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Plexus



UCI College of Medicine Journal of Arts & Humanities
2001 Edition • Volume 1



*Dana Chase, Medical Student, Class of 2003
Pneumonia mural, Cuba*

Front Cover

*Karen Chiu, Medical Student, Class of 2004
Two Koi*

Back Cover

*Sabrina Pak, Medical Student, Class of 2002
Machu Pichu, Peru*

Plexus

UCI College of Medicine Journal of Arts & Humanities
2001 Edition ● Volume I

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Hydrant & Buttercups, Washington

Lichen on Bark, Yosemite
Photographs by Judith Hopkins, MS, RN, Department of Surgery



Drowning

When my grandmother died
My mother's grief knew no bounds
It raged and roiled
An angry current
Overrunning its banks
Spilling inarticulate and destructive
From bedroom to living-room
A soggy flood of feeling
Knocking over tables and chairs
The way my grandmother did
When she was drunk
Each one of my mother's tears
Perfectly transparent
Like a drop of the vodka
My grandmother drank neatly
Straight from the bottle
She hid in the chandelier

We always visited early
I would wait in her garden
Among the chipped plaster fish
While the sound of shattering glass
And weeping voices dissolved
Into the careful clink of ice-cubes
Once, framed by pale light
My grandmother ran naked in the rain
Her sad breasts flapping
Until my father
Who liked dry land
Better than the uncertain expanse
Of alcoholic seas
Caught her up and wrung the water
From her seaweed hair

When my grandmother died I watched
As the river of my mother's grief
Muddy, vicious, turbulent



*Jim Moore, Resident Physician, Department of Internal Medicine, UCIMC
Fire Lookout*

**Its pale fish floating belly-up
Flooded beyond our shipshape house
Into the streets of our quiet green neighborhood
(Who knows what lay beneath its leafy calm?)
Sweeping away cars, trees,
Domestic pets, small children
First it smelled sweet, like bourbon
Then it smelled sour, like gin
Sometimes, out of the tide
A hand reached up for help
Small water-logged fingers
Barely breaking the surface**

*Johanna Shapiro, Ph.D.
Department of Family Medicine*

*Karen Chiu
Medical Student,
Class of 2004*



I Know A Quiet, Grassy Knoll

A deathly silence presages a purge;
The sky is clearest before the storm.
A gentle breeze cues a dirge
As all creation begins to mourn.

I know a quiet, grassy knoll
Where Peace like a river over flows my soul.

A furious Gale whips around,
With a biting lash and deafening roar
Enormous oaks are ripped from the ground
Inside a turbulent, conical core.

I know a quiet, grassy knoll
Where Peace like a river over flows my soul.

In the center of the tortuous cone,
In the fiery eye of the storm,
Encompassed by debris, besieged by moans,
A stolid Fortress endures till morn.

I know a quiet, grassy knoll
Where Peace like a river over flows my soul.

Joshua Swamidass, Medical Student, Class of 2004



*Marianne Ross, Ph.D.
Counselor, College of Medicine*



Pat Lenahan, LCSW, Associate Clinical Professor, Family Medicine
Masai Child, Rural Kenya

An Encounter in the Parking Lot For Marjorie, now 80

You stopped me in the parking lot and asked
"Where have you been?" and I asked
"Where have YOU been?" And we asked at the same time
"Where are you going?"

10 years ago you made it every month:
Three buses, the waiting room, the flight of stairs
To my office.
No matter that you were well, healthy, not ill
You were there.

Eventually I made it to your home
Just before you moved.
Your only daughter had died
And you could no longer live there.
You didn't know where you were going,
And you could not say goodbye
So I did.

I remember well: the quilt for my firstborn
The knitted outfit for my second, the crocheted Valentine cushions
The garish cards you sent at Christmas, and the potted plants
How much you cared about my family's life.

I can't remember what I gave you.
Was is good health?

Has it really been 5 years?

"How are your children?" You asked
"I want your telephone number" You said
And I scribbled my home number on a scrap.
"You look so well" We both said.

"You are the best doctor I ever had"
And then you were gone.

"You haven't called, Marjorie."

*Desiree Lie, M.D., M.S.Ed.
Associate Clinical Professor
Department of Family Medicine*

Peace at Last

In Japan, there is a story called Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes. It's a true story about a dying girl's last wishes and the power in the belief of hopes and dreams. The belief is that if you make a thousand paper cranes your wish will come true. In the story, this helped a young girl, Sadako, cope with the leukemia that she got from her exposure to radiation from the atomic bomb dropped over Hiroshima. What I learned in the in-service part of my medicine rotation is that sometimes in order to cope with some of life's events, I had to learn to think about what the patient wanted out of life. I had to find out and honor his/her desires not just what I wanted for the patient. Medicine to me focused on two very interconnected, but distinctly separate entities: the saving of lives and more importantly, the saving of souls.

The last patient that I had at the VA was 72 years old and had terminal transitional cell carcinoma of the bladder. He was healthy until just 6 months ago when he was diagnosed with TCC and had undergone both chemotherapy and radiation treatments. He couldn't talk and his mental status waxed and waned, but somehow we were able to communicate through body language and the usage of basic hand gestures. I remember as I walked into the room to interview Mr. L, I could hear the heart monitor beating, the smell of the room had a pungent alkaline smell, and I could hear the struggling sounds of breath coming from across the room. As I took a few steps closer and closed the door behind me, I looked at the foot of the bed where I saw a child's mobile made of origami cranes and balls. Who made this? I didn't know. As I came closer, I saw a man struggling for life underneath a mound of white hospital-smelling blankets. Who was my patient? Who was this man I asked myself. I came closer to Mr. L, so close that I could feel his gasping breaths of air against my cheek. I wanted to be close to make sure that he could see me and more importantly I wanted to make sure that I could see him. To see inside him to see who he really was was what I really wanted to see.

