles cancer.

I asked if she would like to pray and she said yes. I told her I would try to pray as best I could but that I was not very good at praying in Spanish. I started out apologizing, really not even sure how to begin, what words to use, trusting that God would hear my prayer for this woman even if it was awkwardly expressed.

After a few halting phrases from me, she began to pray aloud. She prayed that God would give her the words of prayer, because she had never before dared to pray aloud. She prayed for the ability to approach God in prayer. She asked God for strength and for healing. She thanked God for knowing that she very much needed someone to come and visit her, and she thanked God for sending me to visit her. In a beautiful act of generosity, she also prayed for me and for my family.

I stood in awe, with my hands in an open prayer position, knowing that I was witnessing a powerful example of God's empowering presence and providence. I cried as she prayed. She started the Lord's Prayer, and I said the first two lines of the prayer with her, which are all I know in Spanish.

I could hear her nurse getting ready to enter the room as the patient was praying the last lines of the Lord's Prayer. I thanked her for offering such a beautiful prayer, offered her a blessing, and left her to the care of her nurse.

This visit touched and blessed both patient and chaplain. Together we shared an unforgettable, holy moment in this place of healing, this place of grace.



Untitled

© Seamus Carmichael Staff Library

Life Lion Call

© Catherine Marie Smith, R.N. PACU

She gave me a handful of papers
And said "Here, she's coming to you"
I started getting ready
To do all the things I always do
I had your number and your name
I began to clear a space

Then I picked up the handset
And I listened to the call
I learned of your trouble
And my heart began to fall
That sense of fear and dread
And sorrow all at once
It was all I could do
To keep from coming undone

There was an aching in my soul
I hope you were laughing
Right before you left the road
There was a chill in my bones
Any time it could be me
That they are flying for

I watched the faces of
The doctors as they left
I could tell you touched them
I could feel the weight of their silence
I could see emotion
Where feelings rarely show
They fought so hard but they
Had to let you go

When I picked up the handset
There was a voice in my head
Saying "Go for the moment
'Cause this could be you instead"
I made it a point to show
Extra kindness from that day
God forbid that ever fades away



Bhutanese Children

© Tom Lloyd, Ph.D.
Department of Public Health Sciences



Safe Transportation

© Gordon Kauffman, M.D.
Department of Surgery

About a Dream and a Clinical Encounter

©Matthew McAuliffe MS II

The setting is an exam room. The exchange is between a medical student and a middle-aged woman in obvious mental distress. “You feel like you are dying?” I asked. “Yes. Ever since I took some Ambien and stayed up all night talking to my daughter. It just feels like I am rotting away,” she said. She’s crazy, I thought. She looked high-strung. It was the third time that week she had come in suffering from a panic attack of some sort. “Did you do your homework? Like the Doctor recommended? Did you tell yourself to accept the challenges of life?”

“Yes, of course.” She looked indignantly at me. I could see nothing that was wrong with her. She added, “I hope in your training they will someday be able to figure out what is wrong with people like me.” I laughed uneasily and told her I agreed. Later in a dream she would pull out a mirror, and show me a reflection of myself. She faded to black. And I knew to be ashamed.

1st Patient Encounter

©Abigail Podany MS II

The doctor and I (the medical student in tow) enter the fire-engine-red room, with puzzles on the floor, and a little girl on the fresh white paper of the table. Beside her, grandma is impatient. “She’s constipated,” says grandma. “She just won’t go.” “I am not constipated,” counters the girl, twisting up her dress in her lap. She must be loved, I thought. She’s cared for—in her pastel flower dress, with shiny white church shoes (the kind they only make in tiny sizes) and thick glasses with pink and blue frames. Her round face peeks out behind dirty-golden colored curls in a little pout. At eight, her forehead seems prematurely lined. The grandma sighs as the doctor scans her chart. I shift helplessly beside him, trying to remember the reasons for constipation, while at the same time I try to stay alert in case I am called upon to do something. The doctor says, “So she’s living with you now? That’s good. Last time I saw her she was still with the father.” “Oh that’s over and done with,” the grandma explains. “He is no longer in the picture. Well, he does get to visit on Tuesdays, but I am always there.” I catch myself thinking, an endocrine disorder? Infection? Or could she just be dehydrated? “Is that something the courts set up?” The doctor has moved right into ‘social history’ I note, no longer thinking of constipation.

“No the courts were not involved. This is our private arrangement,” the grandma says, “she needs to see her father sometimes.” The little girl appears to be only half-listening, still twisting her dress, but I know she must be absorbing every word. The doctor slowly says, “Well, something like that can make any person constipated. Unfortunately, we see it a lot. Especially in cases like this.” He pauses. “I wish I had been the one to notice what was going on. Because then I would have had to report it and she would never have to see her father again.” He slaps me with his words—the sting of sudden strength and clarity. “She doesn’t understand what has happened anyway. Look, we’re here today for you to help with her constipation. Now are you going to have a look at her?” the grandma insists. The doctor does. He examines every inch of her, and instead of copying his movements like we had previously arranged, I remain frozen in the corner. He does not notice. When we leave the room, the doctor goes into his office and shuts his door. I hear him talking, muffled, probably on the phone. He is angry. And I have absolutely no idea what to do.

Legacy

© Dennis Gingrich, M.D.
Department of Family & Community Medicine

As I look ahead,
I wonder
What I should do to be the best doctor.
Can I study long enough?
Can I work hard enough?
Will I pay off my debts?
Will I match with a good residency?
Will I do well with my patients?

Now that years have passed
As I look behind,
I studied long enough.
I worked hard enough.
I paid off my debt.
I matched with a good residency.
I did well with my patients.

But,
Did I smell the roses?
Did I give relationships enough attention?
Did my kids see enough of me?

Are my memories of great diagnostic pickups or family vacations at the beach?
Where does my legacy lie?
Where should my legacy lie?

