



Humanitas

Medical University of South Carolina

Volume 9 • 2005

Humanitas

**Medical University of South Carolina
Volume 9, 2005**

HUMANITAS



Do you want to take part in the next *HUMANITAS*?

Submissions may be sent to:

Carol Lancaster

E-mail to Lancascj@musc.edu

Campus mail to P.O. Box 250215

or

Taken to 17 Ehrhardt Street, Suite 3

PREFACE

The humanities, including philosophy, literature, and art, are reflections of human emotion, thought, and culture. For the past 9 years, the people behind the scenes at *HUMANITAS* have sought to give you a taste of the sentiment that walks quietly about MUSC. We have found that the university hospital system is a natural place to look for literature and art—as the arduous and heart-rending situations, frequent to the medical world, trigger creative expression.

We frequently are placed in situations where we feel like Band-Aids applied over large gaping wounds, especially in times when our patients' sufferings are in ways that we cannot help: as one of our authors stated, "I stopped him from breaking the seventh window, and that feels like nothing." Still there are many moments of joy. Indeed, this year's selections reveal a connection between the joys and sorrows of life, and in the end offer hope—that in spite of blindness, we begin to see; in spite of pain, we can feel.

It was a joy to put together the 9th edition of *HUMANITAS*. Genuine gratitude goes to the students and faculty on the Editorial Board—the reading, critiquing, and selection process would have been impossible without their input. Thank you to everyone who generously submitted their work. Thank you to John R. Raymond for financing the publication of *HUMANITAS* and to Kristi Rodgers-Cishek and Carol Lancaster for organizing and advising our progress. Special appreciation goes to Bert Keller, who has been intimately involved with *HUMANITAS* since its inception; he will be missed in his retirement.

HUMANITAS and this year's lyrical selection are also available on the internet at www.edserv.musc.edu/humanitas.

We hope this journal proves to be thought-provoking and heartwarming.

Blessings,

Rita Cuthbertson
Editor, 2005

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Cover by: Linda Heffernan, College of Medicine

* Editorial Board Selection

First Bite

Second Date. He Would Cook.

Recipe: White Fish in a Mushroom Wine Sauce

Looked Good on Paper & Used the Familiar

Red and Gold Can of Soup

Meal Served

She Took a Bite and Said

Delicious!

Wonderful!

Could She Have the Recipe?

He Took a Bite and Wanted to

Spit it Out!

Cover the Plate for Last Rites!

Prepare Oatmeal!

She Copied the Recipe

Prepared it Once and

Threw it Out

She Said it was a Case of Love at First Bite

Charles Brown
Library



Achuar Woman

Khristina Hoover
College of Medicine

”Move over and let the big dog eat,” he’d say.
That plump southern Santa, a Mason Dixon Jimmy Soprano.
It was June of ’87, and my sister a half-year six
when his coronaries choked on a chicken bone
leaving us two steps from godless and one from hemi-orphaned.
But two Johnny Carsons later, he was split neck to navel,
moon-faced on steroids and a week shy of his 43rd.
He left Providence on a cold turkey recovery road,
dotting his nights with baked cod and belly crunches.
Paler and thinner, clean shaven like Uncle Larry,
but he was still a home grown St. Nick,
a zipper-leavened father of two,
scarred over from the scalpel’s reconstruction,
so we could still swim in the Atlantic
and scream at a football game.

Jonathan G. Black
College of Medicine



Split Rail Fence, Blue Ridge Pkwy.

Charles D. Smith

Division of Pediatric Surgery

Passing By

On the Shoeless Joe Memorial Parkway
between Easley and Greenville, South Carolina,
there is a white wooden cross erected
beside the shoulder of the road.
Poised on top of the three-foot high cross,
a foot-tall angel stands
with its wings in repose.
The angel's hands hold a bouquet
of artificial flowers.
The angel is white plastic and mourns
this place of death.

On Interstate 26 outside Columbia, South Carolina,
driving toward Charleston, I see four crosses,
side by side, one is taller than the others.
They are also white and stand off from the road.
These are strewn with lace and flowered garlands.
Each cross bears words on the upright stake.
Passing by at 70 miles per hour,
I cannot even come close to reading the messages.

