



SCOPE

Southern Illinois University School of Medicine
Volume 30 2023

On the cover:

The Rod of Asclepius

2nd Place Art

Dr. Amanda Mulch

Faculty, Student Affairs - Carbondale

SCOPE

Scope is the literary arts magazine of Southern Illinois University School of Medicine. This publication showcases the depth of talent within our campus community as we seek to enrich our lives through creativity. SIU School of Medicine encourages our patients, employees and learners to pursue wellness of the body and soul, and we are proud to provide an outlet for some of those pursuits here.

2023

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Editor's Note

Welcome to the 30th edition of *Scope*, the literary arts journal of SIU School of Medicine. For three decades, *SCOPE* has been a shining showcase for the talent and artistic expression of our students, physicians, employees and the larger medical community. In the works to come, you will see how creativity can serve as an outlet to tell exhilarating, heartfelt stories. The medical community has many of them. Our muses are all around us.

Coincidentally, thirty years ago, SIU School of Medicine graduated a physician who would become a pillar of our institution. We would like to dedicate the 2023 edition of *Scope* to Dr. Christine Todd, professor emeritus and champion of the Medical Humanities. Your vision and passion have inspired countless others to grab hold of their imaginations and connect art to life. I hope we can continue to cultivate the garden you grew.

Future *SCOPE* artists, poets, and writers, consider these tips from Peabody Award-winning producer and author Julie Burnstein in *4 Lessons in Creativity*.

1. Pay attention to the world around us.
2. Learn from parts of life that are most difficult.
3. Push against the limits of what we can and can't do.
4. Embrace loss.

Thank you for the privilege of serving as editor in the creation of this meaningful edition. I appreciate the creative souls before and around me who made its production possible. I hope that this springtime tradition continues to bloom and celebrate the imagination, creativity, and depth of the great people at our medical school.

Emma Johns, Editor in Chief

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Bruce

Thomas Hingle
Community Member

What the Dog Saw

1st Place Prose

Dr. Kathryn Waldyke

Faculty, LSP, PA Programs, FCM

Everyone in this small town is in a tizzy at what happened here at my house. Sadly, for all the notoriety, no one noticed I needed a new home, but I'm used to scratching out an existence. I'll go on.

My last folks were actually really good to me when I was a puppy and very young. But then they started to change. They had always argued a lot, but they started to fight, not just disagree. First it was just mean words, then shoving and throwing little things, sometimes followed by days of silence. We all (their kids and I) thought they were just going to split up and live apart, but then they got more forgetful, too. There was more going on.

At that time they were not always feeding me, so I took to getting the scraps I could off dirty dishes and out of the trash. The trash thing got me scolded and hit a few times. Later on they would forget to let me in or out, so I had accidents, which got me hit more than a few times. And I spent a lot of nights in the yard. And they stopped noticing messes.

Eventually they forgot to feed me more days than they remembered. But they would always apologize to me for that, saying the nice things to me that they sadly never said to each other. On really really good days, one would feed me and love on me, then since they were not talking to each other, the other one would not know I'd been fed, and they'd do it too. Those were the best days.

For a while a kind neighbor noticed I'd be left in the yard for days at a time, and she'd bring over scraps or bowls of dog food and water. She even put out a doghouse with a blanket that kept me a little bit warmer on cold days. I loved her so much. She would say nice things to me and scratch my ears, which really itch from the fleas. I duck into the creek whenever I can, to try to float a few of them off me. She moved away last year. I think she was kind of scared by all the yelling from our house.

This went on for years. Their kids came over less and less. I could hear the kids telling each other how scary it was to see the house in such bad shape and hear their parents yelling or silent all the time. I thought, "They are humans! Surely there is something they could do, with their big brains

and all.” But nothing ever changed for the better. They would sometimes say to their parents that they should move to “assisted living,” which I was afraid would not include me, but maybe it would be better. “With whose money?” one of them would ask. “We’re not leaving.”

One time after the same exchange, when they were leaving I heard one of them ask the other, “Should we hire a lawyer? Get guardianship?” The other shrugged his shoulders, and they left. I did not see them again for 2 seasons.

Well, life got slowly worse. No actions by anyone, if there were any, made it much better, except for the nice neighbor lady. The old folks had more trouble getting out of the house to shop for groceries, so we all got thinner. And being hungry seemed to make the fighting worse.

The old man had been mumbling things to me for years about how bad his life was and how hateful his wife was and how they had loved each other long ago, even still when I was just a pup. He started to ask me if they would both be better off dead. I could not have answered that one even if I could talk.

One day he left the car running in the garage. His wife got very angry when she found it and yelled at him for being forgetful. With the fumes, I don’t know that I was thinking so well, but I had my doubts that he actually forgot to turn the car off. I was worried for all of us.

The old man would wander around the back yard mumbling to himself. “We’re no good anymore. This is horrible.” “It needs to stop.” “I wish I’d die.” “I wish she’d die.” “We both need to die.” “I can’t kill myself.” “They’d take me to jail, but she’d be free.”

A few weeks later he turned the stove on, but just the gas, no fire. This time I was very glad to be outside, but I could hear the shouting again when she found it. I knew for sure it was not a forgetful accident this time. He had to have turned the fire off. I was more worried, but she just seemed angry. I don’t think she could understand what was happening. I wondered if I could get out of the back yard fence and find a new home. As bad as things were over the years, running away never seemed like the better option, until then.

When the old man pulled his old hunting rifle out of the basement, I was terrified. I stopped going back into the house when they called me. Sometimes they would drag me in by my collar. Other times they’d just leave me out, sometimes with a bowl of food, sometimes not. I started to dig a hole under the fence.

