



SCOPE

volume 23 - 2016



On the cover:

PEDRO

Amanda J. Ross, MD, *resident*

acrylic painting

First Place, Art

FROM THE EDITOR:

We are often under the notion that medicine is concrete — certain medications are used to treat specific conditions, the physical exam is composed of established maneuvers and each diagnosis comes with its own gold standard. However, this perception creates an invalid dichotomy between the arts and the sciences. Art and medicine are not distinct entities. Art is inherent to medicine. The patient history is a carefully told story that physicians interpret in order to develop a personalized treatment. This requires as much creative capacity from a physician as Salvador Dali’s surrealist paintings.

Much like medicine, art is universal. The pursuit of health knows no boundaries or language barriers. Likewise, an appreciation for art does not rely on a repertoire of impressionist paintings or the ability to differentiate a haiku from a sonnet — it only depends on an individual’s capacity to perceive beauty.

Our 23rd edition of SCOPE is presented to you with no theme, solely creative freedom. In the pages that follow you will find inspiration in how abstract the medical community can be. SCOPE has long-been the creative outlet for our School of Medicine family, and I would like to thank you for keeping the arts and medicine indistinguishable, whether that is by contributing through submissions or even flipping through these pages while waiting to see your physician.

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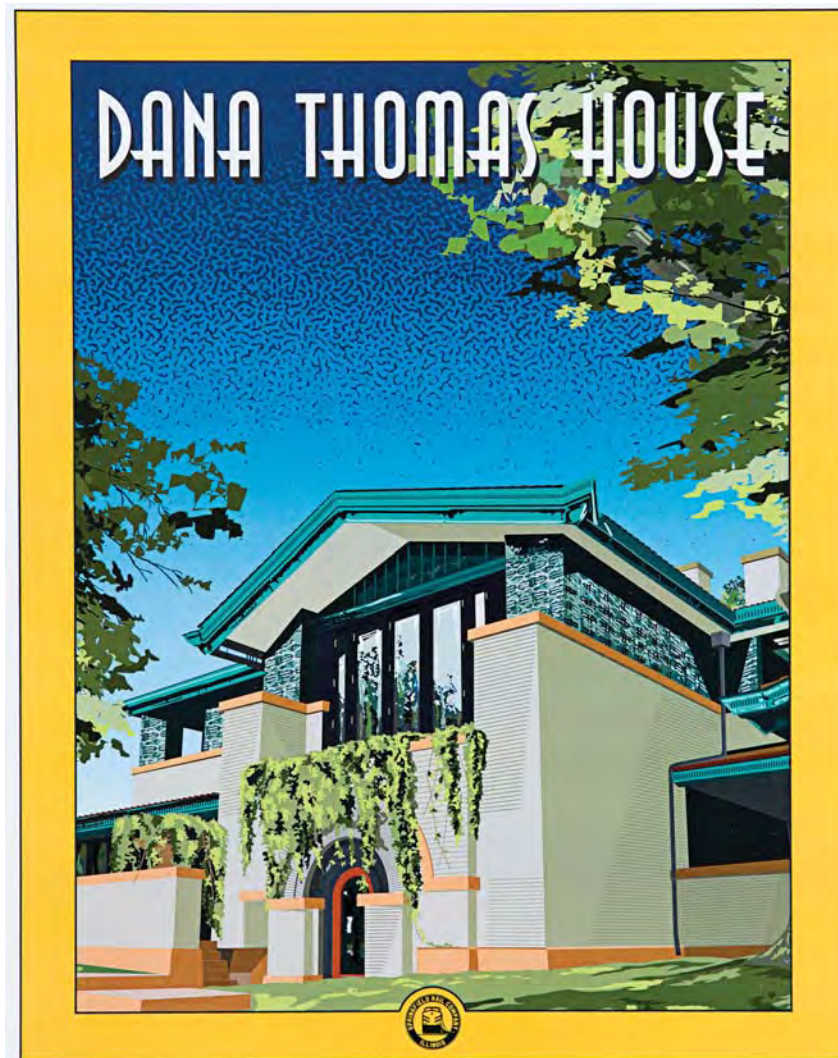
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DANA THOMAS HOUSE, computer graphic

art, third place



Steve Harvey, *staff*

Andrianna Stephens, *student*

A LOVELY SANCTUARY

Imagine yourself riding on top of a dragon
Drifting through the fresh, dewy woods
Air blowing through your hair, giving it a tranquil sway
The water vapor touching your face
Life is calm
Life is picturesque
As you pass the green pastures
Crystal clear waters
Maybe this is home?