Near my home, a cross stands in the weeds
beside an intersection I pass through daily.
It is white, three-feet high, made of two-by-fours.
“Our Brother Bob,” written across the horizontal board
stirs the grief of countless drivers stopped at the red lights.
He was killed at this intersection.
I read it in the paper.
His old blue ballcap (or maybe it was his fishing cap)
hangs from the top of the cross.

Other accouterments are added periodically—
flowers, garlands, pictures.
They are signs of visits by his brothers or sisters
to this crossroads of busyness and death.

Craig Stephans, M.Ed.
Institute of Psychiatry

How They Met

She announced one morning to her parents she was moving from Indianapolis to Washington, DC. As she explained, her friend from school, Jack, lived there; she would find a job and a roommate. Having completed college, she needed to leave the house or otherwise face a future as an “old maid.” In DC, she found a job in a candy store, and a Danish roommate, who while not too friendly, helped pay the rent. And Jack, never a romantic interest, served as a known and friendly soul in a new city.

She had read in a woman’s magazine that if you want to find an appropriate man to date, it was helpful to go to events “by yourself.” So, angry one afternoon that the Danish roommate, Marguerita, had backed out suddenly on plans to go together to a Boston Pops Orchestra concert Arthur Fiedler was conducting at Constitution Hall, she gathered her courage and decided to go to the concert alone. Upon arrival, she found herself sitting next to two Army officers. The Korean War had recently ended, but young men were still serving obligatory time in the military. “I left my glasses at home – would one of you be kind enough to read me the program?” she innocently asked. One of them did, and following the concert, all three went out to dinner. The officer who had read the program asked for her phone number...he called her two days later and they began to date. Neither of them had a car or much money. They relied on public transportation to inexpensive restaurants and concerts, when they could afford the tickets. Window shopping was another pastime.

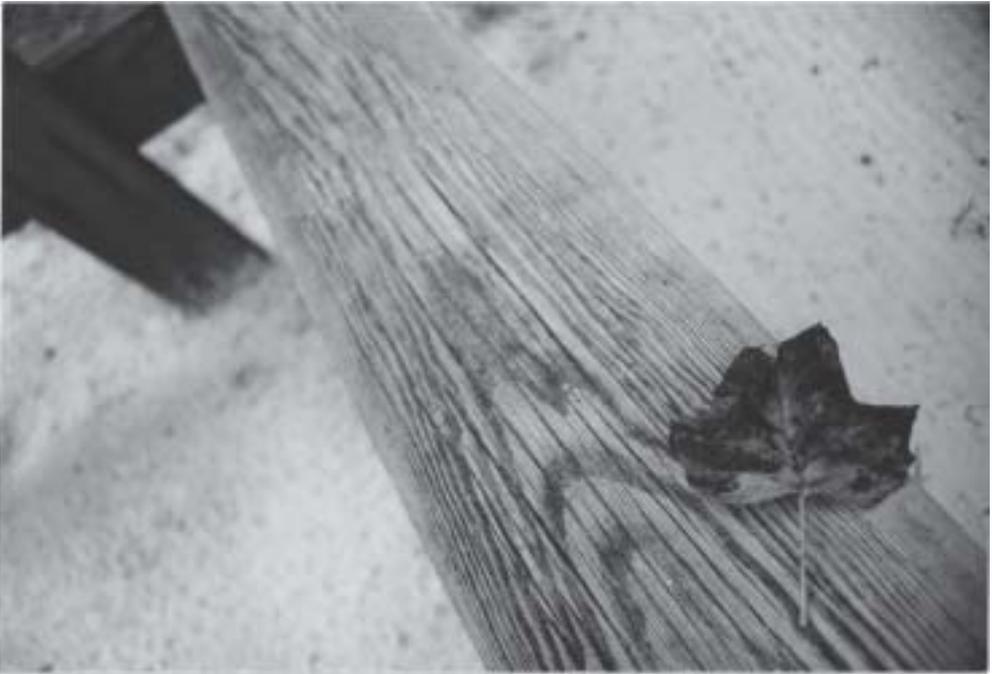
The candy store closed every July to avoid the August Washington heat, and with the prospect of no job or income, she decided it best to return home to Indianapolis. Her mother had friends who owned a business college and, though she had a Bachelor of Science degree in Food and Nutrition from Purdue University, she would enroll and learn how to become a medical transcriptionist. She and the army officer promised to write. He still had several months in the service, working in the post judge advocate's office. The youngest person to be admitted to the state of Missouri Bar Association at that time, he would start a proper career as a lawyer when he was discharged from the Army. After corresponding for a few weeks, he proposed marriage in a letter, and she replied, "yes." He brought the diamond engagement ring when he visited at Christmas, and plans were made for a February wedding. After a honeymoon in Cincinnati, she moved to Arlington, Virginia, in an apartment he found for them.

