PREFACE

For 11 years, *Humanitas* has been a forum showcasing the artistic pursuits of the students, faculty and staff of the Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC). This volume is particularly special because of the inclusion of select photos from the Palmetto Portraits Project (see page 34 for details). The collaboration between *Humanitas* and the Palmetto Portraits Project has been warmly welcomed by our editors and has been fostered by the President of MUSC, Dr. Raymond Greenberg.

The editors of *Humanitas* would like to thank Dr. Carol Lancaster for supporting each step of the production of this journal throughout the years. She has served MUSC and *Humanitas* well and will be dearly missed in her retirement. We would also like to thank Kristi Rodgers-Cishek for her guidance and advice.

The selected pieces in this volume of *Humanitas* show the profound talent of the MUSC community and were chosen from a pool of excellent work. May they serve to inspire the unrealized artist in all of us.

*Humanitas* Editorial Board - 2007

Steven W. Kubalak - Cell Biology and Anatomy
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# Table of Contents

**Treehouse**, Kristi Rodgers-Cishek  
**Charcoal Woods**, Charles Brown  
**Rounds**, Ashley Mason  
**Pipes**, Kristi Rodgers-Cishek  
**Dungeness Compound Workroom**, Bill Basco  
**Philo’s Plumber**, Stan Schuman  
**A Light for All**, Steven W. Kubalak  
**Why do you weep, woman?** Lisa M. Vendemark  
**Evening Chill**, Charles Brown  
**Souvenir**, Matthew Dettmer  
**Different Worlds**, Jeffrey G. Wong  
**News**, Barbara Austin Ball  
**Boneyard Beach at Dawn**, Bill Basco  
**Hardest Part**, Anonymous  
**Psychosomatic**, Casey Sharpe  
**Bottles on the Wall**, Charles F. Degenhardt III  
**Down Mem’ry Lane**, Stan Schuman  
**Bridge Cables**, Charles F. Degenhardt III  
**Daddy**, Amanda Easterday  
**The Past Embraces the Future**, Sherrie Nesbitt  
**Untitled**, Teri Lynn Herbert  
**Sea Isle Eventide**, Stan Schuman  
**Orange Cactus Flower**, Tina Rapstine  
**Country Children**, Angela Hampton  
**Busy Chickadee**, Kristi Rodgers-Cishek  

Special Section: **Palmetto Portraits**

Cover: **Rainbow Row**  
Anne Marie Chalker - College of Health Professions
Treehouse

Kristi Rodgers-Cishek
Office of the Provost
Charcoal Woods

A student invited father to his family’s farm

There was good squirrel hunting in the woods

A fall morning seemed ideal

A fog hung in the trees and the sun was a silver disc
That gave every treeless branch a crisp outline in the sky

He and I went into the charcoal woods

A twitching tail, a head, a body would be seen instantly

The quiet was complete with no birds, no rustling, no barks
would answer our clucks and calls

No guns were fired, no squirrels harmed

A hunt became a quiet walk and conversation between a father
and son as they strolled through the charcoal woods

Charles Brown
Library
Rounds

I.
I can see it has been a long incubation.
Parental, sexual, maternal-fetal routes, and ex-husbands.

All I can think about is your pretty liver.
How clean and beautiful its vessels looked on ultrasound, but the surgeons want to clip out it out and give you a new one.
I know but cannot tell you how snipped-out alive it will look, vessels dangling. Like the fresh flowers by your bed.
Beveled-cut-stems quiet by-your-side, all day. Knowingly.
Each day I give the flowers a secret nod. We know.
Your ex-husband sits positive beside you. I see the entire history in his face. He gave you a bath today as if that could erase your pretty liver turning you yellow.

II.
The spitting image of my grandmother in black skin lay tired, complacent, and sweet as sugar.
Mother to all children.
Trying to wrap her mind around her colon (that now ends in a plastic pouch).
Before the son found off, we watched Oprah’s face and felt like we could forget cancers doing what they do, and believe that one day Oprah will gift us a new Pontiac too.
I say a small prayer as I touch your arm but cannot look long at your brown Mother-eyes.

III.
For me, it’s been a long incubation.
4 years
4 years
4 years to go.
As if one day I will wake up curing-all, being-all, finding my own pain.

Ashley Mason
College of Medicine
Pipes

Kristi Rodgers-Cishek
Office of the Provost
Dungeness Compound Workroom
Cumberland Island, GA

Bill Basco
Pediatrics
I meet Anton by the kitchen sink.
His big frame crouched, probing leaky pipes.
I hear him murmur from the sink’s dark grotto,
“This should work.”
I wonder at his accent; could it be South African?
“Yes, Afrikaner, third generation farmer.”