No wait that can't be it
Home is something else you see
Imagine yourself in a futuristic world
All the techie gadgets
If you're injured, you're healed
If you're hungry, food appears before you
Life is satisfying
Life is great
You work in the lab, fighting off disease
Developing a way to preserve life, stay young
Home. This is where you belong

But something isn't right
It's too easy you see
Imagine yourself in a twisted movie scene
Fighting for your life
The monsters they come
Haunt you while you sleep
There's nowhere to run
Life is scary
Life is fear
You certainly hope home is not near here

Switch the image
Something less intense
Imagine yourself in a cottage
Sipping tea
In a magical forest
A kingdom

A paradise
But be careful
Evil lurks near
Waiting
Stalking
Looking for the perfect time to strike
Life is dubious
Life is fun
But something's still not right
The feeling of home still isn't here

All these visions
All these dreams
Give you the high of flying on a phoenix's wings
They fit the definition
But nothing is complete
The fun you have creating serums makes you long for something more
And when that's acquired, another longing pops ashore
Your emotions drive it
Develop a world only you can see
Like that beautiful forest that leads you to a murderous sea
Each image is dear to your heart
But collectively

One day a mystery
Fantasy the next
Then a science fiction
Even a little romance
Life is spontaneous
Life is diverse
The ultimate life experience can happen in just one room
With books, home is your heart's desire or an impending doom
Try it one day and you will see,
Books give you the chance to experience home as you always wanted it to be

GRACE

The wind buffeted the van, roaring as gusts rocked us about in random directions, while driving the rain almost horizontally across the yard. The gravel driveway, leading up to a unpainted, dilapidated shack, was the first exit I could find off the two lane road when the lightning came too eerily close and the rain poured down so hard that windshield wipers became useless. Unsuccessful at finding a radio station with a weather forecast here in Marengo County, Alabama, we listened to NPR's "This I Believe" segment, as we sat in the driveway watching the tree branch that had just glanced off our roof fly across the yard.

I contemplated the speaker's conviction in barbeque and I wondered if there was anything I believed in so fervently. The answer came in an old Chevy that shot past us in the grass as the apparent owner of that shack arrived back home. Instead of angrily shaking her fist at us for blocking her driveway as she tried to get back to her young children in the middle of a storm, she turned around when she got up to the house, drove back down in the grass and invited us inside.

I suddenly knew that what I believe in is grace. Grace, as defined by, "a favor rendered by one who need not do so." I thought about my life and how many other times I had been enriched by unrecognized grace. I came to the realization that we all experience it, but we often fail to notice or appreciate what is given. True grace, to me, is not good deeds done so others will notice, not the amazing acts of altruism chronicled on news magazines, but small moments that can easily be overlooked.

Aside from the grace of that woman in Marengo County, Alabama when we were unexpectedly delayed on our journey home from a Florida vacation, I have experienced grace many times from other strangers. Like the time in Taipei, when I woke up at 5 am to find that a cleaning woman had put her coat on me during the night, as I slept on a bench in the empty airport. Or the time I stepped onto a crowded New York City subway during rush hour with my 6-week-old baby sleeping against my chest. The city's tough reputation was quickly dispelled as the subway door closed and I heard murmurs of "a new baby" from the crowd. Despite the sardine-like conditions, somehow the people found room, not only to give my baby some space, but to find me a seat.

Now living on the other end of the spectrum, I have experienced the gifts of living in a small town. Many years ago, when my car slid off the road during an ice storm, I was overwhelmed with the response of neighbors and acquaintances. Within minutes, one car stopped and offered to take my kids to school while another told me that they would drive out to my house and get

my husband. Before he could even arrive on the scene, a group of elderly men pulled up in a pickup truck, shuffled out with chains in hand, slipped under the car to attach the chain and dragged my car out of the ditch. With a wave of their ball caps, they were gone – likely back to the café to finish their coffee.

As a nurse practitioner, I have often been enriched by the grace given to me by my patients. Believing that I was making a home visit to provide care and reassurance to a young mom with a newly discharged premature baby, I was surprised at the gift she gave me, when she stood at the door of her inner-city Philadelphia row house watching for me to be sure I was safe as I approached her home. Or the time when I was in Mexico and a waiting room filled with impoverished patients watched me struggling to give medication instructions to a woman in my rudimentary Spanish. Before I had finished, the patient and the whole first row of women waiting for prescriptions got up and hugged me; a gesture of kindness and support that required no translation.

My patients at a rural community health center regularly grace me with care and concern. Often, when I am running late and they have had to wait over an hour to see me, the first thing they ask when I walk into the exam room is whether I am having a bad day.

I believe that grace presented itself to me often in my life without me recognizing it for what it was. I see it now in my father, who taught me about responsibility by having me wash dishes after dinner, and mercy by always stepping in to finish when the truly disgusting greasy pots and pans hit the water. I see it in my grandmother, who struggled up three flights of stairs to our apartment in Philadelphia, at 85 years of age, to bless her newborn great-grandson with her love.