On April's Fool day that year while shopping together in the afternoon, the blind in her eye went down. When they had first met at the concert, she needed more than eyeglasses to read the program. During college, she started having double vision that eyeglasses and treatments at Mayo Clinic and Johns Hopkins had not been able to remedy. When they met at the concert, the vision in one eye was already gone, and she had 20/2200 in the other. The ophthalmologists attributed the problem to uveitis. The army officer, now her husband, had suspected serious eye trouble when they met, but he didn't think too far into the future about it.

After they got home from shopping, she told him she could not see at all. They went to Walter Reed Hospital immediately and, a few days later, she underwent surgery to re-attach the retina. He visited her every day. After weeks with her head “sandbagged” to immobilize it post-operatively, the bandages came off her eyes. She still could not see the finger or the hand that the doctor put in front of her face. They returned to their home to restart life as a married couple.

After 50 years together, they have two children, three grandchildren, and have traveled the world. He had a successful law practice; at one time while raising the children, she taught cooking to the blind and worked part-time in a senior center. They have endured the ups and downs, the mysteries of marriage. They enjoy going to the theatre, opera, and occasionally a concert. My father still reads the program to my mother.

Amy Blue
Dean's Office
College of Medicine



Duality

Kristi Rodgers-Cishek

Office of Institutional Research & Assessment

The Tightrope

I walk a perfect tightrope here
Heel to toe, compelled by fear
That if I step in error now
I'm bound to fall and won't know how

To climb back on this fragile rope
Upon which I have placed my hope.

If Providence with anxious face
Holds His breath with every place
I carefully set down my feet
and cautiously to Him entreat

To stay up on a fragile rope
Upon which I have placed my hope.

For I each step would reassess
And paralyzed, I'd second guess
For Providence would then demand
I not misstep or fail the plan

But stay up on a fragile rope
Upon which I have placed my hope

But what of Him who knows this all
Who knew about each time I'd fall
Who placed my name upon His Heart
And ordered time before its start

When clumsy feet He thought He'd buy
So this child who'd often try
To walk a perfect tightrope here
Would not live compelled by fear

or try to climb up on a rope
when on Him she can rest her hope.

Laurie Johnson
Occupational Therapy

Music and vocals:

Jin A. Kang
College of Dental Medicine

Back up vocals:

Amanda Reinhardt
Plantation Pediatrics

Go to www.edserv.musc.edu/humanitas to hear.

The Big Top Coming Down

We have not toe'd the line, a high wire, just for this.
That your perspiration could not station your feet opposed
heel to toe, if the light was on, the words would flow,
in regatta, in applause, our names as the trumpets blow.
And if our balance is love then our feat is not a show,
our swaying tenacity as our lives are not lovers but now foes,
and we ponder how to still stand high, the line we toe.
Our movement must be tandem and if it's random,
no homestead, no big top could ever grow,
no ankle-biters could ever sit up late and know
that we hung our star up in the firmament and
sweat silent prayers and swore to never let go
until our BMW carried an easy-bake oven and a GI Joe.
But soon the lights will dim our stardom,
not that some of our audience won't sigh in relief though.
If you tear your grip from mine, not long and the struts will bow,
and your body make wind with its swiftness, arrow of Apollo,
to plunge headlong into the shadow dust of animal prints,
while I'm black haired, broken nosed, and in the back row.

Jonathan G. Black
College of Medicine



Dock and Water

Charles F. Degenhardt III
College of Medicine

Sea Isle Morning III

As I stride the sand-swept shore
Under a sun ablaze,
I thank the southerly breeze,
Cooling face and limbs.
I thank this unordinary wind,
Driving the waves and whitecaps
Without mercy.
Not a single seagull in sight,
Fearing this seawind, they choose
To wait it out, nesting, for
A quieter, gentler sky.