After interviewing my patient, I still wasn't satisfied that I really knew who he was. It was simple just to get the facts out of him even though he couldn't talk, but to try to find out what he wanted out of life and out of us was something that I wasn't able to get out of the interview in less than an hour. I looked through his charts. Nothing spectacular stood out, just a bunch of pages of old labs and procedures. As I continued to search his old files, I found more pieces of the puzzle that I was trying to find. I found out that he had two brothers and one sister. He was the youngest of the four children. What else could I find? I soon learned where he lived and that he had no other immediate family nearby and lived alone. Then, I learned of his religion and finally, I was getting a much clearer picture of who my patient really was. Then, there were the durable power of attorney papers with someone's initials printed in large letters on it which read R.E. and a phone number beneath the name. Finally, the last bit of information that I needed, the phone number would serve as some kind of link and connection in finding out who my patient was. I called and reached R.E. who ended up being his sister who told me about his life from his childhood all the way up to his diagnosis of cancer. She taught me a lot more than anything in his chart could have taught me about him. He was a veteran who fought for our country in Vietnam, he was a computer analyst, he was an uncle, and he was the youngest brother of this sister who loved him with all of her heart. I began calling his sister every day to update her on her brother's condition and at the same time, she updated me with more information about who her brother was. I had her talk to her brother on the phone because she was unable to visit him and he talked to her by making gestures to me which I learned to interpret rather quickly.

Mr. L was transferred to the hematology/oncology team, but I continued to visit him faithfully throughout the days. He was gradually getting weaker and weaker and there came the time when I



Matt Solley & Rakesh Marwah, Medical Students, Class of 2003 & 2004

wasn't sure that he was going to make it through the night. What could I do? I didn't know how to cope with it other than to mumble a silent prayer near his door where he couldn't see me. He made it through that night and made it through a lot of times when everyone thought that he was going to die. He just kept bouncing back, but he was getting weaker and weaker every time. Finally, after being transferred over to the MICU, he looked at me for the last time, nodded his head, squinted his eyes and then closed them, and went to sleep. I looked at him and I wanted to save him, to bring him back to life is what I wanted more than anything else at that moment. But, my gut feeling was that he was telling me to stop all of this poking and prodding and to let him die in peace. He was in too much pain to want to live anymore. All he had wanted us to do was to let him talk to his sister and to let him rest comfortably. I think that's what he was trying to tell us the whole time, but we were too busy trying to save him every time he started to slip away. I took a few steps backwards, but remained facing Mr. L. I thought of his life and everything that his sister had told me about him. I looked again harder this time and saw what we had done to him. We had tubes coming out of him in all directions. He was hooked up to 3 different machines that were slowly beeping away. I had to wonder if this was all we think about in medicine. Yes, we were keeping his physical body alive, but we were slowly killing the soul. Here was a man who was dying, but who had dreams and desires just as strong as you and I but his only dream and wish was to sleep peacefully. I took one last look at him, covered him up with a blanket and left the room knowing deep down what was going to happen. By the time I came back, the monitors were silent. At last, Mr. L's wishes came true and he was finally sleeping peacefully, and the mobile of cranes was still hanging from his bedside honoring his last wish.

Valerie Sugiyama, Medical Student, Class of 2002



Kasra Rowshan, Medical Student, Class of 2004
When Life is Spent

Evening House Call

Come in she says and I enter
a dark and dusty living room.
Cold chicken at her elbow,
she sits with her swollen legs.
He's in there she motions
and I follow the path she's worn in the carpet,
my coat a white patch on the shadows.

It's her husband I've come to see:
Strokes and dementia the chart says,
crying out all day and all last night,
clamoring against the bedrails.
Focus on a heartbeat, a breath sound, a soft belly.
Find an infected toe and clean it. I do my dance,
my coat a white blur to his dull eyes.

You need more help I tell her,
I've called for a nurse, I'll talk to your son.
We're fine, she says, thank you.
This marriage of sixty-seven years
that has no bed and no dinner table
has no need of the props I offer. So I retreat,
my coat a white speck in the night sky.

Patricia Gifford, M.D.
Volunteer Clinical Faculty

Rip

Almost a year ago now
You went and died
When I thought I could be a hero
And tell the world what you had.

But you defeated me
You defeated us all.
And we never know that
what was growing
had never been seen before.

And every day for what
seemed like forever,
You wanted
But we did not know
could not know
And we dithered and intellectualized.

And it grew and grew
and consumed you.
We acted but too late.
Four times ablating, but
it was not to be.
You wanted so much to live
more than your 28 years
And I wanted it for you.

And you never knew
that you ripped my
heart out
Every day since.
How could you,
you now, with the belladonna eyes.

Frank Meyskens, M.D.
*Director, Chao Family Comprehensive
Cancer Center*
Author's note: Like most poetry this is best read

I've worked with a group at Cedars Cancer Center for the past eight years. I have heard them share their fears and anger - their new-found love of the moment - and their bewilderment at the situation.

Only one patient has survived my eight year journey of Tuesday Group. We have said farewell to our members - kept in touch with some of their children. Mourned in silence together. Every time I meet with this wondrous woman, a sense of awe and pride surface for her and myself. Together we shared her being the only woman of color in our group - a cancer survivor whose special partner left her during her cancer challenge. A call that her son of twenty-six just passed away. Her beloved mother dying at church. In the midst of this turmoil, her company asking her for early retirement with no health care benefits.

We have shared - cried and overcome together and made it with gratitude for another week. At every meeting I fear perhaps this splendid woman of valor will lose her way (health-wise) and will not be there. Then will I diminish also? For she has been a doctor and a healer to me by ministering to that frightened part in all of us. By example, the patient has become a symbol, a flag of courage.