Delivery of Relief

©Saloni Sharma, M.D.
Pain Management Fellow

Skin puffed with caine
needle
dives into an ocean of fat
plunges through a valley of muscle
weaves past a cord of blood
meets the wall of crunch
dye reveals an invisible space
<picture perfect>
milky fluid flows in
relief a possibility

The Lies We Tell

© Sowkya Rangarajan MS IV

lying on cold
sterile metal,
under a borrowed
crisp white sheet.
Disheveled tawny hair,
uncovered,
to start the day.
A wan smile
‘Mourning.

Over the summer, I was privileged enough to be able to watch a number of outpatient eye surgeries. The patients were strabismic, usually amblyopic, and almost always under the age of 12. The goals of surgery were simply to fix the strabismus, and hopefully improve patient eyesight. A patient I remember in particular was a little girl just old enough to understand there were reasons to be nervous about having surgery, that something could go wrong. I remember her sitting in pre-op. She was being reassured by her parents. They were telling her the doctor would even fix the eyesight of the stuffed animal she was tightly clutching to her chest. I thought I was the only one that heard. The surgery went well of course. I watched her wake up from the anesthetic-induced slumber. The tears mixed with the blood and spilled down her cheeks. I remember standing over her wondering if any disease could be overcome without pain or anguish. I glanced down. Her stuffed animal was there waiting for her. Its left eye had been bandaged.

Matt McAuliffe

Hummingbird in the Shadows

© Andrew Messiha MS IV



A Day in July

© Vickie Rausch Patient

That morning in July as I began my ride I looked at my helmet and thought...What a good hair day!
Only the second time in my life without it I would ride...being I never go over 45.
Riding along the river each morning gave me peace...a way of calming the soul before a busy day.
However not to be that day.
I remember the calm of the river...then a pick-up truck.
As I cruised in my right lane.
The truck still in a rush on my left decides to...push or hit me.
In seconds either he or I decide my fate.
I am braking down hoping...I see the wheel well...
bumper dragging me. Looking down the curb the truck...
I opened her up...I think oh my not today.
As my body was tossed I only remember my head...
crashing in a flash thinking my God...what will be.
As I awoke the people abound. A hit and run...I pleaded...please call my husband.
The EMTs and police asking questions...I mention coumadin...as I lay in
a blood pool and my right index finger all twisted about. I remember the
pain, the ride, would I make it in the Golden Hour.
I asked the EMT if I could listen to the siren...being that this was my first and most likely...last ride.
Not today...he told me...as he had to cut my clothes...em ok.
As he assesses my broken body...asking for morphine...from the trauma center...
I know there is care waiting for me. As I lay there...why today...was that pick-up truck in my way?
The doors open... he instructs me that 10 or more will be in my face...focus as I thought this could be my last fate.
As the trauma team in full swing questions...orders...CT scans...x-rays...blood drawn...my memory fades.
I hear a voice how irresponsible...that is what brought me around.
Looking down my index finger being pulled into place...I thank God for morphine.
The voice is irate sense this is about riding without my helmet today.
I mumbled...I had a good hair day. Someone mentions need to cut hair...do you have a license I reply.
I ask for my husband...I was told he had to leave for a moment...He needed to take a deep breath as he realized it
was me...so scared.
On he goes...I ride responsible...this surgeon rants on...working on my face.
I respect this person who speaks.
As I listen I want his name as I lay all broken...eyes focus.
The height of the unknown is winding down, my survival is stable for now....
As I lay I thank the angels who surrounded me that day, and kept me in God's light.

Wild Onions XXIII 2009

Fish

© Tammy Lin Age 14 Family Member

Fish, a superb companion
Inside a petite glass bowl, or a tremendous aquarium
Sizes vary and there are diverse types, ranging from
miniature to immense
Have people marvel at their creative existence, which
never ceases to fascinate them

Coffee

© Tammy Lin Age 14 Family Member

Energizes the body
Fuels you for the day
Ground Colombian coffee
Hot and steamy
Caution: drink one cup or hyperactivity will occur,
or other mild side effects.

A Cut of the Profits

- Forgetting eye protection while assist-
ing with a gushing aortic aneurysm
repair – One walk-of-shame back to
the scrub sinks
- Scratching that pesky itch. Above your
eyes. While retracting the abdomen –
One new glove, size 6 ½
- Caressing the IV pole with your elbow
– One sterile sleeve
- Cutting 3mm instead of 5mm from the
end of the suture knot – One loss of
scissor privileges
- Watching helplessly as the attending
backs into a sterile tray - One nurse's
squeal of "Contamination!"
- Grinning contentedly behind your
mask - PRICELESS

Mirjana Jojic

Waiting for Coffee

© J.S. Reid, M.D. Department of Orthopaedics & Rehabilitation



People Worth Knowing

© Anthony K. Sedun
Son of Yvonne Sedun, R.N. Pain Clinic

When I learned about his dying, I thought it too bad since he was so young. Still, I did what I could to carry him in prayer through my Christmas break. People—even believers—tend to be shy about praying for those in need. But praying like that seems more about the self than the ones we’re praying for.

Disease and illness are real. For some, it’s the only life they know. For others, accidents happen, violence visits; in innumerable ways, the damage is done. The body can only take so much.

How many times have people arrived, recovered, or died in white caves with hard lights and strangers nearby?

Death is not the demon, just the door.
We know enough of health to say, “Eat this, drink that. Move more. Relax; take your vitamin.”

It’s the way the crazed think themselves the norm, till everyone else makes the secret known: the hardest love starts with love of self and in this love, one finds the Physician already at work within. Seeing. Knowing. Healing.

Caring for the sick must—at some point—express implicit hope in things to come. Hope, in such a case, is not the cessation of painful circumstance alone but the starting place for health.

Healing like this has everything to do with knowing ourselves, our limits. In seeing the borders of our domain, we begin to trust the Healer’s hands will span the distance we can only describe in measures, mouthfuls at a time. Medicine. The sciences. They have their place. But thankfully, the mystery remains.

Picket fences may tell neighbors something about your domestic aesthete; collections, about your unusual attachment to objects; wardrobes, about your necessity for routine.

