Humanitas

Medical University of South Carolina
Volume 12, 2008
PREFACE

Dear Friends,

Welcome to Volume XII of Humanitas, the literary journal of the Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC). For twelve years, Humanitas has offered a forum for demonstrating the depth and range of artistic talents possessed by the faculty, staff and students of MUSC. This forum would not be possible if it were not for the unwavering support of the MUSC Humanities Committee. This committee is comprised of members of the Charleston community who are committed to fostering humanistic attitudes and values in all facets of daily life, including medical education.

The Humanitas editorial board would like to thank each person who submitted their work for consideration. We would also like to extend special thanks to Kristi Rodgers-Cishek for passionately supporting each step of the production of Humanitas, year after year.

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Cover: Magnolia Blossom, Stephanie Dellis
Hands

March 5th, 2004, Cape Town, South Africa

I stood in the shower, the spray stinging my face. The hot water like a punishment, a self-inflicted purging of my sins. I looked down at my hands. The streaming water made them look different, somehow surreal. They looked like someone else's.

I always wanted girls' hands. The kind with long, slender fingers and gently tapered nails. Hands like my mother's. Instead, I got my father's hands, complete with short fingers and stubbornly round nails. But they were strong hands. They had held me up through the rigors of existence. They never left me, even when everyone else had. They had remained loyal through my failings, and through those that had failed me.

How could I have let everything slip through these hands so easily? How could these sturdy fingers lose grip of everything I had once held so dear? At the end, I had felt them clawing at the air, frantically trying to hold on. Sometimes I expected to look down and see blood on my mangled, tortured fingers, a physical sign of my desperation. That might have been a relief, to see that what I was fighting against was, in fact, real. But like most struggles, this was invisible to the eye. Something I would have to live through alone.

But that's the way of the world really, isn't it? We all like to think we have people with us, someone to love and comfort us when things get too hard. We need to think that we're not all alone in this world. That there will always be someone there to catch us when we start to fall. How many times did it take me to realize that wasn't true? How many times had I hit the ground with the full force of my body, shocked time after time to find nobody there to save me?

Amy Strohecker
Center for Professional Development
Subjects: Sheila and Sam

Photographer: Nancy Marshall

The People of Romania, Photo#1: The Matriarch of Burzuc

Jason A. Curry
College of Medicine
For Randy

August 29th, 2003, New York City

I punish you for every perceived wrong of those before you.
I push you away, hide from you.
Slip through your fingers over and over.

Yet you stay.
Grasping for me.
You’re the only one who reaches for me.
And I am forced to trust you.
Again and again.

And you rescue me once more.
As I turn and walk away from you,
You fall in step behind me.

Amy Strohecker
Center for Professional Development

Title: William’s World

Photographer: Caroline Jenkins
Subject: Bess Park

Photographer: Caroline Jenkins

Leaning

Bridget Hinkebein
Public Safety
Morris Island Lighthouse

Stephanie Dellis
Department of Biochemistry
and Molecular Biology

Subject: Phoenix

Photographer: Vennie Deas-Moore
THE PALMETTO PORTRAITS PROJECT

In 2006, the Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC) asked six noted and emerging photographers to focus on portraying South Carolinians in the Lowcountry, the Piedmont and the Upstate, reflecting the full range and diversity of the state's citizens, occupations and recreational activities. In creating a collection of art to display within MUSC's educational and clinical buildings, the University hoped to remind students, faculty, staff and visitors of those they serve at MUSC and throughout South Carolina. At the conclusion of the inaugural year, each featured photographer asked six additional photographers to participate in creating a second series of Palmetto Portraits.

The 2007 Palmetto Portraits collection consists of over 60 photographs, seven of which were selected by our editorial board for publication in this volume of *Humanitas*.

2007 Palmetto Portraits Photographers

Vennie Deas-Moore, Columbia
Caroline Jenkins, Greenwood
Nancy Marshall, McClellanville
Milton Morris, Charleston
Kathleen Robbins, Columbia
Sam Wang, Clemson

Sea-Isle Morning

Memorize this moment,
You may need it
When you lie at risk
On a surgical cart
Or sickbed, alone at night
Wrapped in darkness,
Dreading the unknown.

