

# SCOPE

Vol. 18 ● 2011



## **On the Cover**

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### **Waiting in the Wings**

Keith Jacobs

Class of 2014

*1st Place, Visual art*

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# 2011

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**SCOPE** is the annual literary arts magazine of SIU School of Medicine, a showcase for the artistic talents and myriad voices of the medical school community. It is produced each year by an ever-changing group of medical students who volunteer to coordinate the magazine. The work published demonstrates how the SIU School of Medicine community embraces creative, empathetic, emotional, and spiritual components of healthy lives.

Submissions for the 2012 edition of SCOPE will be accepted from October to December 2011.

Visit [www.siumed.edu/oec/SCOPE/index.htm](http://www.siumed.edu/oec/SCOPE/index.htm) to view all editions of SCOPE, review guidelines for submission, and download entry forms.

# 2011

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W. Somerset Maugham once said, “I do not know a better training for a writer than to spend some years in the medical profession — the doctor . . . sees human nature bare.” Poems and stories, pictures and paintings illustrate that Maugham’s point rings true for those involved in SCOPE, SIU School of Medicine’s literary magazine.

Medicine is not just a science — it’s also an art; not just a profession — it’s also a calling. It should not, then, be surprising that medicine fosters in many of us creative thought, artistic talent, and the need to express them both. But we at SCOPE are always overwhelmed and overawed by the number of heartfelt and amazing moments that our poets, authors, and artists have let us be a part of. Art is not only where other humans are revealed bared to their essential aspects; it’s also where the artist is exposed as well, showing one’s most vital thoughts and feelings. We are grateful for everyone’s bravery and everyone’s humanity.

We’d like to thank all the people who contributed to SCOPE, both as artists as well as staff. Thank you especially to the staff members from Carbondale who braved the weather to help us put together this extraordinary magazine. And a special thank you to Karen Carlson, Dr. Phil Davis, Jim Hawker and Dr. Nancy Henry for their wisdom and advice, which was always sorely needed.

Welcome to the 18th edition of SIU School of Medicine’s SCOPE Literary Magazine. In it we are all laid bare — and in reading it, hopefully, so are you.

— Amelia Frank & Jamie Truscott, MS II

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*Thank you to all the students who reviewed the entries  
and helped create SCOPE 2011.*

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## The Crumbling Plan

John Grace, M.D.  
Class of 2000

I stare in the mirror.  
Wrinkles start to crawl across my face.  
It's okay.  
Not sad.  
That's what I am.  
A crumbling man.

Play with the kids.  
Aches creep into my bones.  
It's okay.  
That's what I do,  
What I am,  
A crumbling man.

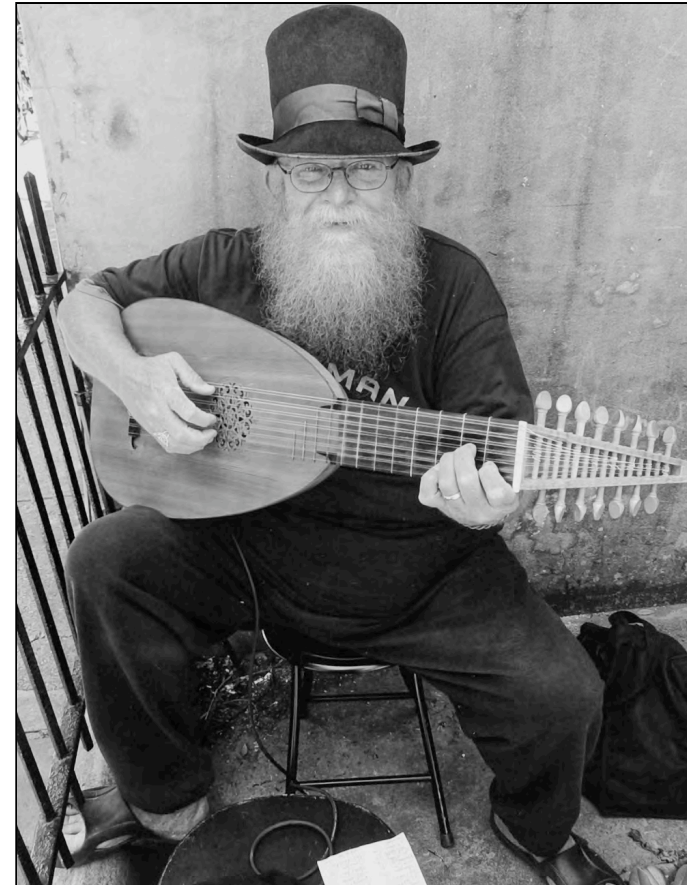
Forgot something today,  
Lost keys again,  
Just smile.  
I know.  
Understand,  
It's a crumbling plan.

Pieces fallen,  
Where I've been,  
Breadcrumbs on a path,  
All that will be left,  
From a crumbled man.

I smile.  
Stumble.  
Crumble.  
And smile again.  
Accepting.  
Embracing.  
The crumbling plan.

## Luteman, New Orleans 2010

Ross Silverman, J.D.  
Department of Medical Humanities





## East-End Women

Sumi Rebeiro

Class of 2014

*1st Place, Poetry*

They drive with one hand, the other  
almost to their lips as they take a drag;  
the faces behind the cigarettes showing  
an infinite progression of the ones  
who have gone before—  
cigarettes, men who shared them...  
the water of life on these rocks  
has not worn them smooth; they are  
rough-lined and cracked and weary—but  
one of them smiled at me for a moment today, and  
so suddenly,  
she looked the way  
I like to feel.

## Let There Be Blood

Peter Somers, Ph.D., M.D.

Class of 2000

*2nd Place, Visual Art*



## Pink Fluffy Slippers

Omonigho Ekhomu, M.D.  
Class of 2009

His brow wrinkles again, ever so slightly. He doesn't want her to see his concern, she might get worried, even more so than she already was, he didn't want that for her. He looked into her eyes and gave a smile. He couldn't feel it in his heart, but it seemed to calm her anyways as her eyes fluttered closed again, briefly, he knew. He turned around again and took her small hand in his. They had been waiting here in the hallway of the ER for almost half an hour. Of course to him it seemed like days, his beloved needed to be seen and quickly. She didn't like feeling exposed to all the prying eyes, and lying here in this hallway in a bed by the corner outside of room Q in the ER was about as exposed as it got. He knew it bothered her, it was why she kept her eyes closed most of the time they had been waiting here. They were closed again, but he knew she wasn't sleeping. He felt her fingers flutter slightly in his large palm, and he looked down again at her small hand, almost half of his, delicate as a butterfly, and he remembered that first night he had asked her to dance, and she had placed that same small hand in his large one. He had felt then as if his hand had engulfed hers and had said so, embarrassed. But she had told him later that she loved the way her hands disappeared in his and he never let her go again. They had been dancing since then, sixty amazing years. He looked quickly again at her face, it was her low moan that had pulled him back from his reverie, lost in long, slow dances, the angst and joy of labor, four children, their wedding day.

"It's okay my darling, they'll find us a room soon I'm sure." He smoothed her forehead tenderly with his hand. Her lips were a little pale and her eyes fluttered open again. Her other small hand rested atop her abdomen, the source of her current distress. Still she smiled. A small smile. He knew it was for his benefit, just for him, and the realization brought choking tears to his eyes which he struggled to hold back. He looked away hurriedly and tried to compose his voice. "I'll be right back," he said simply

and stepped away to speak to the girl standing at the glass observation window where a sea of doctors and nurses and other hospital staff seemed to watch the patients and going ons like they were fish in a fish bowl. "Excuse me, nurse, please..."