But where are the eyes you’re looking for?

Progress is inadequate, treatments turbulent. Five fists above the morning horizon—opposite the surfacing sun—the moon appears like a pebble in the arc of a toss. And here we are again found looking up, wondering about our place and whether or not someone believes—despite our sickness—that we are still people worth knowing.



What Is He Thinking of Me?

© Timothy Craig, D.O.
Department of Pulmonary Medicine



The Health of Poverty

© Shilpa Murthy MS III

At the Bedside

© Eileen Hennrikus, M.D. Department of Medicine

I watched her sleep. She was old and frail and much smaller than I remembered her. Was that due to the shrinkage of age or my growing to adulthood? A combination of both, I’m sure. There was my mother, lying in a hospital bed following the repair of a broken hip, and me, now a physician, having taken care of so many elderly people with broken hips just like my mom, sitting at her bedside.

I’d like to blame it on the pain medication, but I know that her comments before drifting off to sleep came from her deep subconscious judgment of her children. The conversation had gotten somewhat tangential, and she began soliloquizing about what a wonderful doctor my brother had become and then asked me how many years of nursing school I had completed, never mind that she attended my medical school graduation 20 years ago. I forced a smile and began to explain that I went to medical school, but stopped in mid-sentence as she continued musing to herself and wasn’t listening to me anyhow. I reassured myself that I, the youngest of three and the only girl, was no longer trying to prove to my mother that I was as smart and as accomplished as my brothers. I no longer needed her approval; I was comfortable with the woman I had become. Yet her comment confirmed my longtime impression that my mother was the biggest male chauvinist I had ever met. I silently thanked her for her unintentional lessons that made rising through medical school and the workforce so much easier than living at home. As I watched my mother sleep, I had the self-realization that at least some of my initial motivation to study medicine originated in the need to prove my abilities to my mother and that my move from NY to California certainly had an origin in my desire to escape from under an oppressive cloud.

At work, I’ve met many people just like me, the son or daughter who moved years ago to the opposite coast, returning in a time of crisis to sit at the bedside of a sick parent. Just then the nurse quietly walked in and our eyes met. I wondered if she was thinking the same thing about me. We whispered some brief niceties as she changed the IV bag at my mother’s bedside; neither of us wanted to awaken a sleeping tiger.

After she left, I was alone again with my thoughts. Hopefully I have learned from my observation of others. I’ve seen the extended family rally around the bedside of an elderly, ill matriarch or patriarch, providing support, understanding, and knowledge of their parent’s final wishes. But wait! No decisions can be made until the son from the opposite coast arrives. My heart sinks. I’ve met this son many times. He arrives with a cart of excess psychic baggage: regret; sometimes resentment; but, most destructive, guilt.

“Doctor, do everything necessary to keep my mother alive.”

Decades of estrangement are now coming to a head. The finality of death is too much for this son to accept; he has not yet made amends. The inevitable chaos ensues. The son is irrational, the family members argue; well laid down desires of the parent are ripped asunder. In the center of all this commotion is the unconscious parent, now attached to the mechanical ventilator, poked and prodded with tubes and IV lines to support every bodily function while waiting for the drama to play out.

Sometimes there’s reconciliation; sometimes there is escalation of the family feud. But there is always a conclusion. One day the room will be empty; the crowds of tearful family members in the halls and waiting room will vanish. I don’t know what happens to them all. They’re gone. They all move on somehow. But the nurses and I remain and wait for the next person to occupy this room.

So there I sat next to my elderly mother after traveling across the continental United States. At that moment, I promised myself that I will never go down that path.



Highway Lines

© Dennis Hicks Staff Department of Surgery

Curious

© Gordon Kauffman, M.D. Department of Surgery



Highway Blues

© Ron Domen, M.D. Department of Pathology

As the car courses
through an early
autumn afternoon
the palpable silence
between us becomes
an unwanted passenger
as unspoken words
try to come together
to explain the hurt
and anger while
through the window
a lone tree with golden
leaves shines bright.

Lost Flower

© John Messmer, M.D.
Department of Family & Community Medicine

Your glory days of sun-soaked summer are past.
Incomparable among the blooms,
Radiant blossom, you were queen of the bough,
Indomitable.

As autumn's chill invites the frost of winter
To wilt petal and leaf,
So your spirit recedes, my touch
Forgotten.

In spring, the flowers return with joy reborn,
But my soul cries for loss.
Though stems and leaves remain, the flower's gone
Forever.

Crueler than winter's icy hand,
Dementia corrupts love's sweet warmth
And leaves a shadow in my arms
Unfulfilled.

Wild Onions XXIII 2009

On any given day, I usually wrap up my activities at the hospital whenever I can, hustle to the car, and drive home with a head full of miscellaneous emails, lectures and interactions with patients and attendings. I park the car and walk to the mailbox, physically home but my mind still at school. Habitually, I turn the key in the small metal mailbox and find... little things, 4"x 6" to be exact, some larger, some smaller. Postcards Dad has taken to sending me from the places he travels on business. Atlanta, St. Louis, Minneapolis. I'm instantly elsewhere, wherever he is. Little Rock, Oklahoma City, North Dakota. In places not so much exotic as different. I read the familiar handwriting on the back and feel close to family again. In taking the time to think of me wherever he is, he lets me know that I'm there too, and that's no small thing.

Megan Key

Migraine

© Abigail Podany MS II

I can feel my blood
throbbing throughout me.
I could map
its path down my spine
to the tingling tips of me.
Almost as if it wants
to get out, beating, throwing
itself in a futile struggle
against its prison.
I am the walls of jail cells.
My eyes--weakened, dimming windows.
I am a to-go box, a temporary
container that expires
forgotten in the fridge.
At least the light goes off
when the door is shut.
Maybe in an elaborate accident,
someday my captive blood will all break free,
and then, emptied, I can drift
away as a balloon of nothing
but lighter than air.