His calloused, strong hands
Lift his toolbox, ready to leave.
By asking, I learn how he left home,
A survivor in a ditch, hiding under
The barbed-wire fence,
Just missing the spray of bullets
Of marauders taking over Boer homesteads.
Heart pounding, he finds two lifelong neighbors
Executed, nearby, in pools
Of Afrikaner blood.

“This is a beautiful life in the South,
Even if you have to start all over again…
You shouldn’t take it for granted.”

I shake his hand, thank him,
Forgetting, somehow,
To ask for the bill.

Stan Schuman
Retired
A Light for All

Steven Kubalak
Cell Biology and Anatomy
Why do you weep, woman?

Why do you weep, woman? That’s what he asked
The day he came back from the dead.

He had been her son, and she his mother.
Now, she was Mary and he was “teacher.”

There are lessons we don’t want to learn:
Even a mother and her son must shift.

Of all that is impermanent,
Death seems most incontrovertible.

Lisa M. Vendemark
College of Nursing
Evening Chill

Charles Brown
Library
Souvenir

My friend laughed
At me the other day for all the stuff I’ve got
Piled up and stacked up and shoved
In between

One thing in particular
captured his eye, an
old plastic film tube filled
two thirds full with red-brown granules

I thought of my childhood, weekends
spent rolling in mounds of the stuff,
sledding down dunes of it, dunes
that took twenty minutes to climb up and two to slide back down

I thought of the sand cold in the morning on my soles as I shifted from one foot
to another to ease them before trekking up and sitting on the fine one grain line
that traced the top of those dunes and watching through hot chocolate smells the
purple-faded gray of the pre-dawn dissolve slowly and then quickly as the bold
golden orb of the sun peaked a line over the horizon and expanded and blossomed
into a full curve on its side and growing wider and taller over so many crescent
curves like the one supporting me

I thought of lifting up handfuls and watching
The grains flow back
Through my loose fingers and feeling the sand
Jam up and harden as I squeezed it hard thinking that
This is how sandbags must work

I thought of leaving and frantically searching for the
film tube capsule
so that I could bring it across the ocean
and set it next to my novelty paperweight of light sweet crude oil for the benefit
of my guests

I hold the container of black syrup in my hand and
proclaim that this is what it’s all about –
the war,
the weather,
the worries and
the world

But I don’t make jokes about the sand and I feel betrayed when I allow someone
to laugh about it betrayed that when it once reflected the desert sun exotic and
honest in each grain that slipped through my grasp now it sits dusty between a
paperweight and a stack of pizza boxes

Matthew Dettmer
College of Medicine
DIFFERENT WORLDS

He was 26 years old and was my first patient.

*He was the first patient assigned to me as a 23 year old medical student on my surgical clerkship.*

He never knew his father. At age 16, he dropped out of school, left home and tried to “make it on the streets.”

*At age 16, I was taking Driver’s Ed and was preparing for a high school debate tournament on the topic: “Resolved: The American criminal justice system should be significantly reformed.”*

At age 17, he had his first run-in with the criminal justice system for a shoplifting infraction at a convenience market. The charges were ultimately dropped. However, over the next several years he was in and out of jail, detention centers and the like until, at age 21, he was incarcerated in the State Penitentiary for “assault with a deadly weapon.”

*At age 17, I had my first run-in with the criminal justice system for a shoplifting infraction at the college bookstore. The charges were ultimately dropped. Over the next several years, I was in and out of different career choices until, at the age of 21, I graduated pre-med and with a degree in Human Biology.*

Earlier that year in the spring, he began having some pain in his mid-abdomen. He had “used” a similar “ploy” in the past to try to get out of doing undesirable tasks in the prison and so no one paid him much attention – until one day in late June he passed a bowel movement that was entirely comprised of blood.
Earlier that year in the spring, I began having some pain in my mid abdomen, possibly related to stress during my preparation for Step 1 of the National Board examination. The pain ultimately passed one day in late June after the examination was over.

He was sent to the University Hospital where a colonoscopy revealed a 12-cm fungating mass located near the splenic flexure of his transverse colon. The biopsy revealed mucincystic adenocarcinoma and the abdominal CT scan demonstrated extensive metastatic spread. He was admitted to the surgical service where he underwent subtotal colectomy to relieve his impending bowel obstruction.