The old man would mumble more, sometimes even where his wife could hear him. “They’d take me to jail. I wonder if I’d be OK in jail? But she’d be free. She is so miserable....”

One day the truck driver brought a little box to the door. I barked at him, of course. He threw me a biscuit, the only food I got that day. I decided to bark at him every time, to get more. I hoped he’d be back again.

The box had an odd metallic jingle as he handed it to the old man. When he dragged me in, I saw the box had a picture of a deer, so I wondered if it could be food for me. But then I saw the picture of the gun on the other side and smelled gunpowder. We had hunted together once. I knew that smell. When the wind blew the door open, I snuck out and hid in the doghouse.

I knew the Terrible Day had arrived when I heard him in the kitchen with the gun and the rattling box. I was wondering if I should bark to warn her something was going on, but she usually just shouted at me to “shut up!” I started to bark anyway. I had to do something. I knew something very bad was happening.

As she started to yell, “Shut up!” I heard a loud bang, followed by another. Then I heard a man sobbing. I smelled gunpowder smoke.

I never saw my people again.

After about an hour a police car showed up at the house. I know humans have limited hearing, but a neighbor had to have heard the bang. Maybe a neighbor called the police. They seemed in no hurry. They knocked on the door, and the old man let them in. I saw him hand the gun to one officer before they went in the house.

Very soon the noise from sirens was intolerable. I howled in pain until they stopped in front of our house.

First to come out of the house was someone surrounded by police. It smelled like the old man, but I could not see him. He smelled afraid. He smelled like smoke. They loaded him into a police car that left before too much more time passed. More police cars pulled up, and more people went into our house. One of the cars had another dog in the back, so I barked for help, but he did not respond.

Finally the ambulance men came out with the stretcher. It was covered with a cloth, over the whole length. I guess that must have been the old woman. I could smell fresh blood, strongly. I stayed until it was dark. People continued to come and go, in and out of our house. I barked at

some of them, but they ignored me. I finally decided to finish digging my escape tunnel.

I found my way to town and the trash behind the only restaurant. It was the best I had eaten in weeks until someone found me and chased me off. I saw people walking, so I ran over and sat by the sidewalk. They looked at me but did not stop. They were talking about the horrible thing that had happened that day and asking each other how such a thing could have happened.

I wanted to tell them. I wanted to warn them. I wanted to go home with them and drink clean water and eat a bowl of dog food. But they continued on their way, so I went mine.

This story is inspired by an event that actually happened years ago in a small town where I lived and practiced. Details have been modified. I don't know if they had a dog or not.

Castaways

Emma Johns

Class of 2024

I never thought I would smile at the distance between us,
considering not long ago I would have clamored to cross the space
amid us.

I did not care of the currents trying to pull me back
or how my muscles ached to span the gap.

I used to swim halfway

and maybe you would swim halfway too, and we'd meet for a
moment

with our heads above water and remember
what it felt like to be on solid ground.

But now I see you from the shore, and I send a wave that lingers a
little too long.

I wonder what life lies behind you, but it is no longer my place to
ask.

The tides have washed away the sandbar we used to stand on,
and somehow, I would rather make peace with our oceans
than to create a place never meant to last.



Rocuronium

Jake Schmid

Class of 2026

Turkey Day Blues

Timothy Ting

Faculty, MEDPREP

A midlife crisis
And it's Thanksgiving too
There's no Fall colors for me
Just the Turkey Day Blues
I lack motivation
And there's malaise in my bones
I know I should exercise
But I'd rather stare at my phone
Overeating is common
So my depression can hide
A third helping isn't noticed
On this day and time
But with family around
I can laugh and push through
I can still be thankful
Despite these Turkey Day Blues

Dead Silent Streets

1st Place Poetry

Emma Johns

Class of 2024

the bones are walking
with reticent chattering
teeth to defunct ears
there is no body left
but heartless hardened
outlines, calcium carbonate
cutouts on these
dead silent streets



Cityscape

Laurie Rollet

Staff, Facilities Management

NOT I am not; I AM ...divine

Dr. Susan Hingle

Faculty, cHOP, Medical Humanities, IM

I am not a quiet, shy, socially awkward woman;

I am an empathetic, compassionate, deliberative woman who thinks and cares deeply.

I am thoughtful.

I am divine.

I am not a sexual object;

I am a human being who is strong and healthy and well through exercise, healthful eating, and mindful self-care.

I am strong.

I am divine.

I am not a motherless daughter who lost her mom when she was only 18;

I am a daughter who was blessed to have 18 years with a loving, compassionate, inspiring, courageous mother.

I am resilient.

I am divine.

I am not part of an infertile couple;

I am part of an amazing family chosen to be formed through adoption.

I am grateful.

I am divine.

I am not a mother of a son who has been misunderstood, mistreated, and marginalized by much of the world;

I am the mother of a creative, fun, loving, imaginative, kind, compassionate, perseverant human being.

I am blessed.

I am divine.

I am not the friend who missed the clues and was unable to save two friends from suicide;

I am the friend who is working diligently and passionately to create a culture of vulnerability, compassion, and understanding that normalizes and celebrates self-care, care seeking, and wellness.

I am a wellness champion.

I am divine.

I am not a person with a seemingly unending family history of cancer;
I am privileged to have been inspired by my mother, father, and sisters as they courageously traveled their cancer journeys;

I am fortunate to have had the opportunity to change my lifestyle to lessen my risk of cancer.

I am healthy.

I am divine.

I am not an autoimmune patient;

I am a person who has developed enhanced empathy, understanding, and compassion as I have traveled my journey with chronic autoimmune disease.