Sometimes grace presents itself in unexpected ways, like when your child draws a picture or describes something mundane in a way that allows you a unique and magical perspective into the world. Or when I got to re-experience, from an adult perspective, the love and care given to me as a baby while watching my mother, with advanced Alzheimer's dementia, care for her stuffed koala bear.

I do not believe that there is only grace in humanity. I know that there are too many murderers, rapists and child molesters in the world. There are also the realities of war, racism, gun violence, terrorism and genocide. But I do believe that if we take the time to notice those small moments of beauty in our lives that we can't help but be enriched by them. That enrichment can help counteract and buffer against the sadness and despair we can feel when watching the evening news.

GRACE *continued*

I believe that grace is contagious. As we recognize the small, but important gifts given to us by those around us, we will surely pass those gifts along. Not out of a desire for reward or recognition but out of the pure joy that giving provides, for those on both sides of the equation.

I believe that we all have it in us to be sensitive to others and to give small acts of kindness. I believe that we can learn that from two-year-old Gabriel, who sat on the floor of the exam room playing with puzzles while his mother talked to me about the stressors in her life. When she started crying, he looked up and without saying a word, quietly crawled onto her lap, snuggled into her shoulder and gently started patting her on the back with his chubby little hand. By that one small act, he showed that he could recognize pain and suffering and already knew how to provide comfort.

I believe that we all have the ability to recognize pain and suffering and that grace, “a favor rendered by one who need not do so,” provides comfort to humanity and enrichment to ourselves.

SUNRISE, pastel painting



Mary Corrigan Stjern, *retired staff*

BILLBOARD - GULF SHORES ALABAMA, digital photography



Mark Gordon, *community*

Cynda Strong, *community*

THE BLOSSOMS NOW LIE LOW

In sun-kissed meadows Autumn's oaks
In the days not long ago
Loomed where the bulldozers moan
And prairie blooms lie low.
The purple fragrant blossoms sweet
Are swept away by dust
Chopping, banging, crunching steel
In Autumn's colors rust.
The mighty oaks and purple blooms
Left us yesterday
No more to shade, no more to bloom.
The giant oaks lie low.
The blossoms now lie low.

BINARY OPPOSITION: EAST VS. WEST, acrylic painting



Lacey Wood, student

A.J. Ward, *community*

CONFLUENCE

poetry, third place

The windmills were tilling up the sky,
dripping the pink sun all down Second Street.
Drove past our old house in the Avenues.
Wondered when it'll all catch up with me.

Routine shrunk the years and pushed us
to the roomy promises of our daydreams.
Stood on the front steps for the last time
just blinking.

Through August leaves, the wind wheezed like a coiling spring;
I felt a confluence, felt a plunge and lift like a disappearing dream.
And I felt a pang of how this place will feel in my smeary memory.
I hope one day it'll all catch up with me.

Vikrant Borse, *PhD student*

EMPTINESS

How did I come to this dead end?
How did I become haunted by my own inner friend?

I didn't smile, I didn't scream.
I wasted my life, I didn't even dream.

What sort of emptiness is haunting my mind?
I suppressed it. But it is still flowing like a wind.

The sounds and echoes harbor my mind.
I fight with myself with no manner of kind.

You linger with me, when I am alone.
You kill me and I am blown.

No matter if I burn you or bury you. You are still there.
OH, EMPTINESS! You suffocate me. I cannot bear.

YOU ALWAYS TAKE THE WEATHER WITH YOU, acrylic paint & paper



Emma Sandstrom, *community*

IT TURNED OUT TO BE ROOSTER BLOOD

prose, second place

My patient, Yolanda, had been chronically ill for a long time. She'd had a coronary bypass some years ago, and a kidney transplant a few years later. She had digestive troubles after years of uncontrolled diabetes. In the past few years, she had been in and out of the hospital with various problems: she was anemic, she had terrible diarrhea, she was losing too much weight. She'd had test after test, and specialist after specialist, but no real answers and certainly nothing like a cure.

Yolanda and her husband Miguel ran a *botánica*, a little shop on 31st street specializing in traditional herbal medicine. She told me that she was taking some "natural" remedies to help her get better. I didn't blame her; the big Ziploc bag of medicines prescribed by her nephrologist and her cardiologist and gastroenterologist hadn't made her feel any better. Her eyes shone with serenity and conviction when she told me, in my office, that she didn't want any more tests.

She had been managing her diarrhea at home, but she was down to almost 80 pounds. The dizziness and dehydration eventually brought her to the emergency department; she was admitted for IV fluids and an attempt to figure out what to do next. It was the ward nurse who noticed the blood on her hair, and she called one of my residents to examine her. Steve examined her scalp; Yolanda confessed to him that she hadn't fallen down. It was rooster blood on her hair, rooster blood from the *botánica*, a desperate clutch at hope and good health. I tried to imagine the ceremony.