I was sent to the wards at the University Hospital for my surgical clerkship rotation where I was assigned. From him, I learned about colostomy wounds, colostomy bags and skin-breakdown. I learned how to put in a central line and how to write for TPN orders. I learned about liver failure, ascites, chronic horrible pain, morphine drips, and palliation. I learned how important it is to really talk with your patient, to try to offer comfort, and to try to explain the limits of medical science.

I learned to care.

I also learned that life is unfair.

Two days before the rotation ended, he fell into a coma.

Two days before the rotation ended, I took the surgical shelf examination.

Two days later, we both left the service.

Jeffrey G. Wong
College of Medicine
News

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to the news
Have you heard the latest? Do you want the blues?
Our headline for this evening is how one kills another,
it matters not what time or place or that it was his brother,
For every day the faces change, as does the nightly reason
that men all do each other in, for PEOPLE are in season.
The newsmen try to tell us that it’s guns that do the killing,
they never talk about the fact that men are more than willing
to waste each other daily in this massacre of souls,
It matters not if crime or war puts people in these roles
What matters is that human beings, perpetuating strife,
have lost respect for God and truth, have lost respect for life.
But no one says it, no indeed, it’s easier to believe
that man is not responsible for what is up his sleeve
Good night, ladies and gentlemen, we wish you well in slumber
and while you sleep the news will keep the count of Evil’s number.

Barbara Austin Ball
Grants and Contracts Accounting
Boneyard Beach at Dawn
Jekyll Island, GA

Bill Basco
Pediatrics
Mr. O’Connor had corralled his eldest son onto the porch. In silence that was meant to be meaningful, Ray and his father sat in green canvas chairs on the screened-in porch, listening to the rain. His father had gotten drunk on his own liquor, and he was telling stories. Ray had heard these stories a thousand times, and knew the one about the grandfather was coming soon.

“We used to feed the horses twelve ears of corn each and every night. We’d count them out two-four-six-eight-ten-twelve, and then go to the next stall. They’d bite at each other over the dividers and kick and buck when they heard us coming. You’d think they were intelligent the way they’d carry on.

“Now, talking about horses, we had this old horse up on the farm named Marilyn. Big horse,” he said, and waved his arms. He pronounced it ‘hohse.’ ‘Ran faster than any horse we had on the farm. I tell you, one day we were coming back from the fields from the plowing at the end of the day, and, you know, we always raced the horses back. And I was the oldest, so I rode Marilyn all the time. Any how, this day we were going along boomdy-boom, boomdy-boom, and Marilyn was ahead, leaving the others far behind. We were going. We didn’t have saddles, because we were poor, so we were just running them with the plow harness. So,” he paused and drank liquor from a cup, spilling it down his chin. He muttered an obscenity and said, “I heard Charlie coming up on me and he was coming up on me fast. So, I didn’t want to have him win because I was the winner all the time.” He paused again to cough, and he spit on the cement floor.

“Anyway, I had this whip stuck up under the harness, the whip I used on the mule team, you know. So, I pulled this thing out and...I know Charlie thought I was gonna use that thing on Marilyn... but I reached back and brought it across Charlie’s chest so hard that it knocked him clean off.” He stopped to cough up a laugh, tears forming in his eyes from the exertion. Ray moved in his chair uncomfortably, his eyes dark and avoiding. “Heh, actually,” he sputtered, “actually, it was the fall that broke Charlie’s arm, not the whip.” Mr. O’Connor’s lips peeled from his teeth and he laughed, watching for his son to laugh, which he must do, and when he did, his father laughed harder so that he could see his gums. When Ray could see gums, he knew his father thought something was really funny. He hated to see him laugh like this. He had no right to laugh like this. The pale skin stretching over his big laughing jaws, the hard, round muscles at the hinge, the hoarseness of his voice afterwards, only reminded Ray that this was not how his father really was, that the difference between the real dad and this dad was only a few swallows of liquor.
“Ho boy,” his father said, and they looked off in different directions. He was so quiet for so long that Ray thought his father had fallen asleep. He was about to get up quietly, thankful for the chance to leave, when his father held out his hand with staying power.