I Cannot Cry Because He's Gone

© James Thomas
Patient

I cannot cry because he's gone,
His hand in mine, he breathed his last,
And then he left me here, alone.
His heart had stopped; his life had passed.
His early years were filled with joy,
A spirit sweet and pure,
A vital, wholesome, witty boy,
Then cancer came--no cure.
So now he dwells, I don't know where,
But this I know for sure:
His spirit sweet's still with me here,
Still living, well and pure.
So though still here, I'm not alone.
I cannot cry because he's gone.

One freezing evening in November, we were standing outside canning for THON when it started to snow. We were the last shift for the night; so after about an hour in the cold, we were starting to count the minutes left standing, when a little boy and girl walked up together. They each put in a quarter and softly said, "Thank you for our brother!" Their mother pulled up in a car to pick them up and told us that they were on their way to the hospital now to visit her son who benefited from the Four Diamonds Fund. She thanked us for canning, showed us a picture of her boy, and told us that she wouldn't know what to do without the Four Diamonds. In that little moment, the family shared with us a story that cut into the chill of the night, making the rest of the shift seem to fly by.

Bethany Edwards

Prayer

©Lauren Hale MS II

“Pray with me,” she said, as I sat down by her bedside,
“For I am frightened by the illness that I bear.”
She is not of my faith, but I know the importance of prayer,
And so I reply, “Why don’t you start for me?”
I bow my head and close my eyes as I hold tightly to her hand,
And she begins to whisper words unknown that hold so much meaning for her.
Silently in my head, I say a prayer too, in my own words, from my own faith.
Though we may not be uttering the same sounds,
I know the meaning is just the same.
Her voice grows stronger as she continues to pray, and then she asks that I add something as well.
I ask that our prayers be heard and answered today, and that blessings come upon my patient,
And at this she smiles.
I do not tell her that her faith is not the same as my own,
But hold her hand and talk with her to let her know that she is not alone.
The worst thing, I know, is to be frightened and feel alone,
So I believe that prayer is sometimes all that can get one through such difficult times,
Whatever one’s faith may be.
With this perspective, I sit with my patient, letting her lead the prayers,
And at the end, I whisper,
“Amen.”

Daydreams

© Elaine Julian Staff Library



The Abandoned Corners

© Sigmund J. David
Husband of Patient

Today
I glanced down
And saw
For the first time
A dense bed
Of violets and dandelions
In a patch
Of lawn
I walked by daily.

I like
Bending down
Exploring
The tiny flowers--
The glorious
Growth of spring.

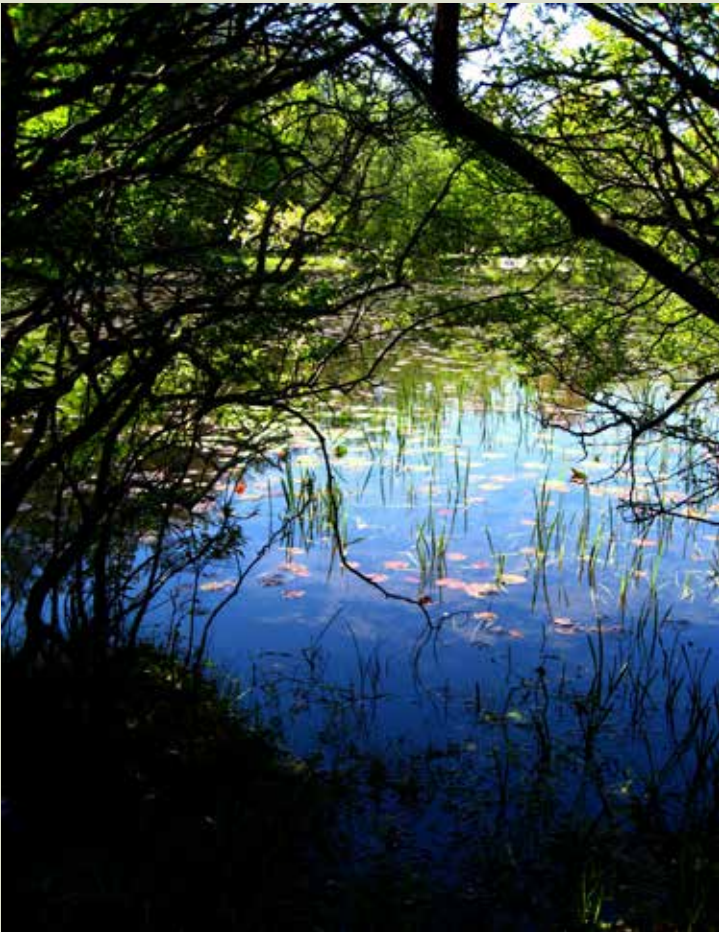
Everywhere
There are
Gardens
In bloom.

I prefer
The untended corners
Growing wild
Often passed
Unseen.

Listen

© Jesse Gutnick MS IV

Listen
pitter-patter pitter-patter
pitter-patter pitter-patter
an old woman’s heart
runs like a child



Leaves on Eagles Mere Lake

© Roger Ford Patient



Country Bridge

© Bill Moore Volunteer

Eating Disorders - July 28, 2008

© Sarah Summer Shaffer Age 14 Patient

The Story of those with an Eating Disorder:

Another meal comes. You become upset. The thought that you are not worthy of eating comes into your mind. You try to fight the lie. You eat a bite of an apple. You feel awful. You feel fat. You head to the bathroom and kneel by the toilet. Tears come and start to flow from your eyes. The act you are about to do is harmful. It is disturbing. You feel this is what you deserve. You take two fingers and slowly slide them down your throat. You start to gag and cough. Stomach acid starts to come up. It rips up your throat. Burns your mouth, leaving a sour taste. You sit back and lean against the wall, crying even harder. Right now you feel better. You are relieved. You feel thin. But then why the tears? If you feel so much better, why do you still feel so hopeless deep down inside? The pressure on you to be skinny is outrageous. It just gets worse. You will never be perfect or good enough, you tell yourself. You listen to the lies you are repeating over and over to yourself. "I will never eat again." Don't you want to feel perfect the way your body is? You are hurting God's temple. He spent so much time and thought on creating you, His beloved child. You were made in your Heavenly Daddy's image. Aren't you tired of feeling desperate? Do you want to get control of your life or keep living and letting the negative things of this world take you over completely? You are beautiful. You are worth more than this. Believe it. This isn't a lie like the ones you have been believing. God loves you no matter what. Your tears are His tears. When you hurt, Your father in Heaven hurts.