In the years Yolanda had been my patient, I had known that she believed in *remedios caseros*, but my vague notion was that she used *sábila* shakes or *árnica* salves like so many of my patients. Her embrace of the primeval healing magic of a sacrificial rooster made me feel that I had never really known Yolanda. Yet I am intrigued by, and drawn to, my patients' use of Mexican *curanderismo* and traditional medicine. I am reminded of Mystery, of things unknowable and inexplicable and maybe sacred. So many times I have lifted the shirts of pregnant women, to measure their abdomens and listen to their fetal heart tones, only to encounter, once again, the safety pin. "Against the eclipse," the mothers would tell me shyly. The ancient Aztecs believed that an eclipse was a bite on the face of the moon; if a mother watched a lunar eclipse during pregnancy, her baby would have been born with a cleft lip. For protection, the mother should carry something metallic, such as a safety pin, on her underwear. And so these women, thousands of miles and hundreds of years removed from the ancient Aztecs, protect their babies with their faith and their metal safety pins.

And of course I do not believe that the safety pin will protect against a cleft lip, just as I don't believe that the *ojo de venado* fastened around the baby's wrist will protect against the *mal de ojo* or evil eye. Yet these amulets from a bygone era, like the rooster blood, seem somehow to facilitate a window to that inexplicable Mystery we encounter in life and in medicine, if we only pay attention.

Years ago, I helped teach a medical humanities class; we reflected, in small groups, about our own experiences with Mystery. Without exception, each person was able to recall a personal experience which was truly inexplicable: patients who outlived dire predictions, deathbed experiences of connection and grace, stories that seemed to somehow not match the facts. Things do happen that science can't explain; these things are not replicable, nor are they measurable. These things are touching, moving, inspiring, powerful.

Nowadays, I don't have time to teach the medical humanities class. I am the director of my clinic and I have to focus my attention on things like Quality Indicators and which stage of Meaningful Use we have been able to achieve with our electronic medical record system. The Affordable Care Act comes with lots of administrative tasks. But I haven't forgotten Yolanda, who died peacefully shortly after she was admitted, surrounded by her family. I still get to take care of the pregnant women, guarding their unborn babies against supernatural forces. I am grateful for the reminders to pay attention, to be open to wonder and mystery and joy. As Marcel Proust wrote, so many years ago: "The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes."

SPRING REDBUDS AT POND, pastel painting



Mary Corrigan Stjern, *retired staff*

Jim Pollock, *staff*

I LIKED HER THEN

Blackest eyes I've ever seen,
Like moonstones they shined.
I liked her then.
We would sit and drink for hours,
And watch each other spin,
I liked her then.

FRIVOLOUS FLORAL, colored pencil & metal etching



Emma Sandstrom, *community*

A.J. Ward, *community*

LARAMIE COUNTY APOCALYPSE DREAM

I knew it was a dream when I could feel each color and consonant
stirring inside my ribcage like an assembling summer rain.
Your hair, it fell in lazy waves like it did before you cut it;
before you moved out east and picked a model's name.

The hysterical sky spinning spools of black and orange and amber
rolling and bloating above the junior college where we met.
I thought the end would come like a shattering, but we were talking on a
picnic bench,
crumbling handfuls of the ag building in the silence.

A looseleaf paper ring that we found around your pinky,
and unfolded to find an atlas of conversations we had shared.
Those years all feel half lived in, the words all feel half learned from.
But we're here now, the clouds are a bleary, panicked red.
Like the red that you once used to describe your restlessness.

Tiffany, I know that morning will come to drag me
from the fevered splendors of this humid dream,
where we're rummaging through the wreckage of old lives and old selves
we didn't realize what we'd forgotten in Wyoming.

So let me hold you, let me tell you how I'll miss these mountains,
the new parts of themselves old friends will find that I will never know.
I'm not sure if this is healing, or just gluttonous nostalgia,
but goddammit, I don't want to let go.

THE NOT

prose, third place

First, let me affirm: the nod does exist, right alongside the secret handshake that any self-respecting Black male from the Boomer generation can precisely execute on cue when circumstances call for it. As Laurence Fishburne said in a recent Black-ish television episode about the nod, “This is basic Black stuff.”

The nod is a way for me to favorably connect with a few passersby during a busy day. It is a time saver and in some communities has been a lifesaver. At its core, the nod isn’t really a Black thing at all, but rather the manifestation of a human thing – non-verbal identification and acceptance of another done transiently in quick time, exclusive to no one ethnicity, but peculiarly represented in most – basic cultural stuff.