Here, at seaside
On this stunning
Sunbright morning,
Observe, feel another kind
Of unknown, another kind of awe,
The unknown of horizon and sky,
Blue upon blueness,
Sky careening over ocean,
As far, and further
Than the eye can see....
How infinite is infinite?
And why this coming together
Of sand and breeze, tide and shore
Me and this day?

Inhale and exhale,
With the hush-hush of each wave,
Lapping lazily, giving up its gentle spray,
Dampening each delicate grain of sand
Before ascending as spraylets,
Fairy-like, up and away, misting into the blue.

And so, consider this, our brief life,
A bit of foam, a mere spraylet
Given up by the vast sea,
Brief but beautiful
Heading to shore and air
Followed by other waves and wavelets,
Rushing, exulting, sparkling with light.

Memorize this,
Breathe this
Sea-isle morning...
Sustenance for the soul.

Stan Schuman
retired
Charleston Verticals

Charles A. Brown
Library

The Hungarian Saint, Budapest

A Proud Past
Winter World

Jim Hensley
Integrated Planning and Assessment

Liz and Me and the Movies

How many movies can you see in twenty-five years?
100? 200? 300? Or 400+?

We like the movies.

You won’t see us at the concession stand – no popcorn, sodas or candy.

We are at the movies for the stories

Drama, comedy, romance, animation, mysteries, fantasies, and stories that make us scratch our heads.

We discuss them for days

“The reason she did that was….”

“We have to see that again because….”

And to our friends, “You have to see this movie!!”

Look for us at the movies.

Sitting near the rear

Waiting for the magic

Holding hands

Charles A. Brown
Library
The power of pure glass,
The simple sands of nearby seashore
Blended into rainbow spectrums,
To inspire anyone with eyes
For the Mystery of Art and Creation.

Stan Schuman
retired

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Birds Over Naples, Italy
Cameron Corbin
College of Health Professions

The Glass Palace, Madrid
Elizabeth Burton
College of Graduate Studies
AT RAVENNA, 1997

The awesomeness of Mosaic art
on the ceiling, the arch, the nave
took me by surprise!
Tourist weary, too many churches, galleries,
too many guide-talks, who wouldn't be half-numb,
half-immune to beauty?

But then... There It was. There I was,
Gazing up, up into a canopy of
Piety, poetry in color and glass
So enchanting, so visually rich,
Simplicity itself, walls with martyrs and angels,
Saint Apollinare with adoring lambs,
In a luminescent green field of pure white lilies...

I wish I could stand beside
the ancient master craftsman
sorting his palette of sparkling tiles
Gaze at his sketch of the lamb, the bird in flight,
the palm fronds, the halos, the crown. the throne
the shepherd's crook, the clouds of glory,
the twinkling stars in blue heavens above.
But most of all...the Eyes, the awesome Eyes of the Divinity
in the apse that follow you, anywhere you move.

I wish I could tell him, the nameless one,
How his passion, his vision
Was not lost,
Survived the ages,
Is still inspiring mortals,
Beyond words...including me,
A footsore tourist, feeling closer to him
Than any celebrated Master in Rome.

Her Wing Broken

Look there at that bird;
her wing broken.
She flies a crooked path
Searching for twigs to balance against
The tilt of her way.

Not lost; she only flutters
As she tosses her feathers at the past.
Her cry soaring as clouds follow her
In white fluffs.

Where is her nest? What ridge are her chicks waiting
Mouths wide; little voices shrill?

She knows her way there; and the twig she holds
Straightens her path

Val Evans
Speech Language Pathology
Escape

The girl crawled underneath her bed to hide,
The sounds of rage were just like a knife.
She closed her eyes and covered her ears,
Counted to fifty and whispered a prayer.
Lord I hurt so bad inside right now,
Come help me escape,
To you I vow:
I will try hard to be a good girl,
But for right now,
Please rescue me from my world.
Let’s disappear to a place that is safe,
Where people don’t come to tear innocence away,
A place where hands are used to be kind,
Eyes are gentle,
Words are soft,
Where my heart is protected as it should be.
Jesus, let’s fly away, you and me.