"Please, sir, we are doing everything we can. There are a lot of patients coming in right now. We will have a room for you as soon as one opens up."

"Thank you I understand you are working very hard, and I thank you, but my wife, she, really doesn't feel well and lying out here in the hallway just makes it so much worse.."

"I understand that sir, but there is nothing to do now but to wait till something opens up."

"Thank you ma'am..." But she turned away almost immediately and was gone before he could ask her the question. He glanced again at Hattie and hurried back to her side.

"My darling, it's coming soon, we'll be in a room, don't worry sweetheart." He tried to keep his voice light and spoke almost in a whisper. He touched her shoulder lightly and held her open hand with his. "Oh Arnie, I just wish it didn't hurt this much," she whispered softly. "I know my angel, i'm sure the nurse will bring something any minute." He felt teardrops flowing, but his face was dry, inside he cried. He was afraid, she was 77 and she hadn't been eating for the past two days. What if she was really sick, what if it was ... no he couldn't think that. Lord God please, my Hattie he screamed, yet his lips uttered not a word. He smiled and she smiled back at him, or tried to. Then he saw it, ever so softly — her lips trembled. That only happened when she was really cold, yet trying to be so strong like she was always wont to do. He had needed to ask that lady for a blanket for Hattie. Hattie always had chills and she'd told him before, when he'd asked her, that she was cold. He rubbed her arm "I'll keep you warm my dear," he said "just give me a moment." He pulled out the green bag the tech had

### **Pink Fluffy Slippers (cont.)**

given him when they first came in, and began to rummage around inside it.

“It has to be here, I know we packed it because we were scared she might have to stay this time.” he muttered to himself. “I’m sure I put it in there, they’re her favorite, always give her a sense of being home, I ... aah.” He pulled it out ever so gently and placed the green bag at the bottom of the stretcher she’d been conveyed in upon. He moved to the end of her bed where her little feet stuck out from the thin solo blanket she had covering her.

A girl walking past was struck by the image of an old man standing at his wife’s feet, sliding fluffy pink slippers onto each tiny foot. A visible look of relaxation came upon the old woman’s face accompanied with a smile. The man was watching the old woman’s face, and bore the same look of happiness at bringing comfort to his beloved.

### **untitled**

Kristen Solberg  
M.S. Student



# Just a Typical Day for a Med Student

Brittany Harrington  
Class of 2014

6 am and the alarm starts sounding  
I can barely remember the date.  
I make my way through the texts that are mounding  
and begin to select the day's coffeemate

At 6:30 with one cup down a thought pops into my head...  
Wasn't there something I should've remembered when I got out of  
bed?  
Brushing my teeth I couldn't stop reeling, what letter did it begin  
with?  
S, T, R, L and C all sounded like they could be right,  
but with that many choices, I was no closer to putting an end to my  
plight

I grabbed my backpack and locked the door  
and I walked on down to my car.  
Still remembering nothing more  
It seemed the thought was just too far.

Walked into class three minutes to eight  
I sighed as I took my seat.  
One more offense of me being late  
and I'd go before SPC.

Group starts and we begin with our differential diagnosis,  
Suddenly a group member throws out an idea and my heart starts  
racing  
What I'd been trying to remember sounded like an "-osis!"  
Everything I'd studied last night needed retracing

Was it hemochromatosis? Or thyrotoxicosis?  
No, it must have been renal tubular acidosis.  
Still nothing... how about osteoporosis?  
Or maybe it was atherosclerosis!!

Try as I might, I still couldn't remember  
what was so important the 1st week of December?

As the day came to an end, I packed up and drove home  
still no further thoughts came to me while I was alone.  
I got ready for bed and turned out the light  
and when I crawled into bed I saw quite a sight!  
Beside my bed in fluorescent blue  
was a post-it note reminding me what to do.  
After all of my straining to remember the "-osis,"  
today was my mom's birthday, and I meant to send roses.

## The Cafe Etiquette

John Grace, M.D.  
Class of 2000

It was perfect. It had to be perfect. Everything about the place had its own special place. There was a rhythm, a balance—at all times precision.

It was nice. More than nice. It was clean and pristine. And in this stoic refinement—it was terrifying.

It was The Café Etiquette. And people came for more than food. They came for adventure.

Shelley Jacobson lifted her fork to her mouth. It was a seventeen degree angle lift, well within the accepted parameters of twelve to twenty-two degrees, depending on your jaw line, bone structure, and the balance of your utensil.

Shelly had chosen the Oneida 1850 as her silverware for this important evening. It was a good choice—nice balance, minimal glare, a fan favorite of professional diners. With so much at stake, The Café Etiquette was not for amateurs.

Bored with the everyday dining experience, the wealthy bourgeoisie had transformed it into this macabre display of precision, perfection, and danger. More than a meal, dinner had become an experience, with danger, allure, and mystique. In this dark world of forbidden fruit, the Café Etiquette was born.

You had to sign a waiver to enter. You had to dress in the right color for the temperature. You had to hold your hand, head, and legs at appropriate angles. You had to be perfect.

If you stepped outside of The Guide, punishment was severe including enormous fines, public disgrace, and rumor had it . . . much worse. The Guide was a five hundred and eighty-six page manual on proper dinner etiquette. It covered everything from what to wear to handling awkward pauses in conversation. Every debutante's bible. In the Café Etiquette, it was law.

On a typical evening at the café, a couple would be seated and spend the allotted eight minutes and thirty-two seconds looking over the menu. The man would then order flawlessly for the woman without hesitation. The entire meal, with appropriate wine, would be requested from the garçon who would commit the order to memory without interruption or repetition. After

a flawless meal, the couple would exit the main dining room for the adventurous portion of the meal . . . judgement.

In the judgment room, the experience, videotaped from twelve angles, would be reviewed. The diners would be expected to identify any deviation from The Guide and immediately apologize. Making a mistake was bad, failure to recognize it was unforgivable.

The café was no place for amateurs. There was no sliding scale. Every diner was held to the highest standard. Each movement expected to be executed with the grace of a Bolshoi ballerina. Every muscle, every smile, and every breath was calculated. It was said to be the most perfection ever attained by a gathering of human beings. And while eerily robotic, it was enchantingly beautiful. There was a thrill in taking part in this delicate orchestra, teetering on a razor.

Behind this masquerade of beauty, there was a savage engine driving the machine. While the experience was artistic, it was also terrifying. Behind gentle glances, social graces, and delicate lace, there was an unmistakable and unavoidable trepidation. There were real consequences at the Café Etiquette. Such crude realities were never openly discussed but their existence was understood.

Shelley delicately lifted the soup to her lips, careful not to slurp so much as an eyedropper. She felt her hands get cold. She would have started sweating if it were not for the antiperspirant she had applied. Any perspiration would have been a severe violation. An entire chapter of The Guide was devoted to such faux pas

Then the unthinkable happened.

Shelly dropped her spoon.

“Oh damn!” she exclaimed.

It was the last anyone heard from Shelly Jacobson.