When walking the hallways of the medical school, its related hospitals and clinics, I greet anyone approaching with a slight smile, sometimes accompanied by, “Hello,” maybe even a wave of the hand, or the aforementioned nod. Far too often, however, I come upon a person who drops or averts their eyes, fixing their gaze upon the floor; or turns their body away, fingering their digital devices to keep from looking me in the eye and receiving or returning my greeting. Through these or other mannerisms, their body language communicates, “Not here, not now, maybe, not ever.” Almost without fail, these persons are not Black like me.

This total lack of acknowledgement is what I term The Not, so named because it is a reasonable counter phrase to Dr. Kimberly Manning’s insightful article, “The Nod,” published in July’s JAMA, 2014, examining “cultural nods” as a form of social recognition. The Not describes how I feel after such non-encounters – not recognized, appreciated, worthy. These feelings are exacerbated when The Not is accompanied by a disdainful look and turned-up nose. Is my very persona somehow frightening, threatening or otherwise off-putting? With my salt and pepper moustache, balding head, and conservative suits, I’m the least alarming individual in the hallways.

The Not, then, is more than the occasional missed opportunity to speak to someone due to poor timing, distraction, busy-ness or intense focus. It is the deliberate decision to ignore – a silent refutation of the other. No, in these far too frequent instances something else is afoot; it is racial prejudice and aversion. As Manning theorized in The Nod, The Not is also a carry-over from the days of slavery in this country – a time when Black people were deemed less than; not deserving the same rights and certainly not the same courtesies. While silent on its face, The Not portrays inward fear, uncomfortableness, separatism, superiority, maybe even guilt – any number of things except inclusivity.

Dr. Eric Wesselmann, *et al*, in their 2012 Psychological Science article, “To Be Looked At As Through Air,” report that a feeling of inclusion can come from something as simple as eye contact and is amplified when such contact is accompanied by words of salute. The authors further suggest that “withholding eye contact can signal exclusion,” and that “being acknowledged by a stranger” decreases feelings of disconnection. If this be true, we do subtle, but significant harm to one another when through The Not we pass without so much as a raise of the eyebrow, lift of the chin, or wave of the hand, let alone a howdy-do.

So, go ahead, medical community, make my day: Speak to me. While I may not give you the full-fledged nod and secret handshake, I promise you won’t receive The Not.

Racial prejudice and its ugly cousin racism expressed through our unwillingness to greet one another, cause psychological and sociological harm, and need to be eradicated from professional systems such as ours. We should take time as we walk the halls to recognize those within our culture and those without, because that’s just basic people stuff. In these times of increasing diversity and hopefully inclusion let’s determine to have a decrease in The Not and an increase in the nod, because, as Dr. Manning wrote in her JAMA article, “I see you.”

Won’t you see me?

Andrianna Stephens, *student*

MELANCHOLY

Her mind floated. Wandered. Left.
It couldn't take it anymore. The pain. The hurt. The loss.
It visited elsewhere. It forgot. Lived to be someone else. Fantasized.
A wizard fighting the evil.
A mad scientist creating zombies.
A dragon spitting fire to protect its home.
Just like the books.
Escape. Escape.
Don't go back to the body.
Run. Run.
Leave the skeletons in the closet.
Dream. Dream.
Of the beach and hair blowing through the wind as she walks across the shore.
Forget. Forget.
The nightmares. His hand crashing into her face. The harsh words slashing through her chest like knives.
Laugh. Laugh.
To keep from crying.
Float. Float.
Further and further away.
Help. Help.
Before she doesn't ever come back.

HORSE & BUGGY, pastel painting



Mary Corrigan Stjern, *retired staff*

I'LL SEE YOU AT THE TOP, digital photography



Alan Sutton, *student*

Mendy Huff, *staff*

MOUNTAIN MAN

As wild as the hills he calls home,

As tough as the bulls he rode,

As strong as the broncos he breaks,

No man his equal, No dame could tame.

Most say the mountain man's veins run as cold as ice,

Yet, his heart as pure as gold.

He roamed near and far as restless as the Grizzly in search.

Then on that fateful October day, he gazed into those astonishing

Brown eyes, at last mountain man's journey had ended.

For the mountain man had finally found what his soul had longed for;

PEACE

John Grace, MD, *alumni*

THE NO-FUN DAD

“Your firework was a dud.” I say.
“You’re a dud.” My wife answers.
The kids laugh.
I try to smile but it pisses me off.
It’s not the first no-fun comment.
“Don’t take the fun out of this.”
“Daddy never laughs.”
“Why are you always scowling?”
“Daddy doesn’t smile.”

There are more. They always get to me. But today I realized why...it’s because they are true. I am not a fun dad.