I am empathetic.

I am divine.

I am not the victim of sexual harassment and sexual assault;

I am a passionate warrior for justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion.

I am an advocate.

I am divine.

I am not all of the bad things that have occurred in my life;

I am a perfectly imperfect human being because of the many rich experiences I have had in my life.

I am divine.

I am divine.

I am divine.

Perennials Must Die

2nd Place Prose

Emma Johns

Class of 2024

I write to tell you that I have sold my house, the one I grew up in, and bought a plane ticket to Madrid. Please forgive me; this year I am not coming back. I hear the sunset is beautiful there. I hear that people like dancing. Perhaps this spontaneous combustion was just a product of an unreasonably low activation energy. I think it's time you finally knew.

I write to tell you that when I was ten, I cried myself to sleep because I would never be a single digit age again. My mother's only comfort that all good things must come to an end. And now, I find myself churning through chapters. Grossly satisfied in turning the pages, not reading the words. Maybe because a new story is about to begin. Maybe because this one is finally finished.

I write to tell you that you won't find me here again. I will mourn for our memories on my old kitchen floor, but I won't ask for a key to come back. There is a fragile line between nostalgia and regret, and I live somewhere in the middle. I've learned to appreciate what I can no longer have – childhoods, grandmas, first loves, the choices we made.

I write to tell you that the seasons have changed and with them so have I. Some things cannot stay the same. I hope that one day we may reconvene with light hearts & free minds & good intentions. But for now, I am happy to breathe.

I am happy that the sun shines & I go on.



One Fish, Two Fish

Dr. Amit Sapra

Faculty, Family & Community Medicine - Springfield



Morning Together
3rd Place Art
Mary Corrigan Stjern
Community Member

The Silence of After

3rd Place Poetry

Ireland Smith

Class of 2026

A vast, wide-open space that separates
the air of “before” and “after”—
emptiness and staleness of the oxygen
left behind, unused by those taken to the other side.
Cherished loved ones, family, friends who slipped
from our grasp
no matter how much we held onto them,
tried to save them with the magic of knowledge. Yet
life sneaks in and weaves its eternal thread
amongst our best intentions and the love we pour into those lost.
Here, in the silence of after,
crushed and hollowed from the art of giving,
surrounded by life even as life is carried away with the wind,
must learn to make peace with this natural horror.

What I Gained After Getting Rid of 1000 Items in 10 Months

Dr. Sookyung Suh

Faculty, Medical Education

I gave myself a challenge to get rid of 1000 items in 2022. I didn't count perishable food, apparent trash, or replenishable items (e.g., toilet paper, toiletry items) that I was going to restock. If the items were too small, like paper clips or hair ties, I counted one category as one item. Sometimes, my rules changed a bit – I didn't count expired food and then counted if it was in the pantry. So, it wasn't perfect, and I became obsessed with this challenge and drove my girls crazy at times, but I built some new habits, and it positively impacted my life. Here are what I've learned and noticed.

1. The house is easier to keep up: Don't get me wrong. My house still looks cluttered because the reduced number of items alone cannot guarantee a minimalist look in a magazine. Without tidy-up habits and everyone on board, it's a slippery slope. The average American house has 300,000 items! So, even if I got rid of 1000 items, it's just a drop in a bucket. Plus, I didn't count what our family brings home this year. Although I was intentional about what to bring to the house, the total number of items I got rid of won't be 1000 because of that. In other words, we still have more than enough stuff everywhere.

2. I saved time and money by knowing where most of my stuff was: I had to go through every corner of the house to get rid of 1000 plus items, and it helped me to have a better sense of where things are, and it got easier to put things back to where it belongs. As a result, I saved time on finding lost items and saved money on buying things I already had.

3. I appreciate what I have: I used to buy a bundle or large quantity, thinking I was saving money and time. After seeing half-used specialized cleaners and other pantry items I didn't get to use up before the expiration date, I buy small amounts for the most part. When it comes to clothes, I appreciate what I already have more and notice what I end up not wearing (anything too tight around my waist, slightly itchy fabric, or ill-fitted). After donating quite a few clothes, I don't buy any trendy clothes or something on sale just because it's a good deal. Instead, I try to find ways to coordinate what I have and be content with them. A few times I bought new clothes, I could afford fewer better ones.

4. I invite people over more often: As I said earlier, my house still doesn't look like a minimalist home in a magazine. However, it is less overwhelming to tidy up the house because now we have some room inside cabinets and drawers to put things away. In many ways, I decided to do the challenge because I didn't have the energy and time to keep up with the house. Since the progress was gradual, I didn't notice at first, but I spent much less time tidying up in the evening. Another welcoming change is I entertain more at home without feeling stressed about getting the house ready.

5. I may not have many hobbies, but I enjoy them more: having many hobbies means more clutter. It's true that when you minimize your space and things, your passion can arise. After cleaning up about 20-30% of kitchen items a couple of years ago, I started a natural skincare small business, which is now taking up many kitchen cupboards. So, I might have more things in the kitchen than before. My older daughter seems to get into a new craft every 6-9 months – knitting, painting, making bracelets, sewing, etc. I held onto many of those thinking my younger daughter would get into them. Finally, I got rid of quite a bit after learning that my younger one is content with books, stuffed animals, and Legos. Even if she got into rubber band bracelet making right after I gave away all supplies to a friend, it was worth getting rid of them. Pairing down hobbies help declutter, for sure.