## Study Date

Amber May

Class of 2012

*3rd Place, Poetry*

Seduced by nightly study sessions.  
Exploring synapses and asymptotic potentialities.  
Undeniably entwined despite their attempts to maintain  
The professionalism of colleagues and classmates.

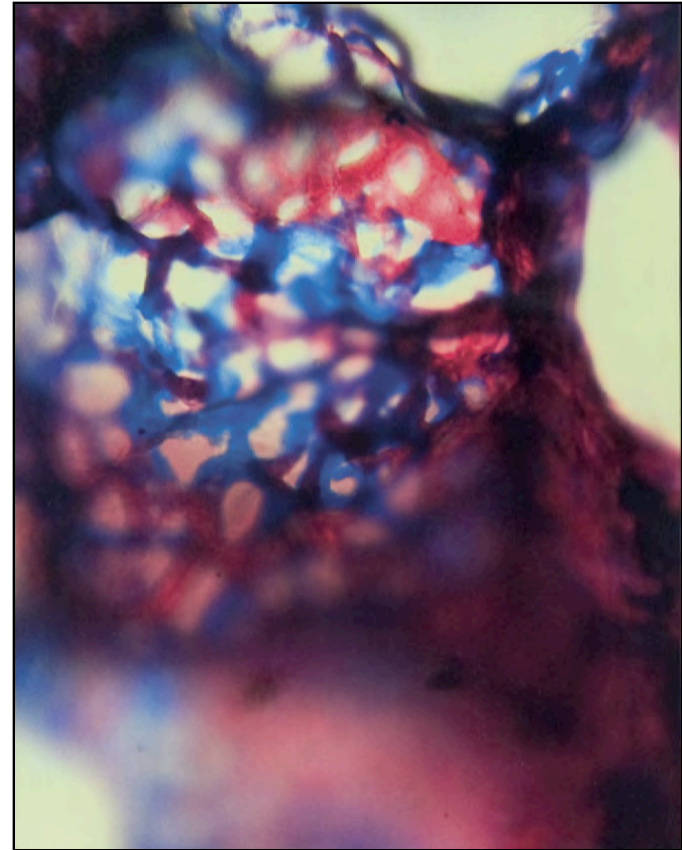
Taking small, justifiable liberties in the name of medicine.  
Never had the imagery of physiology been so vivid.  
Anatomical pursuit transcended to the ethereal.  
Bringing clarity to concepts beyond the classroom.

Laying on crimson sheets, pouring over biochemistry.  
Tachycardia increasing with each turn of the page.  
Behind the books, between the lines, beneath the sheets of text,  
The constant companionship flamed into palpable synergy.

## Perfusion

Nancy Henry, DVM

Department of Anatomy



# Power to the People!

Wesley Robinson-McNeese, M.D.

Office of Diversity and Multicultural Affairs

I arrived in the Republic of Vietnam, late in the afternoon during February of 1968, as part of a small contingent of replacement airmen. We landed at Bien Hoa Airfield for an overnight stay before being flown to our duty station further north. A quiet, uneventful night played out, featuring beer-drinking, talking, and later whispering into the wee hours about a long day of flying that had taken us from Travis AFB, California to Elmendorf AFB, Alaska and then on to this station in the suburbs of Saigon. There was little evidence, that night, of us being in a combat zone except for a few flashes of light and rumbles of explosions off in the distance. The next morning we traveled to DaNang Airbase strapped to the insides of a C-124 heavy-lift, cargo plane. Crucial helicopter parts filling the plane's middle, threatened to commandeer our seats during each episode of turbulence that sent the aircraft dropping several feet, settling and then rising again. The load shifted and creaked with every dip of the plane, but tethers held as we buzzed our way northeast through the sun-swept, humid sky.

When the aft ramp of the burly Globemaster II opened, allowing us to scramble out before helicopter parts could be unloaded, the heat of DaNang's flight line enveloped us, seeming worse than the heat at Bien Hoa. We sweated openly in pristine jungle fatigues and boots, eyes burning from a mixture of sunlight and salt — all giving stark evidence that we were new, and hardly worthy of a second look from passersby. Respect from fellow soldiers in Vietnam was measured by the wear and tear of uniforms, days accumulated in-country (which showed ability to survive), and most especially days remaining before heading back to the States. We were the lowest of the low, with only one day under our belts and a 12-month tour looming ahead. Our bodies had little time to adjust to temperature, and topography, as we were quickly directed onto a waiting truck and driven off to prepare for duties with the 6924th Security Squadron. My previous duty station had been in remote Hakata, Japan, which now seemed like a resort compared to the geography of DaNang. Packed loosely on the back of the truck, we

hardly looked at one another, but stared instead at the major landmarks of the base as it rolled out before us, each handling our apprehensions in silence. The truck sped along the road to base headquarters where in-processing would take place.

We had come to 'Nam in the throes of the Tet Offensive, ultimately being settled right in the thick of the carnage that racked the countryside. Vietcong and North Vietnamese soldiers were unrelentingly striking targets across the provinces trying to dislodge the Saigon government in one series of brutal attacks. My station on the west side of DaNang was not totally insulated from Charley's assaults — no place was, but at least our operations were not out in the bush where men were dying in ever-increasing numbers. Instead, from the base, we coordinated a deadly struggle that blasted the Vietcong from their strongholds during the day, only to have them reappear at night to rain down revenge from the skies. We arrived months before our security squadron's station would be mangled by enemy mortars and knocked off line, sending me and several other ditty-boppers to temporary duty stations in the Philippines. We had no inkling of that ominous future event that would profoundly affect the history of the 6924th in Vietnam. Instead, on the day of our arrival all was routine as we signed and stamped our way through mounds of orientation papers and meetings before taking care of the other Three S's and settling down for some much needed sleep.

Because I had come to 'Nam early in 1968, two months before the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., I was thousands of miles away from the upheaval that coursed through cities across America following his death. Black America erupted behind Dr. King's murder. Racial resentment reverberated through the ranks of the military as well, but was dampened in Vietnam by the necessities of a hard-fought war. It was difficult to direct your anger at The Man back in the States, when the man out in the bush surrounding DaNang had greater means and motive to hurt you. Add to



## Power to the People (cont.)

expediency the fact that by temperament I was more disposed to kindness than to killing – more to moderation than to confrontation, and you had a soldier whose mind, at that time, was far from being engaged in the Black Power struggle that gripped the United States. Besides, my plan for the next twelve months was to endure and only to engage when necessary. Distance also aided distraction. The reality is that DaNang was a hot zone because of the work of sappers in the hills around the air base. The U.S. was a hot zone of civil unrest and growing racial divide, but, also, it was a world away.

The Black Power Movement found its legs during 1968, ending the year with a resounding October protest at the Mexico City Olympic Games. Tommie Smith won the 200 meter race and his teammate John Carlos took third place in the event. During the awards ceremony, as the U.S. national anthem played, they each raised black-gloved, clenched fists in a silent protest that became front-page news all around the world. In February of 1968, however, the upcoming Olympics received only occasional mention in armed forces broadcasts and print media. Being absent from the U.S. on overseas duty for most of my time in the Air Force, I had little firsthand knowledge of the leaders of the Black Protest Movement, and even less acquaintance with the practices and mores of that Movement's members. The Black Power salute meant little to me, especially when compared to the military salute that was a daily part of my life. During those days, the military code of conduct was my bible, especially in Vietnam. I was a gung ho troop who knew his Air Force-assigned job, and did it well.