Please...do not take her away from us from me, the "leader."

Judith Tamkin, Volunteer



*Jose Ospina, M.D., Ph.D. Student
Binic Harbor, Brittany, France*



Jose Ospina, M.D., Ph.D. Student
Turret Arch as seen through Window Arch, Arches National Park, Utah

Top Ten Ways To Be a Good Doctor

- 1) Remember you are human. You are both a patient and a doctor. A teacher and a student.
- 2) Admit your mistakes. Then apologize and tell how you will prevent such a mistake in the future. (Don't worry, this has actually been proven to decrease malpractice rates)
- 3) Don't be afraid to say sometimes, "I just don't know."
- 4) Understand that your patient may be afraid to tell their story. It's OK to share of yourself. (empathize)
- 5) Don't be afraid of your patient. This will keep you from helping.
- 6) Be gentle when delivering unwanted news. Understand that your patient may become angry or upset by what you have to tell.
- 7) Start fresh with each patient. Wash your hands and clear any thoughts of the last patient
- 8) Ask the questions you fear most and don't be afraid to report the answers (rape, molestation, domestic abuse).
- 9) Use your intuition. It's a doctor's gift.
- 10) Use your experience, your colleagues, and resources.

Tandis Kazeminy, Medical Student, Class of 2003

"Dear Doctor"

Dear Doctor,

I am writing to let you know how much I enjoyed my recent visit. After a long bus ride with three transfers, I had a good laugh when the receptionist informed me that there was no record of my appointment in the computer. It was not a problem, because I had the appointment card with me to justify my presence.

I didn't mind waiting in the frigid exam room for 30 minutes before you showed up - I did not bring my sweater with me - getting goose bumps in the middle of a hot summer day was a memorable experience.

I'm glad you only gave me 10 seconds to explain my reason for being in the office - I'm not a verbose person anyway. And yes/no questions are my favorite. I feel that I can convey my health situation so much more clearly that way.

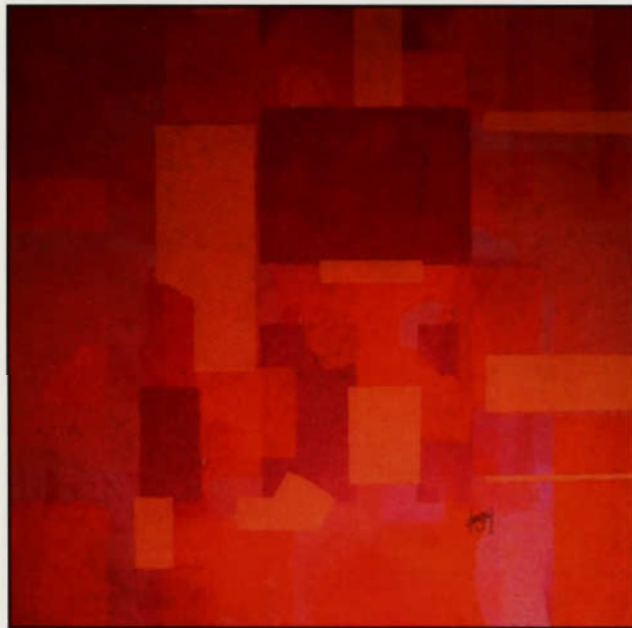
After being repeatedly examined by various doctors, I realized that I had had to take off and put on my clothes three times - but that was all right because the exercise helped to keep me warm.

I was so happy to meet all those other doctors who paraded through the exam room after you realized that I was such an interesting patient with "good physical findings" - I really enjoyed all the attention. I have always believed that privacy was overrated - especially in regards to personal health issues.

And when it was time for me to go, I'm glad you mumbled your last instructions on the way out - it's really so much easier for me to understand and remember them that way. And I am comforted by the fact that if I have any questions, I can just call the switchboard and speak to the operator. Maybe I'll get lucky and will be able to leave you a message. Take care doctor, until the next time I'll need you to take care of me. Thanks again.

Sincerely,
Your Patient

Lavonne Sheng, Medical Student, Class of 2002



Danyol Leon, Graduate Program Coordinator, Department of Pharmacology
Above: Tigermoth Below: Previously Aquatic



"pale"

once, when you were asleep,
and the elevator cogs turned against their chains
beside the outer doors of our tight city apartment,
i slid out of sheets to the floor
crept to the window
and let the moonlight in.

blue and silver spilled across your bare arms,
bangles of cool light across your cheek and hair;
darkness draped all around our bed.
a breeze pushed through the warmth of our room,
pouring over my skin like milk,
while the clock ticked away the rest of sound
and the city receded into velveteen anonymity.



Gia Humelbaugh, Medical Student, Class of 2003
Above: Calla Lily, Steep Ravine, Marin, California
Left: Wormsloe Plantation, Savannah, Georgia

with growing, aching quiet
in the hollow grinding stillness of the elevator,
i heard the whole iridescent pause of life
-that soft half-inch between two kisses
where tenderness creeps in-
and the smallness of our bed our life
was washed out in the pillowy smoothness
of your unsunned skin.

Jade Jeng, M.D./Ph.D. Student
Dept. of Neurobiology & Behavior



David Chang, Medical Student, Class of 2002
Fishing the Green with Elan, Steve & Trout, Thanksgiving 1999

Snow-angel

The rigour of the classes did not stop me from enjoying the wonderful autumn colours. The gold, green, red, and brown leaves spread over the campus like a large multi-coloured dome encompassing the venerable brick faculty buildings that comprised the lakeside campus. But as quickly as the fall colours came, the leaves fell to the ground and soon afterwards the clean roads were converted to strips of white ribbons, like a white carpet installed in an empty room.