"Please believe, my child, that I am holding you in my hand. Take control with my help. You are precious and the most gorgeous thing in the whole entire universe."

Peacemongering

© Judy Schaefer, R.N. Kienle Center Member

Is it true that Frost wrote poems at night
in the kitchen with a revolver on the table next to him?
Uncomfortable with the truth that might come tumbling
unexpectedly from his words? Did he become impatient
with all the peacemongering? Do we all want, at some time,
to rise up fighting and turn words into bullets and give up
on prayer and plowshares, study and sacrifice

And like Frost

do we look and sound so predictable
and undangerous? Faithful farmers
watching fields of brown wheat and yellow corn,
pacing intensive care cubicles in isolation gown;
Walking through the green clearing,
caging free-range chickens, corralling colts,
holding back, fearful of great risk. Fearful of fields in flame



Bride

© Albert Sudol
Son of Malgozata Sudol
Department of Medicine

*This is a "little thing" I learned
on my surgery rotation.... don't
forget your navel, when prepar-
ing for an elective surgery that
involves the abdomen.*

Corlan Kemi Adebajo

Wild Onions XXIII 2009

Brain Death?

© Sara Wasserman MS IV

Pupils unresponsive to light,
fixed and dilated.
Without reaction to pain.
No blink to threat.

Husband's middle-aged eyes respond,
anguish-filled and broken,
staring in disbelief,
but no loss of hope yet.

Heart diseased, but continues to beat.
Brain deprived of blood supply.
But wife, mother, friend remains.
Her spirit lives, breathes.

Husband remarks elated,
"She's responding to me!"
Just reflexes, I think.
But he continues to believe.

How to tell him?

Stone Steps (for Sue C.)

© Ron Domen, M.D. Department of Pathology

Hidden among the frosted brown
grass and brambles along
this familiar back road
only these abandoned stone
steps mark the absent house
like a headstone where
in the dark corners and closets
of your buried childhood you
would be awakened in the night
by the rough and callused hands
that pinned you tight like a butterfly
in a glass case until he had his way.
But on this gray spring morning
voices sing the familiar hymns
in the white clapboard church
next to the cemetery where names
have weathered off the stones
and are forever lost to their children's
children and over the empty field
a murder of crows swoops close
and the hardwoods creak
in a cool breeze laden with the crisp
smell of mock orange.

Rome

© Stacey Clardy, M.D., Ph.D. Neurology Resident



Lingering

© Susan Oscilowski
Standardized Patient
Simulation Lab Tech Assistant

I shiver from the gloom
This winter day has cast.
Yet just in time the sun
Has fiercely pierced the pall
With hues of gentle gold.

The icy crystals dance
Painting brushstrokes
Of hope in vivid pastels
As they chaperone the dusk
And usher nightfall.

Whose hollow eyes are those
Who in the mirror mock me?
I look like a cancer patient
--the thief who dwarfed my days
into December's darkness.

This burden of pain and sorrow
With gravity's pull bind me to earth.
I am light as a feather:
My spirit glides toward the dawn
That quietly awaits my arrival.

Enveloped in visions of forsythia
As twilight gathers
"I feel like I am not here"
My vision fades...
I disappear like daylight.

I squint to see the first star
Rising above the crescent moon
And hear its healing whisper
In sweetest rapture

I long to reply.



Shift's End

© Susan Oscilowski
Standardized Patient
Simulation Lab Tech Assistant



Mirror Image

© Michael J. Green, M.D.
Departments of Humanities and Medicine

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Pearl Divers of Ise

© Hokuto Morita MS IV



Recovery

© L. David Patient

A basket of rocks
Collected at the shore
When I walked four days
In the land of the living.

Our two-day vacation,
Book-ended by two days
Of travel by train.

The sea & sky were blue
I sat for hours
Watching
From a chair on a weathered gray deck.

Twice we walked to the beaches
Sat at the tide-line
The cool waves washed over my legs.

Once I immersed myself
Inching out into the cold bay
Finally ducking my head quickly.

The water was cold for July
Icy even, but so refreshing
I woke up, came alive
The rocks & stones I found were beautiful,
Multi-colored,
Speckled quartz, smooth purple & orange & whites.

We divided them
Among four suitcases,
(Now much heavier than when we arrived)
"What have you got in there...rocks?"
I was hoping someone would ask
As we travelled the rails back to home.

I filled half a laundry basket
With my treasures
Separating them loosely
By color

They sit before me
In front of my chair
I almost want
To give them back
To the ocean.

The living, moving,
Restless, patient
Ever-changing,
Ever-the-same
Waters
Which brought them to my feet.

My feet,
Which walked & climbed
For four days
Now idle
Unlike the sea
Inertia seeps into me
Here at home
Back at the shore
The tides are never still.

I went to the ocean
To find something
My eyes roamed the waters,
Followed gull-flight
Took in the horizon
Watching, Wanting,
Waiting...

I don't yet know
What I have really found
For now,
The rocks remind me
I was there.

June Second, Revisited

© Diana Tacelosky
M.D. / Ph.D. Program-Graduate Year 1

When the lump was no longer visible on the film it was almost eight o'clock and then I was smelling the coffee. It had been left alone and might have been forgotten had it not been for that scorching bitterness forcing it back into memory like the smell of tar and automobile exhaust on a hot summer highway. Because the directions don't depend on whether you know the roads he said. The detours only reveal to man his confusion and despair, and the path less traveled is an illusion of poets, psychiatrists, saints, and fools.