Early one morning, after four months in-country, I was walking back to the barracks area from my duty compound, trying to shake off a long night spent chasing dots and dashes through a faulty headset. I was groggy and only partially awake. Breakfast at the chow hall and then my bunk were the only things on my mind during that walk back to the billets. A convoy of Marines came up from behind me moving at a fast clip, throwing up road-side dust and gravel as they approached. I stepped aside respectfully, watching as each of eight trucks passed. Curiosity began pulling me out of my sleep-deprived stupor, because I didn't often get to see a band of jar-

heads, locked and loaded, primed for a sortie out into the field. The end truck was packed to near overflowing with a grubby band of black Marines, each with M-16s pointing towards the sky. As this last truck sped past, three of its occupants thrust clenched fists high into the air and shouted down to me, "Power, Brother; Power!" I said nothing, but stared quizzically as the truck and its bush-hardened occupants, moved swiftly down the road.

My questioning look turned to a surprised one, as the truck slid to a halt — brakes squealing and smoking, and then backed up, moving faster this time than when it had gone past. The driver slammed the vehicle to a stand-still less than three feet from my boots, which by this time must have been quivering in sync with my heart. A rather threatening-looking brother, with a human thigh-bone tied around his waist by a black, red and green leather strap, came to the side of the truck and declared, as he pointed his rifle at my head, "If you don't give us some Power, I'm gonna blow yo black ass off this road!"

Years later I looked back on this incident with sober contemplation of how quickly one can adapt to new surroundings when necessary; noting that, in a pinch, lingo can be quickly learned and used to assimilate into social groups. I thought of personality traits and how they can be changed dramatically by happenstance — about cultural spirit pushing through from a place deep inside; about clarity of concept, and how it often springs from crisis. I marveled while remembering how astoundingly fast a somewhat untutored airman was educated about, and taught to embrace the passions of his socially-oppressed people — all in a matter of seconds, while looking at the business end of an M-16 leveled at him from one yard away. Mostly, though, I smiled, chuckled out loud, and for a few seconds quivered again, recalling my visceral response — when then fully alert and thoroughly frightened, my clenched fist shot like a bolt into the air as I yelled at the top of my voice, "Power, Brothers; Power to the People!"



## The Sneeze that I Snuzz!

Craig Maddox, M.D.

Class of 2003

*2nd Place, Poetry*

When I was young  
I learned a lesson because,  
Because of a terrible  
sneeze that I snuzz.  
I had a nice hanky,  
One my mother had bought.  
But when that sneeze came,  
Well, I simply forgot.

This was not a small sneeze.  
Oh, no, not at all!  
Like the one in the song  
that mushed a meatball.  
That sneeze that I snuzz  
was a terrible sneeze.  
I bruised my poor bottom  
and skinned both my knees.  
Then I rolled on the floor  
And crashed into my bed,  
which gave me a lump  
on the top of my head.

And as soon as that sneeze  
Came out of my mouth,  
It crashed through the window  
and headed on south.  
I picked myself up and  
got back on my feet.  
I ran to the window  
and looked down the street.  
I watched my sneeze, wondering,

“Where would it go?”  
Then my sneeze picked up speed  
and continued to grow!  
It picked up two dogs  
and a cat and a mouse;  
a trampoline, swimming pool,  
car and a house!  
All my neighbors came out  
and looked with a frown.  
That sneeze that I snuzz  
Headed straight for downtown!  
If that sneeze hit the city  
who knows what might happen.  
What a pity, the city,  
may very well flatten!  
I stood there so helpless.  
What could I do?  
Well, what would you do  
with such a Kerchoo?  
Then it came to me quick.  
It was simple, of course.  
I must call in the Army  
or call the Air Force.

As usual the Army  
was busy that day.  
But the Air Force had  
nothing to do but to play.  
They came in like a flash  
in pairs, two by two.  
Four jets and two nets  
in their color of blue.

*(continued on page 8)*

## The Sneeze that I Snuzz! (cont.)

The first net was made up  
of powerful strings  
in order to catch the house,  
cat, dogs, and things.  
All these had been caught up  
in that terrible sneeze,  
which now also had some  
trucks, birdbaths and trees.  
The second net now would stop  
that sneeze in its place.  
It picked it up and threw it out  
right into space.  
So the Air Force succeeded.  
Mission complete!  
Then we all celebrated  
out in the street.  
That sneeze that I snuzz  
left without a trace.  
But I bet you it still  
flies in outer space.

All these things happened,  
And all just because,  
because of that terrible  
sneeze that I snuzz.  
Now wherever I am  
North, West, East or South,  
Whenever I sneeze  
I cover my mouth.  
But I'll not use my hands  
when next my sneeze blows.  
For now we are told  
To sneeze in our elbows.

## Carhenge

Kelly Armstrong  
Department of Medical Humanities



## On Dieting and Cheese

Jeanne Ferraro  
Community

I love not only string and feta,  
But all the rich and varied cheese.  
The tangy bleu  
The sharp gruyere  
And most, the soft and buttery bries.

## Keep Off the Elephant, I-55 Illinois

Mark Gordon  
Community



## On Dieting and Cheese, Epilogue, variation

Jeanne Ferraro  
Community

I cannot live on string and feta,  
I miss the rich and fatty cheeses.  
Tangy bleu and sharp gruyere,  
The ripe, fresh scent of buttery brieses.

## Inner Space

John Benitez M.D., MPH  
Class of 1981  
*3rd Place, Visual Art*



## i am pissed

Marie Vera

Class of 2014

*1st Place, Prose*

Anger that seethes just below the surface oozes to daylight at the most inopportune times.

There are days that I fight tooth and nail to be civil to those whom I do not like, much less respect. Yet, because of my chosen endeavors, I am forced to do just that every day. And most of the time, I accomplish that particular feat of sublimation quite well. So well, in fact, that those for whom I hold contempt feel free to joke with me, and even confide in me some of their personal challenges. Yet, I deal with it all with what I consider to be a Herculean amount of aplomb, in spite of a deep seated desire to slap spit sideways out of their mouths for fixing their lips to utter some of the idiocy that drips coolly from their lips.

So here I am, today, imperfect in my attempt to maintain my cool.

When Cecil walked into the church, I caught my breath. Not because he is my ex-husband and I missed him (mind you), but because I just did not expect him to attend my father's funeral. He was not close to my father. It was no secret that my father did not particularly care for him after what he did to me while we were married. As a matter of fact, no one in my family (including my dog) liked him.

I could not contain my anger and, at first, I really worked hard to do that. But it kept bubbling to the surface in the form of "tells" in my body language. Arms crossed, my leg shook relentlessly. I looked to the ceiling, examining the replica from Michealangelo's Sistine Chapel, and practiced my deep breathing. But as soon as I "returned" to the chapel, my contempt leapt from me, like lava from a volcano. I was nudged and whispered to until finally, I had to excuse myself so that I could gather my wits.

"I can do this," I told myself. I have lied about who I truly am most of my life. When I was young I endured comments like, "You are a credit to your race, Marie." And, being too young to understand the nature of such remarks, I willingly accepted such "compliments." When I became aware of how these comments smacked with racism, I was too angry to notice that

my coping behaviors had become so ingrained, that even when such evil stared me in the face, I was impotent to challenge it, except in the most academic of settings.

And then I married the very symbol of that racism...but, I was in love. And my type of love...could make a man's knees buckle at the mere mention of its offering.