I shared a physics class with Kim. It was a course that was more difficult than I had ever imagined a school course could be. It was the way that our freshman class would be indoctrinated and only the most studious would survive. I attended class regularly and sat among two hundred or so fellow students. I sat towards the middle of the auditorium and inevitably spent a good portion each lecture sneaking a peek at Kim who sat five or so rows to the front to my left. She always looked so attentive and intense as the professor would drone about vectors in his Scottish brogue.

I was also fortunate enough to share a common talent with Kim: playing violin. I joined the university orchestra a short period after school started and it shocked me to see Kim walk in after a couple practices and hear that she had been a concert violinist in her hometown's Youth Orchestra. My violin achievements notwithstanding, I felt very respectful and fortunate to sit in the same section as her. With such coincidence, I believed fate could draw us together.

Surviving through the winter proved to be a much different task. It had been four years since I had last been through a Canadian winter and there were many incidents that reminded me of how harsh the winters could be in this area of the world. As the temperatures dipped well below freezing, I began to walk to all my classes bundled in a scarf and heavy boots. Students like me shuffled around leaving behind a trail of smoke that emanated from the head area, the result of exhalation. A truly cold morning was symbolized by the freezing sensation my nostrils would get when I inhaled the dry and crisp air. I was sure that extended exposure in these conditions would certainly lead to some horrible case of frostbite. Fortunately, my classes were all within a few minutes walking distance of the dormitory.

Fighting a bout of cabin fever, it prevailed unto me one chilly January evening to walk down to the nearby lake and reflect. The cold air was still and I managed to find a solitary position on the shoreline. I sat watching the lake unfold in front of me, a silent, frozen darkness covered in a light coating of white. I picked up a heavy rock and threw it ten feet in front of me. I heard a thud and a bounce. The rock slid and stopped on the lake surface. Convinced of the solid frozen layer, I approached the rock and felt my own weight being supported by the ice that sat above lake water.

I sat down on the banks of the lake again and I began to think of Kim. I had thought of her and imagined what it would be like to go out with her. Even to study or spend some time with her would be nice. I laid back and dreamed while watching the stars.

"I don't belong to no one, but I want to be with you.

I can't be owned by no one, what am I supposed to do?

I can't see the sense in you leaving, all I need is someone to believe in,

And for you I will do what I can, but I can't change the way that I am."

I sang quietly that night and stood up before I could get too cold. I looked back in admiration of the snow-angel I had just created by flapping my arms and legs in the ground while laying on my back. The angel was hidden from view, being imprinted into the bank of the shoreline, so that only I would ever know of its existence.

AFTER ALL

This was written as a song for the Internal Medicine humanities project.

In a darkened room now you gasp for air,
All that's left is your fading sight.
You never thought that you could be this scared,
Your final day becomes your first night.

This faded struggle crept into my world,
Burrowed deep beneath my skin.
Have these hands failed their most sacred trust?
Why go on fighting when no one wins?

CHORUS

(After all) After all you've done for them where are they now?
(After all) After all you've given them they should be here!
(After all) After all we've done for you all hope is gone.
(After all) After all...

This haunting memory lay soaked with fear,
Hours saved were fraught with pain.
The thought hangs heavy on this guilty heart,
Release this sorrow, keep me sane.

You search for meaning in the window pane,
Friends and lovers roll across your eyes.
Your shortened time helps to keep us sane,
While broken wings take you to the sky.

CHORUS

Pierangelo Renella & Matthew Donnelly, Medical Students, Class of 2002



Joan Rosenberg, M.D., Senior Resident, Family Medicine
Above: Penguins figure skating. Below: Chinstrap bowling pins.



I Awoke

I awoke at about 3 am. It's kind of funny actually. Sometimes life becomes so monotonous that reality blends rather nicely with dreams and one cannot tell whether one is asleep or awake. Now was one of those times that I was confused as to my current state of consciousness. I must have tricked myself into being awake this time. I turned on my television and began flipping through the channels. I was just in time to catch the credits of movie that had just ended on channel 78. But rather than moving up the screen, the credits moved down the screen and I realized that I was watching a movie in reverse. Drunk on caffeine and Nyquil, I was quite taken in by this movie. I was so intrigued by the fact that it happened to be running backwards that I watched it in full. I finally figured out that the movie was about the life of a doctor named Emines and I recall a few of the scenes from the movie. They went something like this:

One day, Emines, M.D. raced through the streets, backwards, in his brand new 2025 Mercedes V18 coup. He raced backwards into the driveway of Pepe's Mercedes dealership, yelling out the window, "!!elohssa gniog re'uoy erehw hctaW" at two bikers that he was about to hit going into the driveway. He stepped out of the car with that childish cheese grin on his face and walked backward towards the greasy faced dealer in his 5,000 dollar suit. He took the cashier's check for the purchase of the vehicle from the smiling dealer. As he walked out of the dealer's office, the look of importance slowly disappeared from his face...

One day, Emines, M.D. was walking backwards with a fellow M.D. through the Emergency Department of the local high-class private hospital where he worked. They passed by Mrs. Jones, without noticing her, as the look of hurt and anger disappeared from her face. Emines, M.D. was about to tell his fellow colleague about some old geezer named Jones that was about to croak in Trauma Room A due to a triple A. Get it, trauma room A, triple A...