The girl grew older, surviving hard times,
Experiencing things that seemed like a crime.
She worked so hard to climb out of her dark,
But nothing could take away the pain in her heart.
The memories of childhood still tortured her mind,
One day she turned to a blade to punish the child.
Her arms became scarred,
But she needed the drug,
To show she was tough.
Pain is love.
The hurt kept rising until she could take no more,
So one rainy night she fell to the floor.
With arms outstretched and tears flowing down,
She cried out again in one last attempt:
Lord I hurt so bad inside right now,
Come help me escape,
To you I vow:
I will try hard to be a good girl,
But for right now,

The deer were hauled back to deer processors in the Texas hill country. Their size compared to the local Texas white tail always caused comment. Mule deer are larger and they get their name from size of their ears.

The trip was made for nine years with no mishaps, no accidents on the roads, no camp accidents and no firearm mishaps. Thirty days after returning from the ninth trip our leader and planner dropped dead in his hospital office just sixty feet from a Class I ER. We were stunned, saddened, and outraged. He would miss his oldest son’s valedictory speech and eventual graduation from a military service academy.

The following year we took his blaze orange hunter’s cap and nailed it fifty to sixty feet off the ground in a large pine tree overlooking our camp area. That bright orange cap was there for two years before the Forest Service spotted it and removed it.

Things have happened to all of us since that year. People have moved. Eyesight has dimmed. Arthritis and spinal stenosis has taken its toll. Knee joints replaced. Two people continue to make the trek. They stay in a nice lodge and no longer haul water or a tent.

So why have these trips been important? Over a ten year span a total of perhaps a total of forty-five days was spent in a New Mexico hunting camp. These days seem magical with the grandness of the land, the peace and quiet and the friendships that formed over the years.

Charles A. Brown
Library
The Thirty-Gallon Water Haul

I was a member in good standing of the Thirty Gallon Water Haul for ten years. Originally four strong, we traveled from central Texas to New Mexico for five days of mule deer hunting in the western and northern sections of the Land of Enchantment.

The leader and planner invited me to join but I was a reluctant hunter until he said I would be the cook and photographer. Immediately, I signed on and became known as Cookie.

Initially the hunters were on foot and then Becky came into our circle. She was a lady wrangler and guide who bought horses as some women buy shoes. She knew all the horses’ personalities and they all had names. She and her family and all the horses lived in the Gila Wilderness. Did the horses improve the hunting? No, but they increased the range of the hunters.

Camp was set up in snow, rain, and sunshine. There was no plumbing and no drinking water except for those Thirty Gallons we hauled into the mountains. The first night meal was homemade chili, frozen and brought from Texas. The mornings were cold and frosty at 15 degrees. Breakfast and coffee was prepared. The hunters left camp to be on the trail before sunrise to places picked out the day before. I headed out with a camera and always shot fifteen rolls of film plus a mandatory group picture for everyone.

Some years the hunters were successful. If a deer was shot the heart and liver was kept to cook in the evening as a special treat A pathologist in the group examined the organs for flukes and parasites before cooking.

Please rescue me from my world.
Let’s disappear to a place that is safe,
Where people don’t come to tear innocence away,
A place where hands are used to be kind,
Eyes are gentle,
Words are soft,
Where my heart is protected as it should be.
Jesus, let’s fly away, you and me.

The dreams she once had, that seemed far away,
Began coming closer with each passing day.
There were still trials and mountains to climb,
But she would take each day,
One step at a time.
She did not know exactly what life had in store,
But now she had help to learn and explore.
On the horizon rose a light of hope,
That sparked a will to survive,
And a desire to grow.
She wanted to find truth that had been hidden by lies,
To discover who she really was deep inside.
As she looked back over the years,
She stepped out of hiding to try and conquer her fears.
Lord I am scared so much inside right now,
Come show me the way,
To you I vow:
I will try hard to be a good girl,
Lord, please right now, help me shape my own world.
Help me make a place that is safe,
Where people can’t come to tear innocence away,
A place where hands are used to be kind,
Eyes are gentle,
Words are soft,
Where my heart is protected as it should be.
Jesus, show me the truth,
Please guide me.