It was pushed onto the table and I sat smelling it. Tasting it, that is. I don't suppose anyone deliberately tastes a smell. You don't have to. You can be oblivious to its bite for a long while, and then in a breath of smelling, it can fill the mouth with all scents you never tasted. Like my mother's perfume now in the waiting room trapped into the threads of her sweater. Like that smell of one's own hungry sickness behind closed trays of stale hospital food. Like the stench of a nauseating cocktail in a cold disinfected bathroom. Like the taste of my body vomiting and sweating through my pores the poisons only I can smell, like.

The styrofoam cup filled with milky sugared burnt coffee now in my hand before the eight o'clock quietness of the closed cafeteria. The man who gave me it thought anything could be saved. *When supper was ended, he took the cup; again he gave you thanks and, handing the cup to his disciples, he said:* it's nice to have something warm to hold. And now seeing the maybe fidgeting or maybe calm or maybe proud or maybe "bugging out" hands that held the other cups that looked like the same cup before.

He my name is Arnold. And I am an alcoholic. Immediately they Hello, Arnold sung like old churchgoers well behind the beat. He thank you for coming to our meeting. Do we have anyone new tonight? Is anyone here for the first time? It's me hesitant edgy trying to blend in and standing out or the perception of standing out and finally Yes. Then in silence, for a requirement here not claiming to be but how not to pretend just here to—to

look, hear not judge, in silence to know you. Now tasting the bitter cup, no longer a smell. A smiling, comforting he And your name? Me quiet monotone syllables forced from my mouth I am. Now louder just here to listen. And they Hello. Welcome. Glad you decided to come. It's a great start. Did you get some coffee? Pleased to meet. Me turning head down while he Betsy will read our steps tonight.

Pausing *She* remembering that the first step smells the worst *1. We are powerless over our alcohol.* And the rest of the steps now applied made goals testimonials sources of what approached or encroached on maybe even contained inspiration or the stuff of a clinical trial. The cadence of voices forming the Kaplan Meyer curve morphed into the fellowship of the disease *the quirks the stages the struggles the relapses the pain stretching too far for the observer me* feigning silence to enter.

10, 11, 12—reciting for the group she Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs—and me eyes averted but steady on the meeting on the people on the movement of the woman's hands over her prayer bead bracelet and the plastic hospital bands on the wrists sitting next to her and the constant shifting of the man in the back corner asking *to strengthen in unity those you have called to this table.*

Then *they* applauding a time measured in days months years. A time celebrated in awkward fragments and years unpunctuated; because *happy are those who are called to* compare everyday to jail sentences relationship anniversaries congratulations cynicism encouragement pessimism doubt hope. There in the waiting rooms and closed cafeteria discussions *Hello, X. Thank you, Y. That's wonderful, Z* was time. Time and me *thank you* hearing then what comes with it. The healing a marker of the passage to be experienced only as a group as a person one meeting one treatment one day one smell one taste from one cup away from what *he or she* already proclaim to be—.

Wild Onions XXIII 2009

18-month WCC

© Akemi Miller MS IV

His growth chart is a ski slope since Dad learned he isn't his. Across the room, Mom is texting, mumbles that he eats: chicken nuggets, fries. Grandma looks down at her feet. I look over at the child. Hollow eyes set in a skeletal frame. Stands alone, but isn't lonely. He's accustomed to being without.



Peeking

© Michael J. Green, M.D.
Departments of Humanities and Medicine

The Girl

© Lauren Hale MS II

The world used to stare at the beautiful girl with her bright smile,
Who loved to dance and live a care-free life.
Then people began to stare at the girl with the growing belly,
So young to be pregnant, just fifteen.
The nurses stared as the girl walked into the hospital when her time came,
A new life to be brought into the world, and so she was smiling.
The doctors came to stare at the girl with the baby,
But something had gone wrong, and so her smile began to fade.
The anesthesiologist stared at the girl who had received the epidural,
For now she did not smile since she could no longer feel her legs.
And so people stared at the girl, so young, now sixteen,
But it wasn't her beauty or even her baby, it was at the wheelchair.
Her family stared in disbelief at a life so drastically changed,
They loved the baby and the girl, but had to overcome the grief of such a tragedy.
With time people began to stare a little less, and the smile returned to the girl,
But underneath the smile is always the hurt and the thought of what could have been.
Now fourteen years later the girl stares at the baby grown into a teen,
And she smiles at the miracle that he has turned out to be in her life.
She smiles too at her husband who stared at her and saw not the wheelchair, but the girl inside, the girl behind the smile.
And she smiles now at their baby, two years old, a true blessing.
The world may stare at the girl in the wheelchair and notice a smile on her face,
But the real story and emotions within that girl can never be known if staring is all that they do.

My Son

© Barbara E. Ostrov, M.D.
Department of Pediatrics

In 1998, I wrote a poem for Wild Onions about my son, who had been diagnosed with PDD or pervasive developmental disorder, part of the autistic spectrum disorders.

Now I feel the need to share changes that have occurred since these ten + years have passed and wish to put all the difficulties—and hopes—expressed in that poem into perspective.

I look in amazement at my tall, handsome son
The challenge to mold him to fit's nearly done
His speaking was slow, reading was early
Behavior aggressive, rough, sometimes surly

Daily problems in those early years
The worries, the heartache, and all of our fears
My anxiety peaking each time the phone rang
“What did he do now?” my frequent harangue.

Now we deal with hum-drum teenage life
SATs, grades and threats of driving at night
Like any teen boy on computers on games
His fixation on sports seems all that remains
Of the boy who once played in his own little world
Uncomfortable barefoot, when in crowds or when twirled

Was this luck?
Was this chance?
It was *work* – every “dance”
With school counselors, teachers, principals too
We pushed them – and him, forced them to do
What was needed to ensure his future success
Socialization more crucial than any math test

Incorrect label some might want to say
Such a “fad diagnosis” now-a-days
But - Autism unmistakable back then
But not any longer;
why us, and not them?