6. I got rid of negative energy from certain things: Depending on what it is, items bring certain energy - stress, anxiety, or joy. Whenever I looked at all books I wanted to read but didn't get around to it, I felt lazy and behind in my goals. On the other hand, when I curated things that I loved, they got used more often and brought me joy. For example, my bedroom bookcase has my favorite books, journals, souvenirs, and sweet notes from my girls. I feel grateful whenever I look at the bookshelf filled with my beloved items.
7. The important things in my life are not things: I often value the experience of using items like playing my ukuleles, cooking with my cooking appliances, and playing games with my girls. If the items don't add value by being in my house, I reconsidered whether I should keep them.
8. Still, it's not easy to let things go: It got easier to let go of things compared to a few years ago as I built decluttering muscles. However, paring down my stuff got harder after getting rid of ill-fitted or worn clothes, books I don't read, etc. Some sentimental stuff, like cards from my loved ones or something I spent quite a bit of money on, were not easy to part with. I know in my head it's a sunk cost because keeping it doesn't help bring back the money I spent. Having my mom as moral support helped get rid of some sentimental things that brought negative memories.
9. We value experiences more now: not doing much shopping saves time and money. With that, we took a couple of trips to see our families and friends. Kids learned that stuff could get lost or broken, but no one could take away precious memories we made with our family. I now spend money on things that matter to me: exercise membership, healthcare expenses, and subscriptions to learn new things like Yousician, Duolingo, or Masterclass.
10. My kids also became conscious buyers (except for stuffed animals): This is one of the biggest takeaways of this challenge. Although they weren't doing this challenge, I noticed that they didn't assume getting a new toy or game just because they wanted it. We played the same game and puzzles repeatedly and still had a lot of

fun. Sometimes, it takes time to learn a new game, so not having new things was not bad at all. Plus, I have generous family and friends who give them gifts around Christmas and birthdays, so those are more than enough for a whole year, and we rarely buy new things... again, except for stuffed animals. And it explains why our house still looks cluttered!

Whether physical things, negative memories, emotional burdens, or digital clutter, I hope you try to simplify one area of your life for a year and see what you gain from the experience.

I hope my reflection helps you rethink the relationship with things and what you value in 2023.



Threading the Needle

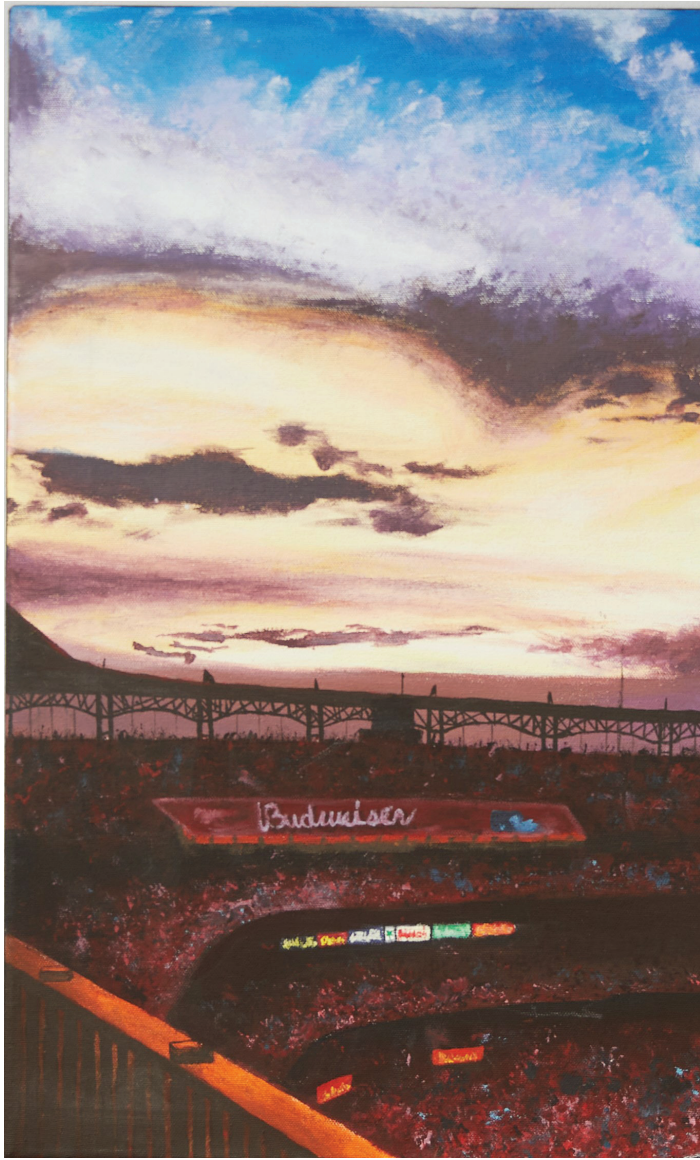
Peter Somers, PhD, MD
Alumni, Class of 2000

Shrinking My Curls

Arianna Isadora El-Amin

Community Member

My black thick hair up in a bun
Most days
Or a side bun
Too scared to wear
It down
Too scared to hear what they thought.
I secretly knew what they thought.
They thought what they saw.
And they saw curls that
Reached my shoulders
And not my back.
Curls that had a
Mind of their own
And not curls
That were paper thin.
My curls give me strength
The strength I've let so many people
Comment on.
People ask to touch my
Strength.
People ask me if my strength is real.
My strength is beautiful
And untouchable.