That really sucks because I want to be fun. I try to be fun. My dad was fun! He played with me. Taught me. We went on walks that lasted all day long. We talked for hours. My dad had an infinite amount of patience when it came to kids. He was more comfortable in my world than his own.

I am the exact opposite. I am a task-oriented, workaholic who doesn’t know how to relax, take it easy, or stay in a child’s mind for more than fifteen minutes. I hate that about myself. I’m ashamed of it.

My kids deserve better. They deserve my dad.

It’s a relief finally admitting the truth. That I’m not much fun.

I’ve been denying it so long, trying to convince myself I am one of the “fun” dads.

That’s not exactly true. I can be fun. But only for fifteen minutes.

Don’t get me wrong, I try to have fun. I really do. I plan activities, go places, and engage things with the mindset, Okay. I’m gonna just enjoy this. But I cannot stay in the kid mentality, the fun mentality, for more than a quarter of an hour. No matter how hard I try, my mind drifts off to thoughts and projects and things that need to get done, my face starts to tense, and suddenly, no-fun dad is back.

Sometimes, while I’m working at home, I set little timers for myself. When the bell goes off I go and play with the kids, be the fun dad for fifteen minutes, then go back to work and start the timer again. I can do that. I can be fun for fifteen minutes. It’s a poor substitute for a real father but it’s the best I’ve got. That’s how a no-fun dad does it. Fifteen minutes here and there, sprinkled throughout life. .

I like to drive the kids to school. It takes fifteen minutes.

I like movies. There’s fifteen minutes of talk before, fifteen minutes after.

I like the pool. A few laps. Fifteen minutes. Then more laps.

I haven’t given up. I’m proud of the fact that I keep trying. I really suck at having fun but I know it’s so important. Don’t get me wrong. I’m not faking it for fifteen minutes. I’m sincerely having fun in that time. But that’s it...that’s all I got. After that...it’s a bit of an act.

I wonder how many no-fun dads there are out there? Dads so worried about life and their kids that they struggle to have fun, to live in a child’s world. Dads parenting fifteen minutes at a time because it’s all they got.

Kathryn Waldyke, MD, *faculty*

OLD

Hairs on the head
beating retreat
Hairs in the nose
growing toward feet
Hairs in the ears
look like a bush
Hairs on the back
down to the tush

PICK ME, PICK ME! mixed media



Emma Sandstrom, *community*

Cynda Strong, *community*

ODE TO PUNCTUATION

poetry, second place

I never know just what to use,
A comma or a dash.
Those crazy punctuation marks
Across the page I splash.

Apostrophes for ownership
Unless IT'S to contract -
I wonder if these little marks
From meaning do distract?

I love to use quotation marks;
In dialog I find
When using them the reader knows
He's in the other's mind.

And nifty brackets catch the eye,
(This writer is [quite] smart),
For using them correctly
Has become a long-lost art.

The hyphen will get thrown around;
It should be placed with care
Between two words that modify,
Not floating in midair.

And . . . (dot dot dot) ellipsis phrase
Looks like you just forgot
Or maybe got your finger stuck
And just wrote dot dot dot.

Parentheses, such funny marks,
But very cool to use.
They help the reader see your thoughts;
(They are the mark to choose).

A semicolon is the mark
That makes a sentence long;
It also is the one I fear
I use most often wrong.

The common mark, the period,
Is greatly overused.
But then again it's hard to see
How it can be confused.

And commas are the writers' friends;
We put them everywhere;
We think they bring a sense of style
And add a dash of flair.

And don't forget the colon bold.
Now where does it belong?
The mark in front of big long lists,
Or have I placed it wrong?

And so I write this ode to you,
My punctuation friends,
And after each and every line
Not knowing how to end . . .

I'll put a little mark or two
As tribute to you all -
Pretending that I know the rules
And on your powers call,

For you can make my simple words
Have meaning, strength, and power;
You clarify and unify
On you my thanks I shower.

Chelsea Still, *student*

SHATTERED SERENITY

Behind a glass wall
Everything is whirling
A hurricane of fear

Yet I stand untouched
In the eye of the storm
Watching that glass wall

Cracks in the glass wall
Brings a rain of anxiety
As I sit here waiting

Knowing it is breaking
The winds of panic strike
Shattering my glass wall

And in comes the hurricane
Wreaking devastation
Until I cannot think

But outside no one sees
This raging storm inside
That I can't control

So I rebuild my glass wall
And sit back down
To wait until it breaks again

WOMAN AT THE MARKETPLACE, pastel painting



Mary Corrigan Stjern, *retired staff*

Kathryn Waldyke, MD, *faculty*

RELATIONSHIP

I first felt Death—
he brushed by me—
“She’s pinking up;
just let her be.”
Then he moved on
to birth suite three.
He came that day
but not for me.