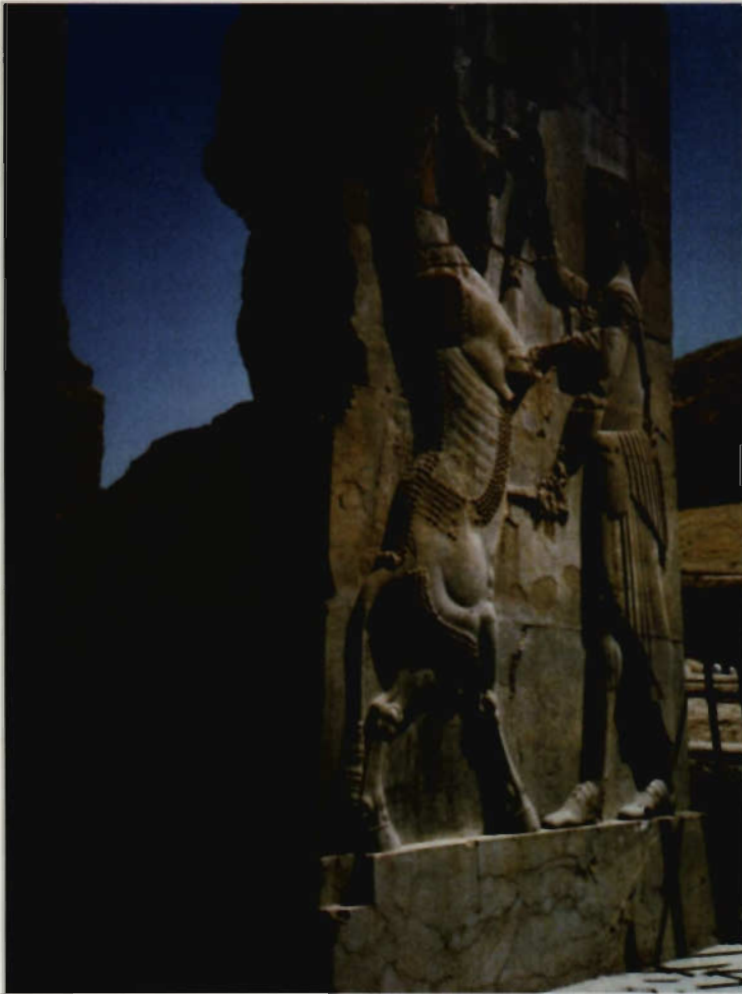
One day, Emines, M.D. was jogging backwards on the beach. He smiled as he felt the soft, cool sand push up on his bare feet with each step. Off in the distance, he could see the sun slowly rise into the afternoon sky as the beautiful red-orange hues gently faded into a brilliant blue. He was starting his 1st year of residency in 2 weeks. It had been a while since he had gone for a jog or seen a rising sunset...

One day, Emines, MS1 read a book...for fun.

One day, Emines was hiking along a ridge of the Sierra Nevada Mountains. He felt the summer sun warm his bare back as he took in the beautiful sights around him. Off in the distance he could see a small island lake rising out of the deep alpine waters. On a distant ridge he discovered an eagle surfing the updrafts that came off the glacier-capped mountains. He felt at peace and at one with nature and the energy that the trees, rocks and unexplored earth gave him. He was quiet, alone and content. The beaming smile disappeared from his face as he thought about the acceptance to medical school that he was going to receive in 2 weeks, and how perfect his life had been...

So that is pretty much how the movie went. After the names of the star actors and the title "Emines, M.D." came across the screen, I laid back down to go to sleep. I had to laugh a little about the movie that I had just seen. Throughout the movie, Emines, M.D. had a chronically healing ulcer and slowly acquired a full head of hair. He had also puked up several thousand gallons of coffee. He felt better though after he started taking the newest anti-emetic. It was called Sleep.

Esseh Namreh, alias



*Tannaz Moin,
Medical Student,
Class of 2004*

Persepolis

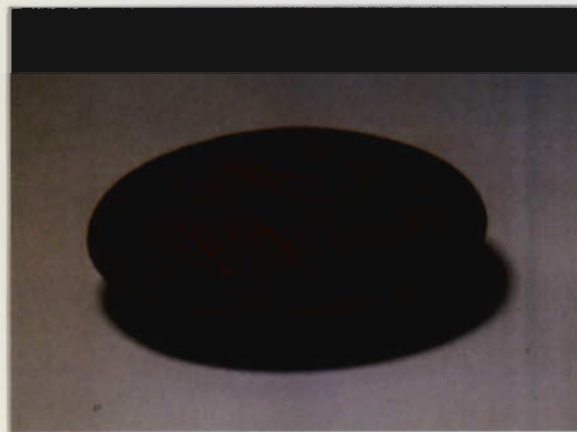


Woodturning, like sculpture, gives the artist the opportunity to explore form, surface, proportion and scale without being confined by the utility of the object. Sculpture may be divided into subtractive and additive. Subtractive is the traditional form of sculpture where material is taken away. Additive, just the opposite, is found in modern and contemporary sculpture. Artistic woodturning has been defined as a form of subtractive method. The studio turner, by removing wood in the lathe, is looking for the elegant and graceful object that is hidden in the gnarled stump of wood. As a surgeon I see some similarities with surgery, which at times feels like a subtractive art form.



Some examples of turned vessels are found here.. These were all constructed with wood that was saved from the fire or the refuse pile. In its simplest form, woodturning is perhaps a feeble attempt to "turn" a piece of lumber back into the majesty of the living tree.

1 Walnut/maple/bubinga. 11" x 13"
Segmented vessel. Segmented bowls are constructed with small pieces of wood. This method offers complete freedom to experiment with form and color.



2 Chinese Elm. 3" x 5"
Natural edge. In this type of vessel the bark of the tree is left on the rim as a visual reminder of the living tree.

3 Ash. 3" x 7"
Hollowform. Most of the functionality is gone. The turner relies on the form and figuring of the wood to convey the artistic message.