My love?

It was everything a man could want in a woman; my vulnerabilities and need to be cared for were offset only by my strong sense of self and fierce protective shield I placed around those I loved...It was permanent. It was real. (*Yeah...Barry White music always played in the background when you were loved by me.*)

And I could do this. I was doing it, because my poor deceased father would have it no other way. And ok, perhaps it was at the behest of those who care for me and did not want to see me sacrifice my dignity at my father's funeral for the sake of displaying my righteous anger.

Unfortunately, today, my anger would not allow it.

For once, I unapologetically embraced my anger. For once, I did not care that the person with whom I was angry, was aware of it. I did not care that he noticed I wanted to scratch his eyes out, chew them up and spit them at him; but only after I opened a can of whoop-ass on his bimchette. I still can't believe he left me for her sorry, shallow, money-grubbing ass.

Ok. Maybe she is a tall drink of champagne; with her blond-haired, green-eyed, 36-24-36 womb and ovaries chock-full of healthy ova just waiting to be fertilized by his supah-sperm.

But...he promised me.

He promised me that my chocolate thighs were just the right flavor of café-au-lait for him. That "his people" could all go to hell for all he cared if they did not approve of us. That he would never, "NEVAH," (*yeah, he said it*

## i am pissed (cont.)

*just like that*) leave my sweet, sweet...because I was all he ever wanted or needed in a woman. He said he loved my brown skin. And he always said it in his best Commodores-Easy-Like-Sunday-Morning-voice (*never-mind that the song's theme was Lionel leaving his woman!*). That goofy imitation made me melt when he used it after my third glass of Riesling. No matter that it made me laugh gently, that was ours.

And suddenly I realized, there in the chapel, that my parents did not teach me to express my anger. Good girls don't get angry. Nice girls don't raise their voices. It is easier to attract flies with honey than with vinegar, I was admonished.

Did it ever occur to anyone that flies like shit whether or not it is dipped in honey or vinegar?

For my entire life, I have muddled through my anger issues with no real means of actually resolving that over which I was angry. I had plenty of practice sublimating my anger, even when he called me a black bitch for the tenth time. I had plenty of practice "making nice," even when he left me for her. I had plenty of practice at not being that stereotypical, loud, angry, black woman who snaps on anyone who gets in her way, because I was afraid of my anger. I was afraid of what my black anger would do to his white ego.

And now, it's too late; I am simply not wired to snap. And I hate that about myself.

So in the chapel, at my father's funeral I suppress me. And I make nice and smile politely and get my pat on the head, and I shuffle along agreeably nodding my head saying, "Yassuh! You mighty nice fo' comin heah to hep me berry mah favah..." all the while basking in the sunshine of being a credit to my race.

And I sublimate. And then I sublimate some more.

Until I don't.

*(Cut to TV reporter: "Grief stricken woman opens a can of whoop-ass on her ex-husband and his new wife in the middle of a funeral. Details at 11!")*

## The Remnant of a Rose

Robert Wesley

Office of External and Health Affairs

The remnant of a rose  
Clings hard to the ground  
Near to where I'd dropped it.  
Stripped of bloom and splendor,  
Dark, withered casting,  
Bristling with thorn and pain.

In vain, I brave the thorns,  
Delve my life and soul,  
To find a grieving boy,  
Regain his innocence,  
Unearth her splendor.  
I mourn what might have been.

I come seeking solace.  
To merge man with boy,  
I reach across the years.  
Still, I do not find her,  
Sense her not at all,  
Her shroud too tightly bound.

Almost warm, almost safe,  
Vague, misty shadows,  
Memories of Mother.  
Too few for a man to  
Grasp, too precious for  
A boy to surrender.

A glimpse of pale splendor,  
Scent of faded spring,  
Hint of resurrection.  
Aging man, grieving boy,  
From sons to Mother,  
Again, I drop a rose.

# The Strange Case of Mr. Baldhart Funk

Stuart Frank, M.D.

Department of Internal Medicine

*(The following is a true story about real people about 40 years ago.)*

Suzanne worked for a man in San Francisco named Baldhart Funk. I suppose that was his real name. No one could make up a name like that, and if you were going to use a pseudonym, why would you pick anything as ridiculous as Baldhart Funk? If you wanted to be relatively anonymous one sure way to call attention to yourself was to be named Baldhart.

Suzanne worked in an office which was a store front on a quiet street in a middle class neighborhood in the Western Addition, a residential part of San Francisco out toward the ocean. There was a small painted sign on the door announcing in very small modest letters, "Western Gate Realty, B Funk, prop." There was nothing else. No business entered from the street. It was not a casual walk-in type of realty where people looking for a house in the neighborhood could stop by and see what was available down the street. Her job was to answer the phones and open the mail, except for letters from Germany from a woman named Alexis and of course anything marked "PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL." There were quite a few of these "P and C" letters. They all looked the same, a medium sized manila envelopes with the same typed address, and Balboa Street always spelled wrong as in "Balbao." These letters arrived about once a week when Suzanne started working there. Her job was to put these envelopes in a slit on the front panel of a locked drawer on the desk. The next morning they were gone, the empty drawer was open and Suzanne was instructed to close the drawer; it locked automatically when the drawer was shut. She was then asked to add the appropriate mail the next day. The drawer was left open so she would know that the private mail had been removed, and no one would be tempted to look for something that wasn't there.

The rest of the mail was professional real estate junk mail; properties for sale, professional magazines and newsletters, office equipment announcements and bills from the landlord and the phone company. Despite all these

real estate front office trappings it wasn't at all clear what Mr. Funk did with his time, either professionally or personally. It was certain that he did not sell any real estate to anyone. He was a great boss and Suzanne was a perfect secretary. She did not see him for three and a half weeks after she was hired, and when he finally arrived, he was literally the first person to walk through the door and she did not recognize him. Her generous checks arrived by mail every Friday. From then on, he would stop in for a short while perhaps once or twice a week, pick up the mail, sometimes make a few phone calls, read the newspaper and leave without so much as exchanging a single word other than "Good Afternoon" and "Good Bye."

It was hard to describe Mr. Baldhart Funk since in some respects, he was so ordinary, but it was also impossible to describe him because he was so strange looking. He was so incongruent with the world around him as to be characterized as eccentric in his appearance. He was always impeccably dressed, but he looked as if he was strolling down the Unter den Linden in Berlin on a spring afternoon in the early 1930's. He wore a black bowler hat, a black suit with a small black bow tie, a black vest, and bright shining black shoes and sported a small pencil thin type mustache which looked like dirt on his upper lip. He was a short man, and had a foolish looking pot belly so that his vest didn't quite reach to the level of his too tight trousers. He didn't just nod his head when he was introduced. He stood erect, didn't quite click his heels, but almost, and he extended his arm for a handshake that was more of a salute, and then he bowed graciously. It was very European. He could have been a diplomat, but he also could have been someone's butler. He looked ridiculous in San Francisco in the 1970's but at that time there enough crazies walking around the streets that he didn't attract too much attention.