I looked at Death—
he glanced at me
as branches broke
and out the tree
I fell and slid
on saving scree.
He walked that day
but not toward me.

I glared at Death—
he turned from me
and pushed on by
to let us be
while round wrecked car
a gas-spill sea
did not catch fire
before we’d freed.

I pushed Death back—
“You let me be!
It’s not my turn!
I’m cured, you see?”
I showed him scars,
lost parts of me.
He settled back,
grim, patiently.

poetry, first place

I looked for Death—
“I’ll pay your fee.
I can’t do this:
cancer, round three...”
He stood nearby,
looked thoughtfully,
but on that day
he took not me.

At last Death came
and spoke to me:
“The time has come
to set you free.
Not pushing back
this time, I see—?
Follow now, for
what’s to be.”

Cynda Strong, *community*

WINTER'S APPROACH

Skies speckled with geese
Sequined grass in morning light
Winter tiptoes in

AUTUMN

Frosted pumpkin fields
Crystallized words in mid-air
October's brisk breath

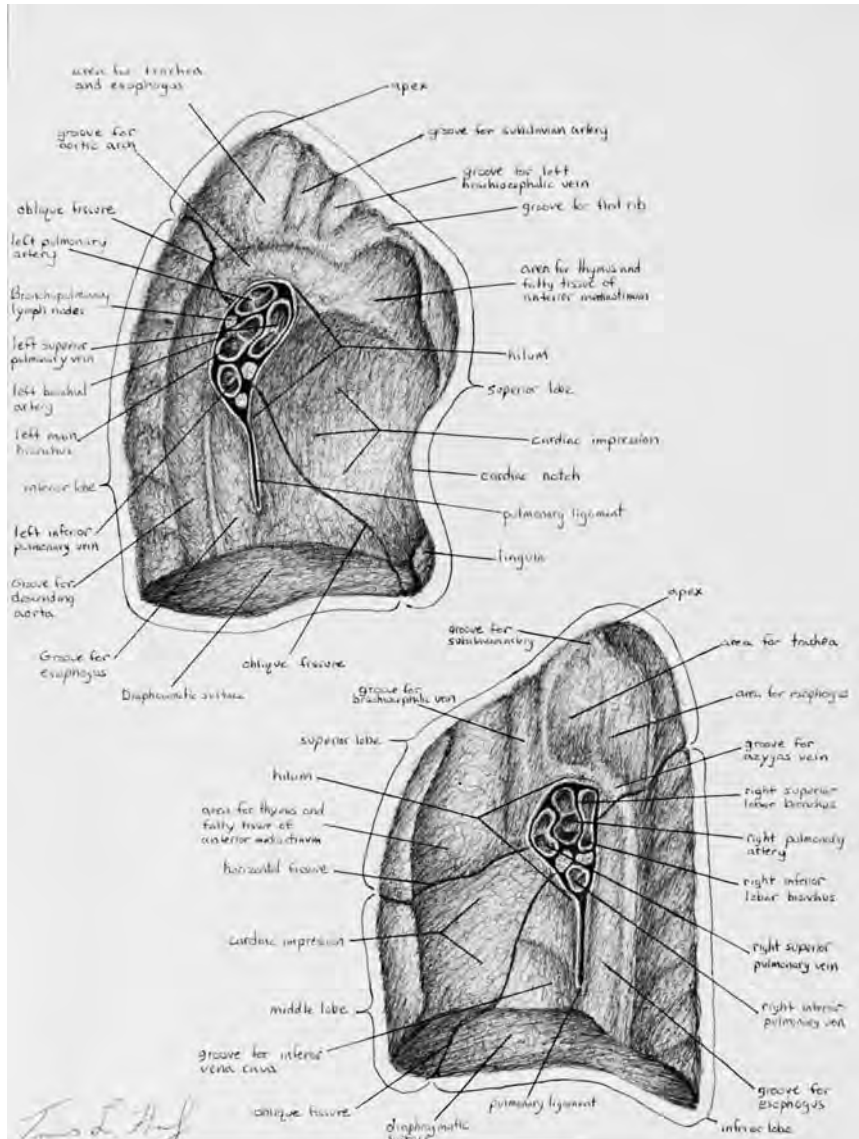
TURTLE IN TUPELO SWAMP, digital photography



Carol Gordon, *faculty*

John Grace, MD, *alumni*

A SIGH OF RELIEF, ink



Travis Healey, *student*

EVERYTHING

A long time ago I had something,
And to me it was everything.
Part of it was taken.
And the part that wasn't taken...I destroyed.
I destroyed it because I was angry it changed.
Then I was alone but I survived.
I survived without that thing I thought was everything.
I became strong because I needed nothing.
Now I have strength, I guess that's something.
I still miss everything...but I wouldn't want it back.
I'm too afraid of weakness.
I'd rather be strong than happy.
I'd rather have nothing than lose everything again.