*Alberto Manetta, M.D., Professor,
Obstetrics & Gynecology, Senior
Associate Dean, Educational Affairs*

Dueling chief complaints

Some of my patients tell me they want to grow up to be firemen.

Some want to be doctors.

Some want to grow up to become purple dinosaurs.

Not Angela.*

Angela wants to grow up to look like the girls on the cover of Seventeen magazine.

Her mother tells me her chief complaint is that her daughter looks too much

like those girls already.

Angela's chief complaint is that she does not look enough like them.

While Angela continues with her obsession to weigh less than air,

I continue with my obsession - searching for zebras.

I pray that I can find some rare malabsorption disorder that could explain

her cachectic state but I can't.

Angela is a beautiful, smart young girl, who is unraveling.

caught in the spider web of Madison Avenue's images.

yearning to accomplish the unaccomplishable goal of perfection.

She's like a piece of fine china, teetering at the edge of a table,

ready to

fall.

I wish I could put her back together again

with a medicine or a band-aid or a purple dinosaur.

but I can't.

I feel incredibly powerless.

Mary Alice Kalpakian, Medical Student, Class of 2002

** Names have been changed to protect the patient's right to privacy.*

I ENCOUNTERED YOUR EYES

I ENCOUNTERED YOUR EYES
FOR A MOMENT OUR EYES LOCKED
LIKE A CASUAL DANCE,
LIKE NEW LOVERS WHO HAVE NEVER EX-
CHANGED ONE WORD
BUT ARE DEVOURING EACH OTHER AS AN
INCARNATION
OF THEIR ULTIMATE FANTASY.

A MOMENT, A LOOK, A SMALL ETERNITY.

WHO ARE YOU?
WHAT ARE YOUR ANGELS, YOUR SONGS?
WHO ARE YOUR HEROES?
WHICH ARE YOUR STARS?
WHAT IS YOUR FETISH?

A MOMENT, A LOOK, A SMALL ETERNITY.

EXUBERANCE COMPRESSED
IN AN EXOTIC SMILE,
AS IF TO TELL ME: WATCH OUT I'VE HAD MY
VICTIMS.
AND QUICKLY BACK TO SERIOUS, LONG
FACIAL LINES
LIKE A CANVAS ALREADY PAINTED ON,
OF WHITE SHAPES
THAT CAN BE SEEN WITHOUT A REAL
DEMARCATIION.

*DR. ANDREI NOVAC, M.D.
DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHIATRY*

DREAM

HER AUBURN HAIR LAY GENTLY ON HER
MARBLE WHITE SHOULDERS,
HER EYES WERE TELLING ABOUT THE NIGHT
BEFORE,
HER SMILE WAS RADIANT, BUT HER LOOKS
APPEARED BELLIGERENT,
BARELY DRESSED,
DEFIANTLY SHOWING HER BREASTS,
SINGING A SWEET LOVE SONG,
CARRYING A CUP OF WINE IN HER HAND,
SHE SAT BESIDE ME,
ON A MID-SUMMER NIGHT.

HER LIPS WERE LIKE A PINK ROSE NOT YET
FULLY OPEN,
HER EYES BECAME DEFIANT WITH ARGUMENT,
SHE LEANED CLOSE TO WHISPER GENTLY A
SWEET NOTE,
REMINING ME THAT IT WAS NOT TIME TO LIE
DOWN,
I DRUNK FROM THE CUP TO MY HEART'S
CONTENT,

I CARESSED HER CURLS; I TOUCHED HER
FACE,
I FELT HER SCENT; I KISSED HER BREASTS,
I LOST MYSELF IN HER ARMS,
I FLOATED IN THE ECSTASY OF MY DREAM IN
UNION WITH MY BELOVED,
DENYING PAST PROMISE TO MY GOD,

LONGING FOR HER LOVE,
I WHISPERED IN PRAYER LIKE A SUFI,
TELLING MYSELF,
WHAT IS A SIN?
WHAT IS A PROMISE?
WHAT IS FAITH?
WHAT IS RELIGION?
BUT LOVE,
MY GOD WILL UNDERSTAND!

*HOUCANG MODANLOU, M.D.
PROFESSOR
DEPARTMENT OF PEDIATRICS*



2003. 7. 14

*APACHE YANG, MEDICAL STUDENT
CLASS OF 2003*



Jose Ospina, M.D./Ph.D. student
Waterfall, Kauai

Eviction

I remember the day my sister
Evicted one of our boarders at gunpoint.
She leaned against his door
Languid and predatory
Shotgun lying silent in her arms.
She didn't aim or even rack it
Just held it there
And said he had two days to get out.
He was gone in two hours.

I remember that night too because
I liked to perch by the dressing table
While she got ready for work
Refilling her Listerine bottle with vermouth
Coating herself in her sequined gown and
Talon heels
Painting golden rings around her eyes
Her cigarette trailing its tail of smoke.
And sometimes she would answer questions.

Does life ever get any better,
I wanted to know,
Or is it always like this?

It's always like this, she said
Turning away again,
And it don't help to think about it.
So I didn't
Or at least not for a while.

Decades later I find
I must myself have evicted
Most of my sister's ways from my mind.
But I kept her
Coiled feline strength
Because you never know when
Retractable claws might come in handy.