“My father, you know, went one time to town,” he said in a low, rasping, and mysterious voice. Ray heard the braying of the frogs around the wet porch and wished for his father’s silence. “Back then, they had horses and trains. That was all. Anyway, he had gone to town to buy some food with his pay check one night after work. Someone must have seen him with the money, because he just disappeared.” He stopped and looked at Ray mysteriously with tight lips and large reddish eyes. It was at this point that Ray was supposed to shake his head in wonder, which he did. “His horse came home. No one had seen Daddy. We searched the woods and dragged the lake for a couple days, and on the second day, we found his body. It was in the water. We had been using these large hooks, and we had all got down in the water, me and my brothers....” He shook his head and looked off into the rain. Outside was dark and Ray couldn’t see the road. A pine cone fell from a tree and hit the ground with a woody sound. “The ol boy with the hook he says, ‘I got something,’ and we all got up on the boat to help. We had to pull real hard to get him out. Must’ve been hung on something. It had my daddy right in the back and down between the legs and all. He was all laid back like this—” and he leaned over the side of his chair with his arms spread backwards and his fat, white tongue hanging out of the corner of his mouth. He spread his legs and pointed to where the hook had come out of his father’s body. “See?” he said to Ray who had turned away. Ray felt the silvery taste of disgust slick over his tongue. He wondered if his father would demonstrate again, but he had already readjusted in his chair and finished his beer by the time Ray could look back at him. “Had water pouring off him, and something that was eating on his stomach fell off into the water,” his father continued. “His face was real puffy and filled with water, looked so taut that if you pinched one of his cheeks, water would come spraying out. Just a sight.

“The hard part was getting him off that hook. That was the hardest part.” Ray winced again and looked off into the flat darkness. “They had us boys pull at him for a long time before someone finally noticed that the hook was probably wedged in one of his pelvis bones.” Ray said nothing, was thankful for the darkness. “My mother remarried, though, and she died a year later. I was twelve then. I looked down at his hands and picked at one of his nails with a frown. Ray watched him steadily. He kept himself from feeling pity, for this man was piggish. “They tried to keep us all together, my brothers and sisters. But getting him off that hook. That was the hardest part.”

Anonymous
Psychosomatic

Subleties twist serpentine excoriations across a sleepless mind;
The slow seeping doubts that tempt a scratch to instigate the itch
Which,
Provokes our repetitious injuries to lichen to
Pachydermal proportions and
Stand in a room where no one dares mention the encroaching
thickness….
Or maybe I am too thin-skinned.

Casey Sharpe
College of Health Professions
Bottles on the Wall

Charles F. Degenhardt III
College of Medicine
It’s like singing DIXIE:

“\textit{wisht I was in the land ob cottin,}
\textit{ol’ times thar are not forgott’n}….”

We just can’t let go of our past!

\textit{no way}

The good ol’ days of childhood,
youth, joy, travel and travail,
\textit{moonlight and madness}!

We’ve gotta remember,

\textit{why? because}…

That’s who we were!

\textit{don’t you know}…

And that’s who we are!

\textit{everyone says}…

Don’t forget where we’ve been,

\textit{after all}….

Without memory,

\textit{who can we impress}?….

What will we become tomorrow?

\textit{Lord knows!}

Unlike me, my dozing Maltese
lies content in my lap,
totally present, no more, no less,
ready to nap, bark, taste, sniff,
listen, romp, sniff and nap again.
knowing each moment is precious….

While we humans spend
days, months, years
Making myths out of our lives.

Stan Schuman
Retired
Bridge Cables

Charles F. Degenhardt III
College of Medicine
DADDY

I CANNOT FIND ENOUGH OF YOU
IN COUNTRY MUSIC
THE NIGHT SKY
OR IN MY SHADOWS
TOO MUCH TO DRINK
I FIND THE BAREST HINT OF YOU-
YOUR SMILE
IN ME
AND ALSO IN MY DREAMS
WHERE YOU ARE CLOSE ENOUGH
TO TOUCH
DID YOUR SOUL CATCH
THE TRAIN OF THOUGHTS
THAT BROKE YOUR BODY?
WHERE IS YOUR SOUL
WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR PROUD
SWAGGER
DID IT SLIP TO MY HIPS
WHERE DID YOUR WICKED HUMOR
GO
WHERE DID YOUR ROUGH
SHEET ROCK HANGING, TRUCK DRIV-
ING,
WIFE BEATING HANDS GO?
WHO PUSHES YOUR HANDS AWAY
NOW
ARE YOU IN HEAVEN,
MENDING THE GATES-MAKING RUNS
OR IN HELL
STOKING A FIRE
STREET SMART
BOOK STUPID
SOB
DID YOU GO UP ON THOSE TRACKS
INTENDING TO DIE
OR TO PLAY CHECKERS W/DEATH
I FEEL RELIEF
ANGER
EMPTINESS
I WAIT FOR YOU