Take Me Out to the Ballgame

1st Place Art
Morgan Suhre
Class of 2024





Flabbergasted

Dr. Amit Sapra

Faculty, Family & Community Medicine - Springfield

Mid-winter

Dr. Mettisa R.K. McLeod

Alumni, Class of 2002

Winter layers like a stack of old fashioned quilts, heavy but familiar
Thick gray clouds block the sun for too many consecutive days
It's too early to be thinking about what will be planted in the rows of
the garden next spring
Even the seed catalog in the mailbox is barely enough
The promise of adding more daylight, minute by minute, comes too
slowly for me
Maybe I'm a pessimist
Maybe I'm a realist
Either way the bees will keep sleeping for now
Shivering
Staying alive on last summer's honey

32 Respirations Per Minute

Ireland Smith

Class of 2026

Deep breath in.

Coalesce your fluttering, heavy thoughts,
images, memories, worries, and dreams—
fueling the fire in your veins while burning
you from the inside out.

Breath out now.

Supraventricular tachycardia, hyperventilation—
the feeling of drowning in a room full of expectations
pounding your ribcage to the tempo of your life
Never pausing nor slowing, as to ensure survival.

Feeling out of breath constantly,
unable to keep speed with a racing world—breath in.
Breathe out. Hurry now.

Past and future are all that exist in this moment
with the presence of time lost
in a forbidden liminal space between this breath—
breath in. And the next. The inability to grasp, to settle
in the safe, warm grip of the wind that is quickly stealing
your oxygen.

Faces, dinners, laughs, precious moments
all but a smear of indistinguishable hues melting
into your veins until they are carried away by the wind
as you breathe out.

You must slow down.

See your hands in front of you.

See yourself and the world you are breathing in.

Search recklessly, endlessly for that lost present moment, second.

Savor it. Cherish it. Let your heart slow—

Deep breath out.

Breathe in the now.



Reaching for the Skies

Dr. Ron Romanelli

Alumni, Class of 1983

Med Student Inspecting a Flower

Tyler Natof

LSP Student, Class of 2024

Thy bright petals doth
bloom and grow
even when exams really blow

How utterly fantastic
the scent of your pollen—
even as my grades
never stop fallin’

Matriarch of the garden,
you have so much clout—
Flower, you truly are a miracle-
like the fact I haven’t been kicked out



The Big Tree

Ian Pollock

Staff, Facilities Management

Croquet

Steve Sandstrom

Staff, Marketing, Communications and Engagement

Under a shade tree is pounded a peg,
Technicolor barber pole for a game in progress.
A brother and sister and some of their friends
Are aiming shots at wire wickets
And colored balls, trying to be the first
To cover the course, to hit the peg.
The lawn a green roadmap of changeable paths.
Two balls clack. Determined brother approaches
And sends sister into the garden
And summer slows down to their pace.

Empty

2nd Place Poetry

Dr. Kathryn Waldyke

Faculty, LSP, PA Programs, FCM

When I go home to visit now,
the tears wash over me
each time I see the easy chair
where my dad used to be.
He'd spend his days with book in hand
just happy to explore
the things he once went out to see
with trips he made no more.

Years back he moved away from home
to care for native folk.
As kids he took us back to camp;
around the rez we'd poke.
Then as we grew we saw much more
of parks and places new.
There wasn't much Dad wouldn't try
or much he couldn't do.

A few years on we left their home
for school and lives elsewhere.
Then he and Mom would come to us
and with them we could share
the wonders we had found ourselves
from curiosity
that we had learned from Mom and Dad
and practiced happily.

But now the chair sits empty, sad,
and no one's reading there.
How terribly I miss my dad
each time I see his chair.

Musings on Vanity

Emma Johns

Class of 2024

The snake and its steely scales glimmer from the garden of eve
with mirrors on her back like those of medusa's sons.

the desert's mirage of what we desire, we yield to temptation
and can no longer turn toward the rotting fruit of the trees
for no other grass can be greener, no plum can be sweeter
than the weed coveted by thy neighbor

Is it really the snake charmer who trains the snake
for it is the snake who charms the crowd
she revels in the gluttony of her deception, and who can pass blame?
To feel the sun on your back and know that eyes pour over your skin
can be powerful magic, enough to make even the marionettes dance

and sway
and sing

Is it a blessing or a curse
To blossom under the light and wilt in it too
As the tale foretold, all Faustian bargains bite in the end
For once you reach the summit, the fall is much too steep
you have seen the sun above the clouds, but have not felt her warmth
distracted by the illusion of our own scales' iridescent glow
and what once was beautiful becomes a molten rotten shell



Dawn's Greeting
Mary Corrigan Stjern
Community Member



Moulton Barn

Dr. Ron Romanelli

Alumni, Class of 1983

When I Think About Winter

Jenna Ribbing

Class of 2026

When I think about winter, I think about New York. I was nineteen, too skinny, too anxious, and experiencing the type of cold that a city only makes colder. Winter after that seemed laughable. There were the eighteen barely Midwest winters preceding it — rendered mild in comparison. There were the scattered winters that ensued, none ever nearly as bad as the first (a few I eluded altogether, between the west coast and southern hemisphere). The less I wanted to be somewhere, the more intolerant my bones to the ice. Seems straightforward, or obvious, now. But when dragging your body like a sack of flour through waist-high brown slush, the only relationship between your hate of the weather and the actual weather is that the weather is the perpetrator and you, the innocent victim. Nuance comes later. Nuance inevitably comes later.

Winter, again. Scarcely a measly twenty-five under the belt and already I was back to the Southern Illinois winters of my youth — even more toothless than I remembered. Back to school, back to the basement below my parent's feet, back to the roads I know everything about, all of their bumps and cracks...but for the life of me I have yet to commit their names. When I think about winter, I think about New York. When I think about winter, I think about moving into a space I don't quite fit into anymore. I think about enzymes and substrates, and lock-and-key models. I think about how I rattle around, claw at the wall, and grow fatigued trying to maintain affinity. I think about how abruptly the wool is ripped away, my eyes beholding what had always been there, what I had always managed to ignore — for those eighteen winters, for that first winter in Manhattan, for every winter since, even in my absence. I think about squinting into the harsh sunlight pouring through the windshield, both hands clutching the wheel (because I

drive like I do everything else), and asking my mother the Question — what my memory-mouth insists was, “Do you ever want something different?” I’m sure it came out in fits and starts and stutters. My brain is eloquent, my tongue is hapless.