*Elizabeth Morrison, M.D.
Department of Family Medicine*

“drought”

blink
blink
blink

little vertical line,
i do believe you are mocking me!

with your steadfast blinking
and reluctance to move
what exactly
are you trying to prove?

that you know your life's purpose
to mark
to move
to blink?

it's funny
i think
as i watch you blink

that for so many works of greatness
(and others not-so-fine)
always you're there
little vertical line

it starts out the same
two companions, you and white
but then the magic happens
and where once was darkness, light

so blink on, little line
don't think for a second i care
'cause when the words come, i'll write
but for now i stare and stare

Michael Doo, Medical Student, Class of 2004



Vlad Gendelman, Medical Student, Class of 2004

“i saw an old man watering a dead lawn”

i saw an old man watering a dead lawn
one morning
in the car on my way to work

meager shots of water
drifting atop a quiet corner of
yellowed grass, and dust
too far gone to even care

does he not see?
such small wonders
tinged with sadness madness hope

the purity of the moment
i saw an old man watering a dead lawn
five weeks past
and i still can't let it go

Michael Doo, Medical Student, Class of 2004

Sister Christine

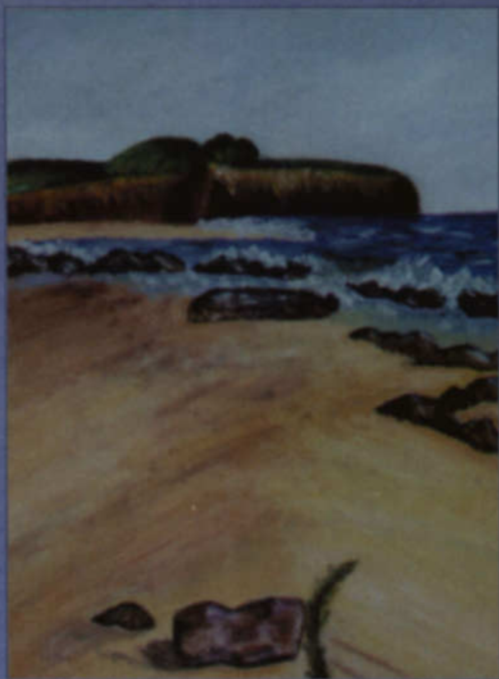
I have always known that my mother lived ten years of her life as a Catholic nun, but I have never taken the time to learn about that aspect of her life. I have always wondered about the lifestyle of a nun and the dedication it must have taken for her to devote a decade of her life to the church. In my recent interview with her, I asked her to share the details of this experience with me.

My mother, Christine Gutierrez, was raised in a strict Catholic home. At the age of 13, she became interested in becoming a Catholic nun after attending a career faire where the Sisters of St. Francis had set up a booth. At that time, my grandmother did not want her to leave home, so my mother waited until she was 17 before entering the convent.

The wait from 13 to 17 was a long one — filled with challenges to her devotion. “I think that I probably forgot about it for a while,” she commented during our interview, “I really liked boys and I had several boyfriends. My dad told me when I went in that I would never make it...that I would probably fall in love with a priest!” One would expect such a serious commitment to be difficult for a young girl to make, but for my mother the decision was easy. “When you graduate from high school you’re supposed to choose your career. I chose to go into the convent because I felt like I had a calling — like [serving the church] was what I was supposed to do.” she explained during our interview.

She entered the Mary Crest Convent in Denver, Colorado in 1962 after her graduation from high school. As a symbol of her commitment to the church she took vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience in a ceremony where she wore a white gown — becoming a bride of Christ. Her vow of poverty meant that she would try to live in poverty — void of all material things — and that she would try to “help the poor people.” Her vow of chastity meant that she was to deny any intimate relations with men. Her vow of obedience meant that she was to follow the orders of her superiors and show no will of her own.

Along with her vows to the church, my mother agreed to follow the rules of the convent. Her clothing now consisted of a long, black skirt reaching the ground, a black veil that fully covered her head along with a stiff, white veil worn over the black veil. “Only our faces and hands could be uncovered. We were called brides of Christ and so we dressed like we were brides of Christ.” She was also “semi-cloistered” — nearly shut away from the world outside the convent. She was not allowed to leave the convent grounds “except to go to the dentist or to attend college classes.” Instead of



*Jennifer Yee, Medical Student,
Class of 2001*

interacting with the outside world, she spent this time learning to sew, clean, and perform other domestic duties. She was not allowed to listen to music or to watch TV, unless it was an educational program approved by her superiors. She went to church early every morning and spent her days honoring her vows. She remembers her second year when she was required to take a vow of silence, "For only one hour every day we got to talk. ...We sounded like bees humming, we talked so much. They didn't want us to talk because they said it could be a bad thing. Like gossip or talking needlessly." During their recreation time they were also able to play volleyball "by pinning up [their] habits to free up [their] legs." She remembers the volleyball games as one of the few times they were able to have a lot of fun.

The restrictions she encountered were especially hard on her family and friends. Though Mary Crest was only ten miles from home, she was completely separated from them. She was not allowed to leave to see them nor were they able to visit her. "My family and friends told me how hard it had been for them to be out of touch with me for so long," she said during the interview. "They told me they didn't even know if I was all right."

My mother spent six years as a resident of Mary Crest, sheltered from the world around her. During that time, she saw her family only once a year at Christmas, she earned a college degree in Education, and she became a teacher at a local Catholic school. Sheltered from television and music, she was very unaware of the outside world. She recalls, "we found out about the assassination of President Kennedy at dinner one night. Someone made an announcement, but we never got to watch any of it on TV. ...I didn't even know about the Vietnam War and that some of my friends had died in it. ...And I recall that the Beatles came out in 1964, but I didn't hear about them until 1970. It was a very peaceful way to live. We didn't know about all the bad things in the world." Though a peaceful way of life, her time at the convent did have its consequences when she left. "I just wasn't prepared for the real world. I didn't know that people were capable of doing bad things. I had to learn [through experience].