Suzanne was punctual, reliable, resourceful, imaginative and never bored. She did not infringe on his privacy, and he did not express one

## The Strange Case of Mr. Baldhart Funk (cont.)

instant of interest in her. She listened to music, read many books, redeco-  
rated the office, hung new pictures, painted the walls, took care of dozens of  
plants, made friends with the neighbors, learned to speak fluent French,  
played with her cat and cooked interesting lunches on a single burner hot  
plate. She never typed one letter, answered very infrequent phone calls with  
appropriate discretion, paid the bills on time, filed the necessary forms when  
necessary and carefully locked the door when she left. One of the reasons  
Baldhart Funk hired her was because she spoke fluent German, but in the  
eighteen months that she worked there, she not once had the opportunity to  
read, speak or translate anything German. How odd.

Baldhart Funk was German, I think. He spoke English without a hint  
of an accent. There may have been an occasional lapse and an absent  
minded verb at the end of a sentence or the slightest trouble pronouncing  
“th” as “this” or “think.” But Baldhart Funk did not speak to anyone much  
at all, not in his office and not to his secretary. He spoke very little on the  
phone and then almost always in a variety of languages including French,  
Italian, probably Dutch and of course German.

This went on for perhaps eighteen months. Nothing really changed  
except for the frequency of the Personal and Confidential manila envelopes  
which now arrived two or even three times a week. Then they stopped  
coming altogether. Mr. Baldhart Funk had been coming in less and less fre-  
quently for the past few weeks and then he stopped coming in to the office  
at all. Suzanne’s paychecks arrived by mail every Friday and after two weeks,  
the paychecks stopped also. She called the bank and discovered that the  
account had been closed. After working in this strange office for a year and  
a half, she knew very little about this strange man, but now she realized that  
she didn’t even know where he lived or how she could contact him if he  
didn’t stop by from time to time.

How long is a reasonable time to continue coming to work for a man  
who has probably ceased to exist, who has disappeared and has stopped  
paying your salary? She called the Police. They had no record for him. She  
called the hospitals and they all drew a blank. She called the FBI who didn’t

say yes and didn’t say no, but they said to try the Immigration and  
Naturalization Service. The INS checked and asked who was calling and why,  
and then referred her to the FBI. The FBI had nothing more to say. Dead End.

She called the landlord, cancelled the newspaper, the phone, the utili-  
ties and left a note on the desk with her phone number on it, locked the  
door and left. She took her cat, the pictures on the walls, the plants and the  
single burner hot plate. The FBI stopped by her apartment a few weeks later.  
They asked some strange questions about Mr. Baldhart Funk, about where  
he lived and who were his friends, where he travelled, his source of income,  
and his bank accounts and where he went. She was not surprisingly unable  
to provide any personal details and it was soon apparent that they knew  
more about him than she did. It was also clear that they were not going to  
give her any information.

What ever happened to Baldhart Funk? Perhaps he was murdered or  
desperately sick and lying alone in an empty squalid apartment? Could he  
have been kidnapped? But who was close enough to him or rich enough to  
pay any ransom and was he important enough for anyone to care? There  
probably is a very boring or mundane explanation for this eccentric  
behavior. A young man emigrated to the United States after WW II. He  
made his way across country and ended up somewhere else, a moderately  
successful small business man. He married, probably had children, got bored  
with his life, his wife, his children, and his small business and left them all  
behind. He sold the business, took all the money, invested it wisely and cau-  
tiously, found an interesting lady friend and set up another small business so  
he could disappear back into the woodwork without calling much attention  
to himself. When his ex-wife caught up with him, he packed up again and  
disappeared, no doubt to reappear somewhere else at a later time. This of  
course, doesn’t make much sense at all. There are too many unanswered  
questions, too many inconsistencies and too many eccentricities for such an  
ordinary explanation.

Perhaps he was a double agent for some other country or smuggling drugs,  
or some poor innocent man caught up in someone else’s crime and was now



## The Strange Case of Mr. Baldhart Funk (cont.)

hidden by the feds in their “witness protection program” or maybe a big time gambler evading his creditors. How absurd. How ridiculous. This is a fantasy.

Suzanne still thinks that Mr. Baldhart Funk was in the real estate business. He was such a nice gentleman.

A few months later, Suzanne visited the old neighborhood where Mr. Baldhart Funk ostensibly sold real estate. She still had a key. The office was empty and she entered to look around. Nothing was changed. It was just as she left it. There was a small closet in the back room which she hardly ever noticed before. She saw a coat hanging on one side, out of sight because that side of the closet was in a shadow and dimly lit when the room light was on. Mr. Baldhart Funk had left a coat; perhaps there was an address or a phone number. Deep inside one pocket was a cryptic letter. There were strange symbols on the top of the page, mysterious, disorganized, illegible, and below was a paragraph in German, presumably a translation. Below this was the same paragraph in English.

“Mr. Funk. Your task and the reconnaissance are complete. Get out soon. Get out now. Your transport will arrive on April 13, Wednesday at 3:17 AM. Departure will be prompt. Alexis.”

Suzanne even now still thinks that Mr. Baldhart Funk was in the real estate business. He was such a nice gentleman.

## Street Vendor in India

Kelly Armstrong

Department of Medical Humanities



## 'crush'

Sarah C.E. Stanton  
Community

this may be awkward to say, but i kind of want to do you.  
for funsies.

i want to create bursts of dopamine and oxytocin with you, and be too  
distracted by you to be able to think about those chemicals.

i want to make love at night where the stars can cheer us on and the  
darkness can swallow anxiety. i want to make love in the afternoon when  
we should be working. and i want to make love in the morning so we can  
go through the day basking in the memory of morning sex.

i want to hold you, feel your body tense and see your muscles tighten  
like a new string being stretched across a guitar.

we should write poetry on each other with our tongues.

i want to show you my ice cube trick.

it might be nice.

and i kind of like keeping this in my head, actually.

because i'll confess if it really came down to being naked in front of  
you i would probably hesitate because i like to trust first.

i like to feel safe with the person i allow to touch my body.

i don't rush.

i'm not a girl you can pick up in a bar, take home, screw\*, and leave.

so maybe what i want to say is that it could be nice to make out.

yes. we should make out.

because even though it's barely autumn i can already smell chill in the  
air every day. so i want to touch the warmth of your lips, inhale it and  
pocket it with a smile that reminds me of the feel of you.

i want to taste your chapstick so i can associate something bland with  
the thought of something lovely.

i want to explore the crevices of your lips and make a map of the roads  
that lead to smiles and the ones that lead to frowns.

we should kiss each other until dawn bathes our pores in pastels.

i want to hear your morning voice.

it might be nice.

and if even that's too much maybe we can just cuddle.

cuddling is \* awesome.

and i'd like it if you felt comfortable enough with me to hold my hand.

i want you to tell me funny things and sweet things and nerdy things  
that i can think about later and giggle to myself over.

or don't talk at all if you want, because the wordless conversations can  
be the best and sometimes it's nice not to have to think of anything to say.

we should make inside jokes.

i want to be silly and real with you.

it might be nice.

because i like listening to your random insights, and i like looking for-  
ward to getting messages from you.

and i'll admit that i'd be perfectly happy to keep this effervescence  
inside without letting it bubble over my lips awkwardly.

because you know, it might be nice to just be in each other's space.

so i think what i really mean to say by all this is we should hang out  
sometime.

it might be nice.

*\*Editor's note: some of the wording of this poem was modified with the permission of the  
author.*

## Quick Thinking

John Grace, M.D.

Class of 2000

*2nd Place, Prose*

Now. I don't have a lot of time. I just got pushed over a balcony. It wasn't on purpose. Just happened. What can I say? It was a crowded party.