Anonymous
Look at Him

Jamaica man full of confidence brimming with pride never afraid to show himself for who he is but wears his soul on his sleeve his emotions around his neck and his love in his hand. This Jamaica man fell in love so real that it became him, consumed him, lived in him so that what he wanted was love, her love, forever lasting, continual bouts of it but the love fell through leaving him like a broken vessel shutting off his heart, closing his hand of love, taking off his emotion necklace, remaining only with the soul that he now lets God cradle day and night. his soul. . . cradling his soul. . . waiting for time to heal the pain, this Jamaica man now starving from the love he has not received and aching from the love he wants to give, finds out daily that his is deserved of love real and untainted

Ashlei Gerald
College of Health Professions

Geometry

How I love Euclid
at the beach,
His seamless horizontals,
ocean greeting sky,
His triangulated sails
billowing bold hues,
Rectangled kites
skittering at their tether,
Cumulus clouds, without a care,
Sinuous shoreline sweeping
Beyond sight,
Perfect spirals of mollusks
Peeking from the sand,
Moon-snails, fanned scallops,
Radial-ribbed angel wings,
Turbaned turbonilla,
Mysterious lettered olive,
Enchanting nautilus,
Abundant cowries and conches.
Euclid's own treasure trove,
mathematics by the sea.

Stan Schuman
retired
Gulf Fritillary Butterfly on Lantana

Stephanie Dellis
Department of Biochemistry
and Molecular Biology

Clean Enough

Kristi Rodgers-Cishek
Integrated Planning and Assessment
The Janitor’s Tale

You know the tenth floor at Medical used to be for crazy people don’t you? Well, they closed it off for over a year so as people could forget about that. They moved all the crazy folks to the seventh floor for how long it took them to build the Psychiatric Hospital across the street.

During that time, the tenth floor, though we wasn’t allowed to call it the tenth floor because everyone always said, “You belong on the tenth floor at Medical.” whenever anyone done something crazy, well, anyway, the tenth floor was all closed up for over a year. My best friend and me used to go up there to smoke cigarettes and just to goof off. We looked alike, my best friend, his name was Russell, and me. Sometimes we had to be at work at 7am, but we still go out and drink the night before, when I get older that shit gets harder to do, so Russell and me would try and catch a nap up on 10 when we could.

Russell and me looked just alike, he was my height, he was same build as me, and we both had short gray hair. We was best friends, some said we looked like we was related, in fact they would say, “Ask your Daddy if he ain’t your brother.” and shit like that.

We had hung with each other since we was in grade school, and we still did, if we weren’t at home, we be together, even at work. I came to Medical, and then when my supervisor said he was looking for help, I told Russell and he come to Medical, so we spent all our time together.

At night, when we went out, we played cards at the social club on Rutledge, and then we’d go home about 1 in the morning, when we had to be at work at 7. Sometimes my wife would be awake, and if she was, she would say to me, “You ain’t coming in this house smelling like a drunk, get out” and I would come on to the hospital and catch some sleep here. That’s how we met, remember? I was sleeping in the storage area, for the Pharmacy and you came in to get some tube feeding, and it scared the shit out of you when you seen me sleeping on the stack of cans.

True Romance

True romance does still exist,
Neatly inscribed on the otherwise
Clean medical library desk in a faded
Blue like veins just beneath skin.
A student, straight-laced in every
Other way, lost her mind
Over the anatomy chapter concerning
The reproductive system and started thinking,
No longer about the epididymis,
Bulbospongiosus or corpus cavernosum,
But about the real-live parts of the one
She had to leave behind for med school,
The highlighter pulling hand from printed page
To that slight overhang of the desk’s hutch
Where the classic words of passion
Could be most sheltered from the janitor’s rag:
I-HEART-L. L.