Today we can see
What success there can be
Autistic child – to typical teen – what fun!
Now an amazing young man – past challenge
Our son.



Rest Stop

© Juanita Evans
Pathology Resident



Gladiolus

© Roger Ford Patient

Wild Onions XXIII 2009

24 November, 2008

© Corene Johnston Patient

I hold my arms around you,
my face pressed to your hair,
your face against my neck.
I have never been so alone.
I have never been so with you --
not this intensely with you -- even in love making.
I have never been so married.
I have never been so alone.

I know what is to happen,
so I have put drops of rose attar on my neck,
on the pulses in my neck.

I whisper frantically, calmly,
“John we’re doin’ it!
This is what being married means.
This is the sickness part of ‘in sickness and in health.’
This is the worse part of ‘for better or for worse.’
We’re doing it John.
This is being married. We’re doing this together.”

I move my leg and nearly slide off your narrow hospital bed
the sheet over a slippery plastic mattress cover.
I’ve already turned off the hissing oxygen machine.
Even with it on, your breathing is irregular,
but the green tubes bind your face to this place,
and I have removed them.
This is not a good place to die,
but neither of us is aware,
both of us burning with these hard spasms of dying.

Yesterday you followed me with your eyes
And tried to form the word “love” when I whispered it to you.

Today,
I felt your muscles relax when first I held you.
But your gaze is fixed now.
I midwife your labor with my arms and my whispers.
“I smell roses in the sun, John, roses in the sun.
Can you smell them?”

I name animals who have loved us:
Pallie, Prima, Boots, Amber.

“Amber, John, I see Amber.”
And I do.

I picture her heart-shaped face so clearly that
surely the image passes from my awareness
into yours,
with your face so close to the pulses in my neck,
so close to roses in the sun.

Your last breath rounds your mouth to “o.”
Your eyebrows rise.
What is the surprise John?
What have you found fascinating?

The pulse in your neck continues past your last breath.
I hold you till that pulse in your neck stops, too.
And sit a little while longer,
for I don’t know how long it takes
a spirit to leave its body.
So I sit a little while longer.



Morning at Pinchot

© Hokuto Morita MS IV

Camp Sagamore

© Tom Lloyd, Ph.D.
Department of Public Health Sciences

We slid our canoes into the clear Adirondack water of Raquette Lake under a July morning sky that was a mix of sun, clouds and wind. There were twelve of us, all part of a weeklong Elderhostel program. There was one grandparent and one 12 - 14-year-old grandkid in each canoe. Just before noon, the wind picked up and we were hit by a squall as we came to the inlet that we were supposed to explore for the rest of the day. We waited under a bridge as the rain drummed overhead and after an impromptu council meeting, we decided to return to our base at Great Camp Sagamore. This was our fourth day at camp and the kids and adults had been immersed in all manner of Adirondack-type activities, including building a wood and cedar canoe, guide boat races, swimming in Raquette Lake, and of course, campfires every night. The chain reaction of friendship that bonds kids at camp occurred the very first day. So I wasn't surprised that soon after we returned to camp four of them asked me to show them the basics of tennis.

Great Camp Sagamore was built by the Vanderbilt family in the early 1900's as their wilderness estate. The single tennis court at the estate was built in 1905 during the Vanderbilts' infatuation with concrete. Almost 100 years later the court was in fine shape, as concrete courts go. The four kids, Courtney, two Brandons, and my Austin, had never played tennis before and expected to be instant experts. As I was explaining some of the basic ideas of doubles to them, Brandon H's grandfather, Maynard Haithcock, quietly found a chair on the Playhouse porch next to the tennis court. Maynard was a tall Virginia gentleman who had a reserved and stately presence. He was by far the oldest of the grandparents at the camp, yet he and Brandon clearly had a strong bond. This was their fourth Elderhostel together in the past four years. Brandon at 14 was tall and slender and showed every likelihood of overtaking his granddad who was still 6'2". Brandon had gazelle-like movements, and he was one of those kids who had been gifted with a large dose of internal happiness.

My memory of tennis rules was fuzzy, so I asked Maynard if he knew them. He replied that he did. Then he and I began coaching the four kids, with me at the edge of the court and Maynard in an Adirondack chair a few feet back on the lodge porch.

The kids got into the game quickly, and Maynard and I kept score for them, reminded the server when to change courts, and called balls as fair or foul. Along the way, I learned that Maynard still played tennis twice a week. The pace of their game was relaxed with stops to apply more bug spray, chase out-of-court balls, and for Brandon H. to get first aid at the camp office after he scraped his knee when his dive for a ball turned into a tuck and roll on the concrete.

After about 45 minutes of tennis, three of the kids decided to join a group confab with other kids on the porch. Brandon H. asked his granddad and me if we would play. To my surprise, Maynard offered to take on Brandon and me. This seemed like a ridiculously lopsided arrangement, with the two youngest of the trio playing a man who had served in World War II. But little did we know. All of a sudden, Brandon and I found ourselves running feverishly from side to side and from the net to the back line, while Maynard seemed calm as a statue, moving ever so slightly about the middle of his court. Maynard began to have a reserved glow about him and every now and then long, quiet smiles surfaced. We played two matches in the next hour, and he quietly beat us: 6 – 3 and 6 – 4. As we all walked off the court, Maynard extended his hand, thanked me, and told me that this was the first time that he had ever had the opportunity to play tennis with Brandon, and he enjoyed it immensely. On the way back to our lodge, I asked Brandon the age of his granddad. Maynard was 84.

In the lodge that evening, Maynard and I sat together at dinner, while Brandon and Austin sat with the rest of the kids. Maynard and I talked about all sorts of things and, as we were preparing to leave the dining hall, he shook my hand and again thanked me for the games and the conversations. He said that he and Brandon had to leave the next morning, a day early, as they were returning to Virginia for the memorial service for Brandon's father who was 34 and who had died of a massive heart attack at his home the previous Thursday.