We're about twenty-five feet from the ground. That means I've got about two and a half seconds. It also means I probably won't make it.

It takes me about a half of second to process all of the above information. That means I've got two more seconds for some real contemplation. How am I going to spend the next (and possibly last) two seconds of my life?

I spend a half second thinking about my wife. We've been together about fifteen years. She's going to miss me. But I've got decent life insurance. I would tell her I love her. But she already knows. That's not the most important thing right now.

My three-year-old son, Johnny, I guess I'm never going to see him grow up. That's sad. I'll miss him. He's a cute kid. I don't have enough time to say good-bye or worry about that.

My seven-year-old daughter, Amberly, she's a firecracker ... seven going on seventeen. She's got a lot of spunk. It's a shame I won't get to see her use it but I know she will.

About a second and a half left now. And that brings me to my next (and probably final) problem — my son, Dean, the baby. He's just six-months old. And the bad thing is ... he's with me — I was holding him when I got pushed over the balcony.

I'm dead. I already know that. I figured that out in half a second. But is Dean too? Is there any way I can save him?

If I hold him close he'll still feel the impact. Think. Think. Think fast.

The balcony was over a driveway. That means concrete. That's not good.

But wait. There was some bushes next to the driveway. Off to the left.

Or was it the right?

No time to look. Take a guess...and hope.

If I push him up ... while I'm falling it should slow his velocity...up and toward the left. And hope and pray I remember about the bushes.

Only half a second left. Here it goes.

Bye Dean. I lov-----

SMACK!

PAIN! Pain everywhere. Can't breathe. Ribs broken. Lungs punctured.

Pool of wet around me. Screaming. Everyone screaming.

"Call 911!"

How's Dean? I wonder.

"Is the baby okay?" Someone asks.

"Um...yeah....yeah...He's fine. Landed in these bushes...not a scratch."

I smile.

Bye Dean. I love you.

# Crosshairs of a Memory

Joseph Butler  
Class of 2014  
*3rd place, Prose*

*(This is the first time I have told this story in this level of detail, although some details have been left out for obvious reasons. This is not a happy story. This story recounts an early experience I had in Iraq faced with someone walking toward base strapped with explosives. I tell this story because in doing so I hope to find a little more peace for my mind. Thank you for reading.)*

No farther than a few hundred yards outside my door and already I'm sweating! This heat is ridiculous. So intensely stifling, it's an effort just to draw breath. If the base weren't here, it would just be sand as far as the eye can see, blazing under the sun's furious rays. Through the waves of heat rolling from every surface, the far side of the base is but a hazy blur.

I stop for a minute, turning my head skyward in an attempt to curse the sun. A mere glimpse was enough though, as the blinding light quickly forced my eyes away. Yet even with my eyes turned down, the heat from the sun continues to beat down on me as if punishing me for even thinking of glancing upward. I continue forward, futilely wiping sweat from my face. A week into the deployment, I'm already counting down the six month tour.

On the blistering trek across base I start thinking about my family back home — my mother and my brothers — my constants in life. My mother was always there. Though I never really had a father figure, it never really bothered me with Mom present. Don't get me wrong, she was married to my brothers' father. It's just that he was never really there when it counted. He was around for video games and amusement parks — the "fun times." But, it was my mom who made sure we played sports when we wanted and took care of problems at school. She made sure homework was finished and well, everything.

God, she's probably completely frantic right now! I guess this time she actually has a reason to worry, or she would if she knew. I just couldn't bring myself to tell her that I was being deployed to a war zone. She freaked out and started crying hysterically when I told her I was heading off to boot

camp. This was her biggest fear!

"Mom, I'm heading to Iraq." She would die.

I don't even know what my brothers would think. I just can't let myself be the cause of their worry. Hell, they have a hard enough time taking care of themselves without adding to it the worry of a brother overseas. So, in my amazingly superior intelligence, what did I do? I just disappeared. Like a complete jerk, I shut off my phone and stupidly decided that I would call them sometime saying I was on a field exercise. Obviously, I should've put more thought into that. If I call them from out here, they'd quickly figure out my general location from the operator.

So now my family has no idea where I am, no way to get in touch with me, and knowing Mom, she probably thinks I ended up in the hospital after another one of the freak accidents I am notorious for. Lord knows, I ended up spending three nights in the hospital about a month before boot camp because I thought it would be a good idea to randomly climb a tree along Lakeshore Drive. I don't remember it, but the official report says that I fell from thirty feet and landed on my face. Apparently, the human body bounces. My friends all thought I was dead, but no such luck. I survived. My mother made the drive all the way out to Rush just to see for herself.

Waking-up proved to be one of the more embarrassing moments of my life. Looking at a room full of the most important people in my life — who had probably saved mine by getting me here — I was only able to tell the doctors, "I swear I know these people; I just can't remember their names." Well, I remembered "Mom." I didn't forget that one, but still completely embarrassing.

So yeah ... here I am, little more than a month out of boot camp, thousands of miles from home, deployed with the Headquarters Battalion of the Second Marine Division in Western Iraq and I'm relying on the memories of those names and faces to get me through this.

Now I'm heading off to stand watch at one of the main gates. I barely

## Crosshairs of a Memory (cont.)

know my way across base. I have no idea what to expect once I get there. I hardly know anyone in my command or on the entire base for that matter. I'm miserably hot. My family has no clue where I am, and I have no real idea what I'm doing. Only I could manage something this ridiculous.

Finally, I arrive at the duty hut and report in. I meet the two Marines that I will be sharing my post with: a fellow Private and a Sergeant. Our position provides an elevated overlook of the road into town; another four or five Marines stand sentry below us to interact with anyone that comes up the road. Exciting? No, it is a really boring job. Infantry platoons and supply convoys come and go regularly, as do a couple of vendors who must be searched. Nothing eventful, but that's a good thing.

I pass the time speaking with the other Private. He comes from a military family. Like me, he's also fresh out of boot camp and doesn't really know anyone here. His father is somewhere on base, but because his father is an officer, they have yet to see each other. He laughs with me as I tell him about my family, and soon things don't seem as bad as they did an hour ago. I still feel like I'm in an oven, but at least now someone else is complaining about the damn sun with me.

We passed the day that way — telling stories about our friends and family. If we were lucky, the Sergeant would pipe-in with a story of his own, which always had us laughing at the sheer ridiculousness of the trouble “his friend” managed to get into. Apparently, I'm not the only one who can manage to end up in impossible situations.

Looking toward town, only half-listening to some story, I note the sun slipping low in the sky and the wind picking up slightly. There really is a rugged beauty to the place beneath the barrage of heat and sand.

On the horizon, I notice an approaching mass. Once again, I yell, “Incoming.” The Marines below tighten their focus down the road, waiting to identify who or what is approaching. Who could be coming this way now? It's too early for a returning squad.

Within a few minutes, a single individual comes into view. It's too late to be a vendor. All the vendors have already left; besides, he doesn't

have anything with him. Not a good sign.

He appears to be a young man, all alone, no carts, no supplies, nothing. He slowly ambles forward, looking down at the road in front of him. As the man moves within earshot, the Marines below command him to halt and identify himself. He keeps moving.

Then, I hear the Sergeant's command.

“Take aim.”