C. Morrow Dowdle
College of Health Professions
Well that got old with our wives, the drinking. I mean, and Russell’s wife left him, and run off with another dude. A Pastor, can you believe that? Russell was tore up about it, and he didn’t want to do nothing with me. I mean, he still drank, but he didn’t have no fun, and socialize, and that. He just got a bottle and he went somewhere and he drank it. It’s crazy, with his wife gone, he could have drunk, and partied all you want, but he didn’t feel like it then. We didn’t hang out for a long time, and I missed him. My wife was getting on me for drinking too.

She always said that my drinking was gonna kill me, like it killed her brother, but he had sugar diabetes, so that wasn’t the same as me. Anyway, I kept drinking, and one morning when I woke up in the storage room, hung over as all get out, I went out on Sabin to grab a smoke before I had to report for my job.

I was standing right by the loading dock, and smoking, and wishing I hadn’t drank so much, feeling like shit, you know. I hear a big thump noise, and I look at the street right in front of me, and there is a body. This body was wearing the same clothes as me, the blue shirt and pants same as me, and his hair was the same as me, and it looked like me, he was lying face downwards on the street.

Well, I tell you, I thought that I had died, and I was rising up and looking at me dead on the street. I started crying, and I said, “Hallelujah, I am rising up to heaven, take me Lord, thank you Lord, taking me to heaven.” and I said that over and over. Except, shortly, I noticed I wasn’t rising any higher. So I started to get worried, I started to think that I wasn’t going nowhere, I was sticking around. You know it took me a couple of minutes to realize that wasn’t me on the ground, I flipped me over and it was Russell. Seems like he was so tore up about his wife leaving, he’d gone up to the tenth floor, opened a window and jumped out.

After that, they put in new windows all over the hospital that you couldn’t open.

I still had to go to work that day, my boss said we was already short-handed without, Russell, it would be best for me to stay. I guess it was.
Merge

You became a small part of me on the first day.
I don't mean in any metaphysical-psychobabble-
Hallmark card kind of sense, no merging
Of two singular spirits in the face of bald
And unimaginable truths;
That would be far more polite than the moment
At which, balanced above you, its work already
Well underway, the scalpel slipped
From hand to hand, making its instantaneous way
Through the nitrile glove and into the skin
Just below the pinkie finger.
Pressing into the broad utility sink, I did my best
To rinse the wound, but some of your molecules
Must have been too quick, invisible particles
Of what once was you escaping
Into the exposed capillaries, flushed indiscriminately
Down by the rushing blood of the heart that still beats,
Leaving behind the wound like a tiny, grim mouth,
The chiding reminder of my own fallibility
By chance or by choice, which might ultimately
Be overwhelmed by chance at any rate,
Tipping me, too, into the supine.

C. Morrow Dowdle
College of Health Professions

Gate at St. George Church, Athens

Cameron Corbin
College of Health Professions
the sky fell blue

yesterday the sky fell blue;
and i forgot my smile; leaving my teeth
in the water by the bedside

i forgot my smile floating at the bottom
of a glass; i forgot people’s eyes
are able to see through glass; that
their eyes are capable to glimpse
remnants of my smile but not
what made me smile; what might have made
me smile yesterday when the sky fell blue

the day looked different after the sky fell
i thought i should show the world my teeth
but i forgot my smile in the glass by
my bedside; the sky fell blue without me

Val Evans
Speech Language Pathology
Quito Evening

It was a week before I realized that palm trees don’t belong in the mountains. Their static explosions line the streets and guide the shooting stars of dirty cars along the twilight. The scatter stacked boxes of buildings are beginning to answer with their now dim but soon to be brilliant orbs. One of those is the reflection of my knuckle-carried, pressed-in cheek, my one and a half day stubble chewing over words while the back of my mind slowly lets the tense clench of last night lighten and release. From outer space this light is nothing, the scattered refractions of a tiny bulb mixed around in the abyss of starry black. From here it is everything; the sometimes fluidity and otherwise creaking of my very own coffee stained life.

Matt Dettmer
College of Medicine

Egret Babies

Stephanie Dellis
Department of Biochemistry
and Molecular Biology