Sandra Shea, PhD, *faculty*

YOUR LITTLE FINGER

(an idea from a cancer survivor's husband late one night while walking Relay for Life®)

I love your little finger.
I love your little finger's crook at rest.
I love the way your little finger shakes when you laugh.

Your little finger gets angry first. Did you know? When you're angry it curls as if you're starting to make a fist.

I love the way your little finger rests against me in the night.
I love the way your little finger catches mine when we walk.
I love the way your little finger's nail shines with its manicure, whether white or rose....

And yet, if cancer should ever come to take your little finger, we should let it go.
If it meant keeping you.
If it meant keeping your laugh in my life.
If it meant keeping your whisper in my ear.
If it meant keeping my partner by my side.
If it meant keeping you.

I can only imagine what the loss of a breast means to you, this scarring of your heart and soul.
We will endure the pain together, as much as we can.
You the greater pain of psyche and of body,
Me the pain of distance, of not knowing how to help.
We will share all the steps from here to there.
I promise. You know that I do.

You must know it's your soul I desire in my life,
Ever so much more than your breast.
You must believe it's your love I depend on in my life,
Ever so much more than your breast.
You must cherish it's you, the special being that is you, who I must have in my life,
Ever so much more than your breast.

So give me your little finger.
I will hold it in my heart.
Again.
Always.

SPRING BEAUTIES, digital photography



Tom Ala, MD, *faculty*

WEEKLY EMPLOYMENT

OPPORTUNITIES IN LOVE, mixed media

art, second place



Joe Clemons, *student*

John Grace, MD, *alumni*

THE AGE

Born into shame,
bred into rage,
raised into sorrow
discovered the cage,

left out of love,
stayed out of faith,
wept out of loss
the age

Kathryn Waldyke, MD, *alumni*

LESSON LEARNED

prose, first place

About 20 years ago I was fresh out of the military and in general practice in a small town. I loved taking care of my neighbors and living the small town life. One night, though, I had a brief encounter I've since regretted as a possible opportunity lost. In my defense, I had been on call every night since I started at this rural practice nearly a year before. Call was light but nearly inescapable. One morning early, about 5 am, the answering service called to transfer a call. The operator apologized for the early hour, explaining he had tried to convince the woman to wait until office hours, but she kept calling back.... A frantic, young-sounding woman started to tell me about her baby's diaper rash. I asked her name and when it did not sound familiar, asked if she had been seen in our office. "No." So I had no legal or, it seemed, moral obligation to discuss this non-emergent matter with her at 5 am. Or did I?

I barely remember rather gruffly informing her this wasn't a medical emergency, but she could go to the Emergency Room (as we called it then) or call at 8 am to schedule in our clinic. I never heard from her again.

Initially I felt I had set some boundaries for once, so hard to do for a young doc in a small town, but over the years I've felt sad I did not allay my sleepy righteous anger and instead inquire—even briefly—about this perceived emergency. I've come to wonder if this mom perhaps could not call her own mom or a friend for advice to calm the baby's bottom and her own fears. Maybe she had no partner to spell her with this fussy baby, and she was reaching the end of her rope. Could I have been the knot on the end of the rope, had I not declined? Did she go on to hurt this child, a mom stressed past her breaking point?

As students, residents, PAs, doctors we are more powerful than we sometimes realize (other times also perhaps less). An opportunity to give healing words should not be dismissed lightly, without thought, as I did that night.

Twenty years ago being stopped in my neighborhood or the local grocery store felt as though someone wanted to take my hard-earned knowledge for free. They weren't asking the grocery store owner for free bread too, were they? But getting something for free was only half the story. They also trusted me, inexperienced newcomer that I was. I didn't realize then that most people earned such trust only over time, usually years. I had been awarded trust on arrival, to be earned over time. I missed a payment that night.

IN GOOD HANDS, charcoal



Austin Beason, *student*

Sandra Shea, PhD, *faculty*

SHOOTING STARS AND FLASHING BUGS

On my back I lay, scanning August's sky.
Mosquitoes in my ears.
Lights flashed between glowing stars as if sighs
From sources far and near.

The faster ones from old Swift-Tuttle flamed
A comet long ago
The slower ones from larger insects came
With chemicals aglow.

The lights of the universe are diverse
Of different starts and fates.
The pebbles zip fire-bound as if cursed
The insects look for mates.

But throughout this long cloudless spitfire night
As midnight spins toward dawn
All the lights burst conjoined as if in flight
'Til pale rays drape the lawn.

Funding for SCOPE was generously provided through the SIU Foundation.

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Submissions for the 2016 edition of SCOPE will be accepted from October to January 2016.



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