It was such a dumb question, in theory. Everyone wants something different. We are perpetually wanting something different, at any given moment, even if we’ve just gotten the different thing we so badly wanted not but two seconds ago. That’s just human principle. We weren’t waxing about green grass, though. We were transitioning from the hypothetical to the reality. We were talking about Us, as concrete molds built from our own choices — grocery shopping on Saturdays, claiming chairs at wooden tables, taking turns in countless bathrooms, setting phones to vibrate. I was asking her about my father. I was asking her about marriage. I was cracking open a giant Pandora’s box labeled “topics we, as a parent and child in this family, do not address nor speak about”. It was scary, but a tiny bit thrilling, but a larger bit sad; everything that came after stopped mattering.

When I think about winter, I think about a series of conversations. Conversation 1 didn’t become Conversation 1 until Conversation 2 happened. For the purposes of this exercise, it will be labeled linearly; timeline integrity must be maintained

Conversation 1: A mellow interrogation. I chase down all the events that had led up to and resulted in meeting, dating, and marrying. In the moment, perhaps innocently received. In retrospect, I was hunting for reasons. I got them, but they were not resolute. I slept in a bed of antlers for days. Something wanted to be done; I couldn’t discern what. I have difficulty trusting myself. I have difficulty cleaving myself from relationships I am party to, but am not a member of. When I think about winter, I think about the buildup of dreamt bravery, lodged in my throat, bulging and ugly with every addition of that which is left unsaid.

Conversation 2: I ask the Question... “Do you ever want something different?” I pride myself on not crying, even though I realize it’s

okay to, and would have been okay to. The Question is answered. There are Problems. Everything I know, I know — difference is, she is teaching it to me. Conversation 2 stops and starts many times, mechanically. It grinds for weeks inside my brain. When I think about winter, I think about the tetanic contraction of surviving on the rapid release of repressed emotion and the parallel absorption of its infinite rebound.

Conversation 3: I get upset. She follows me, several minutes later, and apologizes. She opens up the cabinets and pulls out the dishes — tempered glass, faded flowers, and the faint kiss of sepia script. The only thing I appreciate about them is that we've always had them, and that you can hear their nail-chalkboard movement deep in the darkest recesses of your soul, regardless of where you hide in the house. She talks about them. It's a dialogue about object representation. I am still upset, but less annoyed. When I think about winter, I think about researching Corelle, and sorting through pictures of bright, defunct patterns, and the strange-stomach melancholy accomplishment I felt when I discovered her Air Force commissary-purchased set to be “spring bouquet” (sometimes called “wildflower”), introduced in 1978, discontinued in 1986.

Conversation 4: A relief. I picture a domino-effect. Me, her, him. But it's only up to them, in their court. I creep like a stranger in our home, and act as if nothing's wrong, act as if I possess literally zero intuitive empathy, zero detective skills, zero spatial awareness. It's strenuous to wear the disguise of obtuse ineptitude. Luckily, I have consistently preferred to be silent anyway. When I think about winter, I think about slipping out into a wet, dark Sunday morning and putting distance between my ears and what I knew they would be discussing, simply to pound the pavement and imagine it in crisp, high definition in spite of my best measures.

Conversation 5: The sit-down. The siblings in attendance. My brother, hardened, to my right. My sister, a virtual face on a screen. Mom and Dad, weathered on my left. There are many

words — none significant, all rather soft, and a few as open as they are closed. I had been removed, now reinserted. Am I mediator? Am I counselor? Am I instigator? It does and does not go well; but it goes. I would have preferred to ponder our responsibility to one another, our responsibility to the people who have made us, and the people who maintain us. I still continue to struggle with the fact that this will probably only transpire in the red mush disaster cradled in my skull. When I think about winter, I think about the space heater at my knees, the blue velvet chair supporting my elbows, and how both kept me company while I listened to phrases eerily adjacent to Divorce.

Conversation 6: This is endless. I hope it stays this way. When I think about winter, I think about how none of these conversations really happened in winter, they merely transported me seven years into the past — shivering at a Broadway bus stop, insulated by null certainty, and withering beneath the weight of pressure, and hollow habitus, and the utter lack of segregation between my autonomy and the metro-hive calamity of steel and lights. When I think about winter, I am thinking less and less about New York, and more and more about the lines in our skin, and everything we're doing to understand how we got them.