In her last years as a nun the rules of the convent became less restrictive and she was able to travel. In South Dakota, she worked as a teacher on a Sioux reservation. In Kansas, she helped a dentist who donated his time to migrant workers. In Nebraska and Wyoming, she taught Catholic school. She also traveled to Washington DC with the *Poor People's Campaign*, initiated by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., where she was "part of the Hispanic contingent for Denver." "We all did our part to help get the job done, whatever it was. We just did what we had to do and didn't complain [about the job we were assigned]. ...It always felt good when a job was done." When she was allowed to interact with the public more, she began to realize that she was ready to move on with her life. She explained, "I felt like something was missing in my life. I wanted a family and children."

Having given ten years of her life to the convent she felt like she had served the church to the best of her ability. She was ready to move on to a new life in which she would begin a family of her own. Inevitably, the restrictions of the convent were too demanding. As a result, my mother left the convent in 1973 — ten years after she entered — and I was born less than one year later.

Despite the restrictions, my mother still follows the vows she made in her third year. Ironically, she chooses to live a simple lifestyle. She chooses never to accept management positions, and she always puts others before her own needs. She is the most unselfish person I know.

Michelle Gutierrez, Medical Student, Class of 2003

a little short of breath
you told the resident
that's how you felt a
couple days ago
on your usual
daily five-mile
bicycle ride

fine before then, no problem at all

you hadn't had any
trouble breathing no
chest pain or other
pain no wheezing or
fever or racing heart
or swollen ankles

quit smoking 10 years ago

realized you didn't have
to continue your
20 year habit
girlfriend didn't like it
stupid waste of
money anyway

saw some blood when I went to pee

never saw that before
so after a couple
days decided you
might as well come
in to see the
doctor

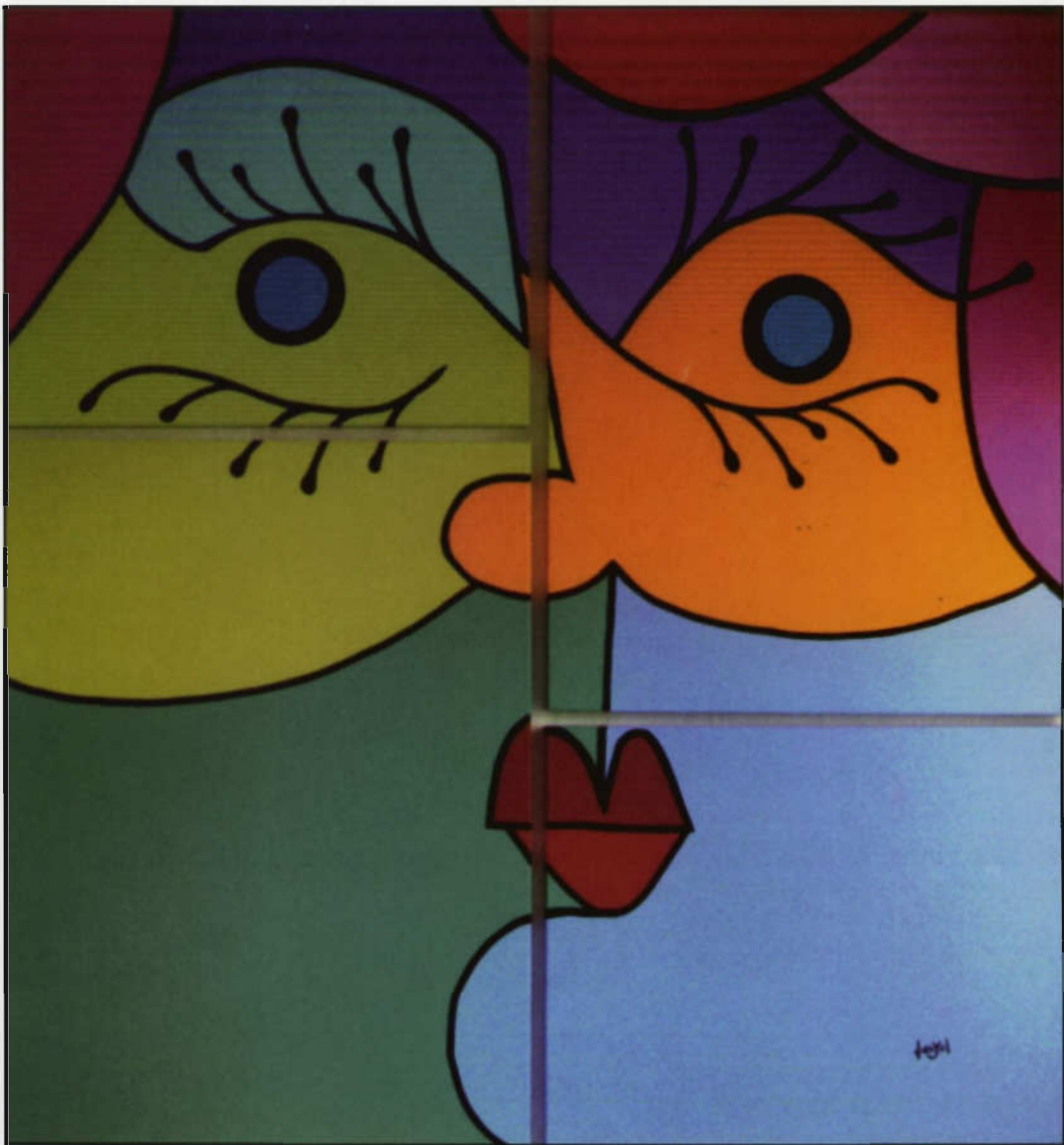
anyone you'd like us to call

we asked after seeing
the report of a
grapefruit-sized tumor
overtaking your bladder
mets to the lungs and
not just a few

one day cycling
one more two more
three more turns
of the wheel

next day gone

*Lorena Hillman
Medical Student, Class of 2002*



Danyol Leon, Graduate Program Coordinator, Department of Pharmacology
Fourfaced