Such a wind, powerful, steady,
A true tradewind,
The kind that beckoned Columbus,
Magellan, and Drake
To set forth, full sail,
Atlanticward,
For gold, silver, promise of spices,
Tobacco, pineapple, cocoa and maize,
Adventure, Glory, Empire,
Canvas into the wind,
Into a New World,
West, west of Eden.

Stan Schuman
Professor Emeritus
Dept. of Family Medicine



the Indian Ocean

Jeremy Kirtz
College of Medicine

The Beach

I watch remembering.
The two year old and her mother
play beside a tidal pool,
deeply engaged.
No one else exists.

I watch with nostalgia.
The sand castle grows to heroic dimensions.
The brothers and their friend shriek with glee
as the waves lap at their construction.
Parents notice briefly and then,
back into the book-the headset-the sun soak.

The beach, years of being with children,
developmental tableaux, joy, sadness, missed opportunities.
Would that life could be rewound, and then fast-forwarded.

Layton McCurdy
Dept. of Psychiatry

HAIKU

Meditation helps
Quiet monkeys in our minds.
Peace is there for us.

Lilless McPherson Shilling
College of Health Professions



Morning Ground Fog, Blue Ridge Pkwy.

Charles D. Smith
Division of Pediatric Surgery

Forever and Again

Morning dew
Tickles and trickles
To the earth below
The early morning sun

As it perches
Just above the skyline
And the mockingbirds
Gather and sing

Enticing your soul
To join in the gayety
Maybe a jig or two
In the crisp morning air

Flowing softly against
Your frame and the
Glistening rose opens
Its petals almost dare to

Form a spiral stairway
To heaven and the dew
Soaked leaves such
Stepping stones for

Your soul as it reaches
Out to capture this
Moment such beauty
Forever and again

Sheila Leger

Dept. of Pediatrics



Untitled

Chris S. Witwer
Institutional Review Board

Catastrophe Awaits

Take one lasting gaze at a baby
don't think about what it will feel
when cinders and diatribes fall
and stock options cascade

No time to capture fireflies
while taunting a summer moon,
or to tumble down a velvet hill
into the wheat shag carpet

From the moment the sun awakes,
catastrophe awaits -
be it today, tomorrow, or a million years
when the sun becomes a dwarf
and expands to purify the earth

John T. Costa
Media Resources Specialist



The Lost City of the Inca

Khristina Hoover
College of Medicine

The Seventh Window

Baseball bat to the windows
around the bottom floor
of the two story house.

Smashing, cursing, writhing,
he goes from window to window,
three, four, five—smashed to pieces.

His swing is choppy and truncated,
an awful form that would never let him
hit a fastball if he had the chance.

His left arm cannot straighten.

He gets it to about 120 degrees, that is it.

Tyler's arm broke when he was nine; too long in the cast
and no exercise condemned it to deformity.

I sneak in behind him after he hits
window number six, wrap my arms around his body
corralling his arms to his side.

The bat hangs limp, like an extension of his right arm.

He twists and curses me. He knows me well;
we live together in the home—

a few days every week for the past two years
along with seven other boys
and a handful of counselors who rotate shifts.

Although a strong 13 year old, Tyler cannot break
my grip around him. I pull him to the ground,
rolling with him, my arms keeping us safe.

I keep him on the ground rather than drag him
to the time-out room inside the back door, a temporary cell.

It would be difficult to push him in and shut the door,
with him in such a rage and hating me right now.

I play this role a few times a week—human straightjacket—
in order protect a part of the house or one of the staff.
I know the rage is not personal; Tyler likes me.
Our relationship is enjoyable.

This morning we joked together while eating cereal.
His sense of humor is one of the best of the boys.
I can always make him laugh, except
when he is out of his mind like he is now.
All I can do is hold him down and wait,
wait for the tears to replace the curses,
wait for the shaking to replace the twists and jolts.
The transformation comes as he cares less and less
about destroying something or killing somebody
and begins to wish for a mother or father
to love him and hold him. Then, he
grasps the futility of his repeated fantasy.
He dreams that he is dead, disengaged from truth,
wishing to be nothing or anywhere, someone else or nobody.
He cannot imagine a worse life than his own—
stuck at a home for boys, no mom, no dad.