After dinner, I took a long walk alone by the lake. The recognition of the fragility of our lives swept over me as I thought about how these two men, one 14, the other 84, had chosen to be together, lean on one another, and support one another during this family tragedy. Regardless of how long we live, life is short. We all need care, love, and support from others as each of us searches for purpose in our efforts to make the world a better place.



Trees in Winter
© Matthew McAuliffe, MS II



Sickening Speed

© Renate R. Mott
Patient

Life moving like lightning
Unable to process at this speed
Brain malfunction
Crushed by daily events

Scarfed up by to-do's
Today swallowed me
Then spit me out
Like vomit

Noise in my life
Chatter in my brain
Unable to stop
Internal stress

Pictures at rapid speed
Past and present
Inside and out
Dizziness takes over

Stop
Breathe
Slow down
Let me be.
Meditate

Tuscany

© Stacey Clardy, M.D., Ph.D.
Neurology Resident

To Zanzibar By Motor Car

©Blake Chin-Lee MS I

To Zanzibar by motor car
five men did leave that day,
and on their way to Zanzibar
what amazing things they say.

One man went to the side of time
and never did return.

One got lost in Zygomabar
because he took the superior turn.

The third tried to steal a horse
but was bucked off where none would speak.
The fourth tried to be his own man,
but eventually married a woman named Dible, I think.

So all alone the last man drove,
and to a cave he went to weep.
And down and down he did not stop...
until he finally served the unknown deep.

To Zanzibar by motor car
five men did leave that day.
What fates that followed? I do not know
for they never returned that day.

Crossword Puzzle Answer Key

1	L	S	D	S		R	H	A	P		7	E	A	S	T
4	I	H	O	P		E	A	T	S		14	W	A	G	E
8	H	I	C	U		D	N	E	T		17	E	T	O	W
12	C	H	E	R	R	Y	D	R		22	S	A	R	I	T
16					23	N	Y	E	S	R	D		25	T	B
18	L	A	S	S	O					27	T	B	O	N	E
20	O	R	S		K	O	O			29	P	I	T	G	S
24	G	E	T	M	A	D				31	C	U	E	S	
26										33	S	U	P		
28					35	A	N	O	N		37	P	U	P	
30	P	L	A	Y		R	O	P	Y		39	E	A	R	N
32	A	O	R	T	A					41	R	O	N	A	L
34	S	U	M	A	C					43	M	C	D	O	N
36	S	N	A	K	E					45	A	S	E	A	
38	E	G	G	E	R					47	R	O	O	M	
40	R	E	H	A	B					49	A	N	N	S	

Music Notes

Make Us Smile In Memory of Jackson Smith

© Jan Stouffer, M.T., B.C.
Music Therapist Department of Orthopaedics & Rehabilitation

Playing Play-Doh for hours on end, watching a movie sent by a friend,
Eating popcorn and drinking slushies ‘til our lips are blue.
Dancing along to a favorite song, singing together when the night is long,
Riding the IV pole down the hall to see what’s new.

Playing Bingo and winning a prize, seeing a smile light up the eyes,
Sharing precious pieces of gum with one and all.
Lining up colorful trucks and cars, decorating with sunshine and stars,
Shaking a parachute, hoping to launch the ball.

Through the laughter and through the tears, what we’ve learned in these past years
Is that the little things in life are so worthwhile.
We’ll look back, and we’ll go on. We will learn to sing a new song,
Knowing the little things still keep us together, and make us smile.

Silly giggles or a regal command, snuggling with Mommy, holding Daddy’s hand.
Giving a look that says, “Something fun is just around the bend!”
Saving food for cousins who fill you with pride,
Nona, Aunts and Uncles who are by your side,
Hearts filled with a love that will never end.

Through the laughter and through the tears,
What we’ve learned in these past years
Is that the little things in life are so worthwhile.
We’ll look back, and we’ll go on. We will learn to sing a new song,
Knowing the little things still keep us together, and make us smile.
Those little things will bring us back together, and make us smile.
Yes, the little things in life will make us smile.

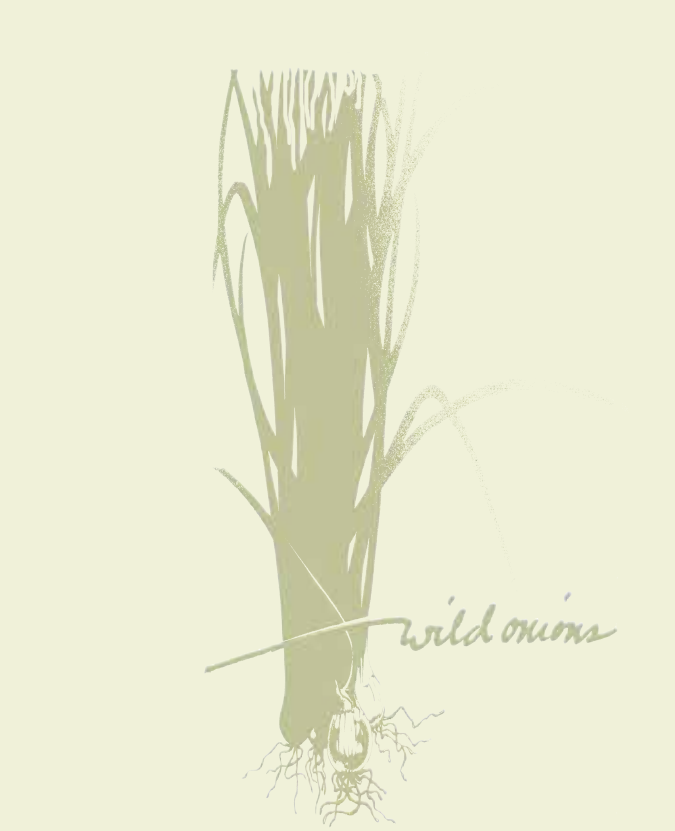
Umbrellas Above

© Alex Podany
Brother of Abigail Podany MS II



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Wild Onions can also be viewed on the Humanities website at <http://www.hmc.psu.edu/humanities/onions/index.htm>



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