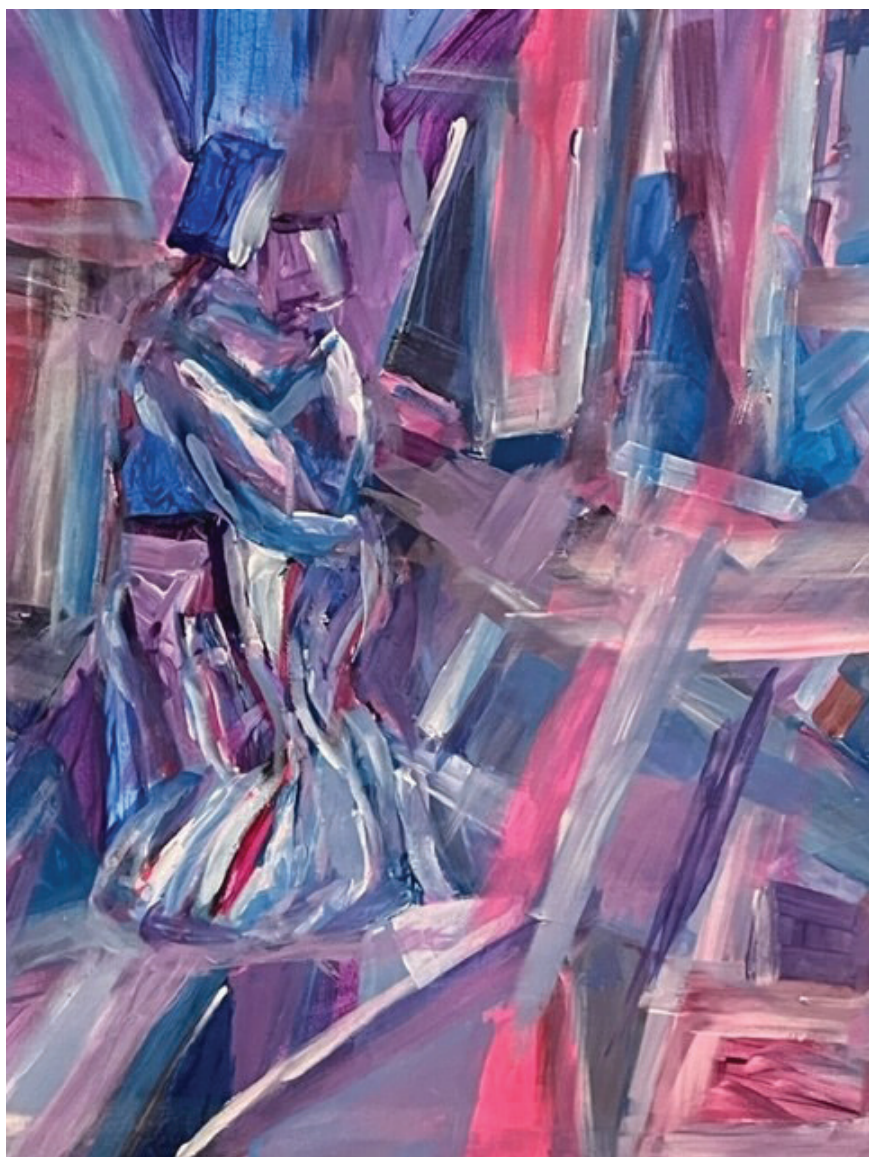
In the narrow space cushioning my ubiquitous, squeaky-wheel brooding, I dutifully empty the dishwasher. It doesn't so much make me happy, or satisfied, as it makes me busy — as it affirms my hands can grip, and touch, and stack just as well as they did yesterday, and perhaps even better than they did prior to my offloading of all this attributional meaning from out my chest and onto the tactile artifacts littered and strewn about, ripe for attachment. I'll likely remain here the steadiest (because I exist like I do everything else). And pretty soon, when I think about winter, I'll think about this too — a sort of boundless performance of an intentional task.

The Music Fades

Dr. Glen Aylward

Emeritus Faculty, Pediatrics and Psychiatry

At first the music is high amplitude
Enjoyed and heard by all.
But it fades and becomes faint
For the afflicted.
An enveloping cloak muffles the sounds
Bit by bit
Until what one sang and danced to
Is no more.
Replaced by traces of what can be heard
Occasional wisps of something familiar
But mostly unfamiliar sounds and rhythms
Vague and muted.
One tries to focus on what is there
But things seem hollow and confusing
And they will become more so,
Inevitably.
Nothing is forever,
The final act is denied
And blocked from awareness.
But this stance is hard to maintain
When even simple things one did before
Are impossible to do now.
This loss expands gradually.
At first in small increments
Not noticeable to most
Until the magnitude of what is lost
Becomes obvious and unbearable
The future,
And what it holds
Vexes the soul.



Hidden Dancers

Dr. Glen Aylward

Emeritus Faculty, Pediatrics and Psychiatry

My Heritage, My Essence

Oluchukwu Oba

Staff, Marketing, Communications and Engagement

Identifying my true essence will enable me to progress in life

There's a chance I will succeed

In today's world, it's all about me

Getting better at seeing whom I am going to be

My existence is deeply rooted in my heritage

But why would I even doubt it?

No matter the color of my skin or the depth of my thoughts, I am who I am

From the songs, we sing to the music we dance to,

Our food and way of life are as good as the souls behind them, I admit

Understanding my heritage is essential to living in harmony with it.

I like the way you greet me, the way you welcome me,

I appreciate the kind gestures you show me,

I appreciate the kind words spoken to me,

Thank you for all your love

However, I still ask myself whether I am truly living or just being part of existence