I cannot imagine his life, the torment,
abuse, abandonment, and anger,
but he wants to be like them.
This heartbreaking truth lives in the shadows
of all the counselors' minds—
the boys want to return to their homes,
to the abuse, drugs, wasted lives.
We love, teach, and care,
changing today for them.

Afterwards, Tyler grows up, deals drugs and goes to jail.
For three years, he had lived at the home.
Countless counselors spent their love and energy
reaching him, letting him know he mattered.
None of that seems to matter to him.
He has a future to fulfill, a plan to follow.
I stopped him from breaking the seventh window,
and that feels like nothing.

Craig Stephans, M.Ed.
Institute of Psychiatry



On the Way Home

Sherrie Nesbitt

Institute of Psychiatry

Special Needs

His body's clumsy, often weak.
His mind is dull. He'll seldom speak.
He's awkward and he'll never know
That when he talks it's much too slow.

He'll push too hard or scream too loud.
He'll hide and tremble in a crowd.
He'll trip and fall on simple tasks,
And he may never think to ask

Why God would let a boy here
Live with broken eyes and tears.

How could one who'll never read
Bring glory to the Holy Seed,
Whose children here will bear His name...
Could glory through him be the same

As one who'll lead a hundred men
and properly repent of sin?

But here the mercy of the Lord
Is cause to wonder and adore.
That God does meet with broken minds,
Though crouched and rocking He can find

A boy who will never know
The proper song of thanks to show.
To God who counts his every hair,
He'll never verbalize a prayer.

But God of mystery in His ways,
All glory, honor, thanks and praise.
For Christ's sweet mercy is the same
To me who's heart is weak and lame.

And though I'll run and sing and speak,
The cross must cover flesh this weak.
And Christ did find this little girl,
Who was too proud and loved the world.

So make your glory manifest.
Let not the strong be truly blessed.
May paradox display Your face
and broken children know Your grace.

Laurie Johnson
Occupational Therapy



Simple Touch

Rita Cuthbertson
College of Medicine

My Calling

I left it up to God,
letting him bring an open door
to me. He knew his plan,
my gifts, to where I should go
for great works, and lasting.

I need food, a place to live.
What about a child? All
they have and breathe.

dead, dead, dead.

Trust, hope in the fulfillment
of inspired dreams—expecting all
that I could not imagine.

So, I wrote it down—plain
and simple—
I believed.

A blank page had better aim.

I left it up to God, waiting
in his perfect time.

I sip my coffee, feeling
stood up in crowded café,
door watching.

strangers, strangers, strangers.

Blooms the desire of the banished. Napoleon
returning to vanquish and rule. Joyce
writing classics of his homeland—from exile. Jesus
rising to break bread.

Bringing salvation.

I leave it up to God.

In isolation, life comes—hovering
away from sound and movement
to charge the soul.

Air, water—a word to live
with that child. She sings
what they have, she kisses
all they live.

Wading, crawling, and follow,
screaming for God to put me down
right here, and now—to be a part

of his dream. His trust, hope
in me fulfills and sparks.

eternal, eternal, eternal.

Blessing of failure, scorn
for temporal gain,
come around to me. Turning
to what pleads for a light
from my heart, and thrives,
I sink into acceptance of life.

Loving once, a goodness
lasting forever, this radiant face—

coming through the door
for me, for God—
my little girl, smiling,
heart beating wildly.

Craig Stephans, M.Ed.
Institute of Psychiatry

HAIKUS

I.C.E. - An Introduction to Clinical Ethics

These haikus are among 121 written by eleven second-year medical students during the fall 2004 course Introduction to Clinical Ethics. Using haiku, the students voiced their essential understanding of each week's readings and discussion.

Walter Limehouse
Emergency Medicine

Vegetative state
A breathing individual
or an organ oven

Emily Darr

There are many aspects
Compassion must be considered
But whose compassion

Ross Simrill

We don't question a
patients decision making
if they agree with us.

Valerie Echevarria

I am suffering
Your own values are your own
Just leave me alone

Ken Byrd

pain overwhelms thought
seconds become eternal
who thinks when I can't?

Elizabeth Gray



Mighty Chickadee

Kristi Rodgers-Cishek

Office of Institutional Research & Assessment

HUMANITAS



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Carol Lancaster

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Campus mail to P.O. Box 250215

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Taken to 17 Ehrhardt Street, Suite 3