As trained, I immediately set my M16 in position: left hand steadying the barrel with my left arm braced on the wall's ledge, right index finger rigid and ready at the trigger, safety off, eye down the sights. Surely this is just a precaution. Once the man gets closer, he'll stop. The moment felt surreal. This is only my second time standing duty. Nothing crazy will happen right? The five Marines down below, they'll stop the man before he comes too close, before anything gets out of hand. Still, with the man just inside of 200 yards from us, I have him easily within my sights.

Taking up more defensive positions, the Marines yell again for the young man to stop. Still, he continues forward. Does he hear them? Maybe he isn't paying attention or the wind is muffling the sound of the Marines' voices. Surely, once he sees guns pointed at him, he'll stop.

At that moment, the young man looks up and he's close enough for me to make out his features. Wait a minute. This isn't a young man. This is barely more than a kid; he can't be older than 16. Yet, it isn't misunderstanding or fear in his eyes. His face is set with determination. Again, the command to halt is given. He hears it and ignores it. Void of discernable emotion, he simply continues toward us.

This can't be happening!

Over the near deafening rush of blood in my temples, the order blasts in: “Take the shot Butler! FIRE!”

My finger hooks the trigger. Through the sights, I clearly see the... the boy, his face, his eyes, everything. He looks so cold, so singular in emotion and thought.

Everything freezes.

## Crosshairs of a Memory (cont.)

For an instant stretching into an eternity I am the only thing connected to that boy. There is no sound, no movement. The boy is there in front of me, mid-stride, foot suspended above the ground.

Time stands still, and in that fleeting instant, a million impulses speed through my being, slamming the awful reality of what is about to happen into my brain. This isn't supposed to be happening, not to me, not to another mother's son. Again, the memories of friends and family flash through my mind in quick succession.

My mind races for an alternative to the inevitable, but the effort is futile. I can't escape the situation in front of me. The thunderous pressure roars through my veins.

Time starts again.

The noise below me violently strips away the silence. Movement returns to the world and the boy's foot completes its decent.

BANG!!!

The echo of my rifle tears through the night as I'm plunged into darkness. I can't seem to get air. I'm cold and yet I'm sweating. Something is on top of me, wrapped around me, holding me down. I fight to break free, finally throwing it off me. Disoriented, I sit up, gasping for air. As my breath returns, I hear crickets chirping.

Crickets?

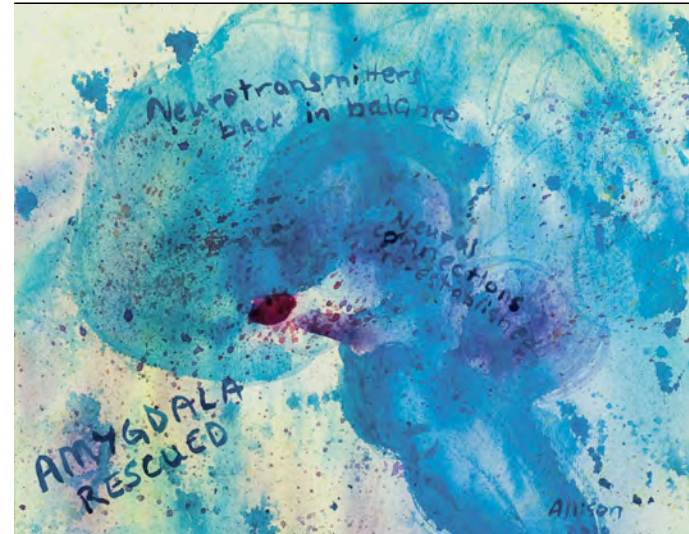
Glancing around, I see the soft glow of light coming through a window accompanied by a cool breeze. I'm in bed, my bed! I'm not there with the sand and my rifle and the boy. I'm home. I'm safe.

But, will I ever stop reliving that day?

## Amygdala Rescued

Linda Allison, M.D., MPH

Class of 1981



## Hospital Room

Michael R. Pranzatelli, M.D.  
Department of Neurology

Strange town  
hospital gown open in the back  
IV drip by drip

A wall clock measures  
time she is away  
from herself... and him

The flowers empty their vase  
before she answers  
to her name

or opens her pretty eyes  
to a light kiss.  
One look

and she is gone again,  
naked on an ice float,  
farther from the river banks

than she has ever been.  
He fears losing her,  
at her side useless,

from thoughts of her startled  
by the intercom announcing baby John.  
A stranger mops linoleum at his feet

[why now—can't she see?]  
The food tray comes and goes untouched,  
winter sun makes its journey

on the off-white wall  
then,  
nightfall

## White Dove of the Desert

Dennis Raddle  
Community



***peccare peccabilis***  
***Peccavi\****

Sumi Rebeiro  
Class of 2014

in the beginning  
before the breaking  
our reflections, mirrored, were  
whole and perfect. no rain  
fell on us, solid in our  
sturdy shelter, sheltered in our  
stolid certainties. now the storm  
of Possibility  
{lives unlived,  
fruits untasted}  
plasters our hair dankly  
to our skulls, on faces  
fragmented in cracked mirrors  
of the mind,  
irretrievably shattered and  
Questioned

\*[peccare: to sin]

[peccabilis: sinful]

[Peccavi: I have sinned]

**A Tribute**

Omonigho Ekhomu, M.D.  
Class of 2009

floundering, lost  
I search for words to place together  
to remember  
my classmate, my friend  
how to speak, to express  
on a page  
the depths of your legacy  
your beauty  
your strength  
your passion for life,  
for people  
for medicine  
the hands of a surgeon  
scalpel-less lie  
hidden in a coffin  
the heart of our glowing Halley's comet  
rare in her splendor  
a smile we will forever miss

five years, four  
we all with joy anticipated  
our conclusion  
never expected.....

cancer, I will name it, and in naming it  
destroy the power thereof  
since our medicine could not  
and you are gone  
dear, beloved missed friend and colleague  
words fail...  
wishes failed...  
Hope prevails to see you again  
farewell my friend.



## Morning Reflections

John Benitez, M.D., MPH  
Class of 1981



## Imperfection

Wesley Robinson-McNeese, M.D.  
Office of Diversity and Multicultural Affairs

The diamond picked by jeweler's gaze  
'neath convex lens shows minor haze;  
And sacrifice to altar's flame trembles under  
blemished mane.  
See heroes and their victories won,  
examined closely, come undone.  
Spirit soft, inspiring awe  
on closer test reveals slight flaw;  
as melody supremely wrote  
soothes the sense through tainted note.  
Even purity from minds conceived, is naive  
imagery unachieved;  
creating character — sight unseen;  
conforming deity to lofty dream.  
How priestly holiness doth elude — intent  
usurped by unintended mood,  
that minds its own, not common good,  
as loudly their hosannas sing

When,

There is no perfect thing!

## Room Without a View

Michael R. Pranzatelli, M.D.  
Department of Neurology

If you're spending most of your time  
looking at the ceiling  
you are either ill  
or an amazing philosopher

unemployed  
or (keep in mind  
Michelangelo's dead),  
you spackle and paint for a living

and lay down those  
patterns so insignificant  
until wandering idle eyes  
try to make sense of them

near the window—  
that shine, lighter than the wall,  
in the shadowy corners darker  
near the hall

and if you're very ill  
(you probably are)  
you've watched your legs drift upward  
touching the ceiling with your feet

and you take your first steps  
surprised, but with a toddler's delight,  
to walk away  
from this upside down world