The aim is just to be carried along in the process

To leave the past and gain diverse access

Holding up every single one of my potential

After a while, my heritage will be substantial

In each of us, there is a heritage and culture that brings inclusivity

A tapestry woven with care

In this circle of my way of life, my motherland spreads gratitude

With sassy mouths and funky attitudes

A legacy to share

But my heritage is more than just a place

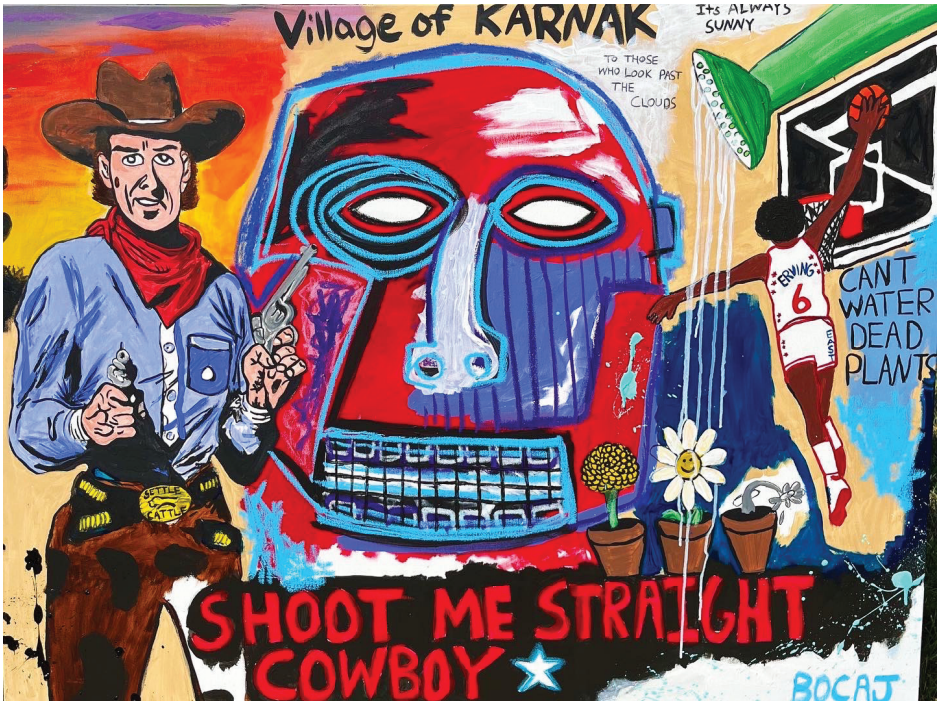
It's a part of who I am

It's the values that I hold dear

And the essence that I stand by

I am proud of my heritage

I am a living legacy,
Carrying hopes and dreams
Forging my path while shaping my identity
It is the essence of my being, a part of who I am
I honor my heritage with pride and respect
It's a vital part of me
And it gives me perspective
For I am not just one thing
I have many things rolled into one
A unique blend of influence
My heritage has won



Shoot Me Straight Cowboy

Jake Schmid

Class of 2026

What I Didn't Know

Tyler Natof

LSP Student, Class of 2024

Before starting med school,
I thought I knew quite a lot:
protein folding and Lineweaver Burke plots

Before starting med school,
I thought I was rather smart:
any problem could be picked apart

What humongous humility I feel now,
for what I didn't know:
just how much professors and patients would help me grow

I didn't know that people die from sorrow,
that one could be so blind to their own light
that they blow out the candle of their life

But I also didn't know just how open
certain hearts are,
projecting their warmth like eternal stars

I didn't know how small my own sadness was
until I saw my first code blue,
a COVID patient's life-long wife howling but nothing she could do

But I also didn't know the tremendous tenacity
select souls have,
After a second stroke, still finding cause to laugh

Perhaps most of all, I didn't know myself,
the mental and moral muscles I command,
my ability to evolve, expand, and understand

Angry Angels

Dr. John Grace

Alumni, Class of 2000

When we think of the best, most perfect people that we have ever met, they are usually kind. They are usually peaceful. And...to be honest....they usually make us feel worse about ourselves.

I could never be Mother Theresa. Or Gandhi. Or my grandmother. I could never be that good.

I'm happy to know people like them exist. It gives me hope for the human race. But...it doesn't help me to believe in myself.

Their road isn't open to me. I could never be one of them—the calm, serene, and infinitely compassionate. There's too much turmoil...in my bones....in my history. If good people have to be peaceful, there's no hope for me.

I'm angry. I've probably always been that way. I'll never let that go. I'm angry at this world—it should be a better place. I'm angry at myself—I should be able to change it. I cannot win this fight, and yet, I cannot quit this fight.

That is frustrating.

At times, it's made me bitter, made me want to stop, to call myself a failure, to beat myself up and tear myself down. It's hard to move toward good when you feel bad.

That brings me to the angels of my life. I use the word loosely. They're not divine. They're certainly not flawless. They're like me in many ways. A little irritated. A tad bitter with a dark sense of humor. They have an edge and a struggle—just like I do.

But...they don't beat themselves up. They don't tear themselves down. They don't quit on this world. Their frustration never gets destructive. They use it. They use their rage and their humor. It's fuel, it's food, for themselves and those around them. They swear at the world while trying to save it. They laugh at the irony of

their struggle in a way that invigorates those around them.

God how they inspire others!

They show the lost angry people of the world, like me, that its okay to be pissed off. It doesn't make you a bad person. You don't have quit or get yourself down just because your back is against the wall and you feel like you're out of options.

You can have anger...and still do good.

I can get behind that. I need that. They're similar to me...just a little better. They give me a realistic goal. They give me hope. They give me a model for how to live with frustration.

I can improve and be like them. I can be upset without giving up. I can be disappointed without tearing down. I can be angry...and be good.

So thank you.

I'll always have some darkness inside of me. I know that. Like I said...it's in my history and in my bones.

But it will not define me or determine my path. Even when I feel negative, I want to be move in a positive direction. I want to keep fighting, growing, and improving in spite of my pain.

The perfect and peaceful don't help in this struggle. They are mountains in the distance. Beautiful and pristine. Far away and unattainable.

The angry angels are close. They walk beside me, maybe just in front of me, keeping me company, lighting my way, coaxing me to the next step towards a better version of myself.

Thank you for being here.

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801 N Rutledge St.

PO Box 19621

Springfield, IL 62794

217-545-2155

scope@siumed.edu

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