BUT DON’T KNOW WHAT TO DO
THIS IS NOT THE WAY I
THOUGHT OR PLANNED YOU TO DIE
I WANTED SOMETHING SLOW
AND DRAWN OUT
LONG LASTING AND PAINFUL
I WANTED YOU HELPLESS
DEPENDENT ON ME
SO I COULD LOOK YOU IN THE FACE
AND TELL YOU
THAT I DIDN’T WANT YOU-NEED YOU
LIKE I THOUGHT I DID
I STILL LOOK FOR YOU
OVER MY SHOULDER
UNDER MY BED
IN MY CLOSET
TO PULL ME BY THE ANKLES
IN THE LAKE
UNTIL THE SURFACE
IS OUT OF REACH
I STILL EXPECT YOU
TO PUSH ME
OFF
BULL RUN BRIDGE
AND TO INVOLVE ME OCCASIONALLY
IN YOUR ENDLESS BATTLE
W/WHATEVER PIECE OF SHIT
TRUCK
YOU BOUGHT AT AN AUCTION FOR
TWO HUNDRED DOLLARS
NOW THERE IS NEVER A TIME
THAT I DON’T
HEAR A TRAIN
DRINK A BEER
LISTEN TO SOME HANK
THAT I THINK OF YOU
THANKS

Amanda Easterday
The Past Embraces the Future

Sherrie Nesbitt
Institute of Psychiatry
Untitled

Teri Lynn Herbert
Library
SEA ISLE EVENTIDE

Sun’s fierce blaze has had his day
Baking and scorching
Clamshells, seaweed and sand.

Sun, in a hurry, begins his Westerly dive
To new shores, lakes and bays,
Taking no interest in a solitary egret
Feeding in still shallows,
Or three young dolphins
Frolicking one last time,
Before minding parents’ call
For evening rest.

Day’s End is passing,
Reflected in dusky waters
Rippling gently, whispering to shore.

From the East, Darkness gathers,
While silver-scimitar moon
Leaves tranquil blue sky behind,
To slice the deepening Night.

Then, of a sudden,
One last flourish of Color
Explodes across the horizon,
Dazzling the retina with
Electric pinks, saffron’s glow,
Soft lavender, ultramarine,
Against an expanse of velvety sky,
The Artist-Creator splashing the Heavens
With laser light of purest Joy.

Stan Schuman
Retired
Orange Cactus Flower

Tina Rapstine
Department of Radiology
Country Children

...The farm’s creek wound around to greet the cows and became lost to a time where children ran wild in the fields of summer. In those days, the sun would shine warm on bare feet and little mini explorers ran unbidden to claim whichever titles they chose. Sometimes they were rock collectors of the most precious sort, occasionally fantastic archeologists, collectors of berry stained necklaces and arrowheads of a long extinct tribe of Indians. They were butterfly chasers and mountain climbers, berry pickers and cattle callers.

They were excavators of deserted farm homes, explorers of country cemeteries, finders of sassafras root and catchers of fireflies. These wild children ran hand in hand over mountain paths, glens and valleys, breathing their freedom through the soles of their feet. They slipped through barbed wire fences and walked on edges of rock cliffs. They made friends with echoes, talked to trees, chased squirrels, and feasted on cherries.

They mothered salamanders whose homes moved from under slippery little rocks to slippery little hands to little glass jars with water and grass. Then brows would furrow and concern brew debate, “Can it breathe in there?” “What if it’s lonely?” “You didn’t put enough dirt in there.” “What if you were a salamander?” “Let’s take her back to her home.”

Then back to a cool dark place in the wet black of the soil, under the grey of the rock, amidst the cool of the creek, in the leaves of the valley, under the blanket of trees, with God in the sky, in the wind, walking amidst our little feet, and painting our playground.

Angela Hampton
College of Health Professions
Busy Chickadee

Kristi Rodgers-Cishek
Office of the Provost
THE PALMETTO PORTRAITS PROJECT

The Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC) has 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 hopes to remind students, faculty, staff and visitors of those they serve at MUSC and throughout South Carolina.

The entire 2006 Palmetto Portraits collection consists of over 60 photographs, seven of which were selected by our editorial board for publication in this special volume of *Humanitas*.

2006 Palmetto Portraits Photographers

Jack Alterman, Charleston
Jon Holloway, Greenwood
Phil Moody, Rock Hill
Nancy Santos, Charleston
Mark Sloan, Charleston
Michelle Van Parys, Charleston
Subject: Foster Folsom
Location: Folly Beach, SC

Photographer: Jack Alterman
Title: The Last Song
Location: Chappells, SC

Photographer: Jon Holloway
Title: My Sins are gone …
Location: Chappells, SC

Photographer: Jon Holloway
Title: Porch
Location: Fort Mill, SC

Photographer: Phil Moody
Subject: Michael Moses
Brakeman
Location: Charleston, SC

Photographer: Nancy Santos
Subject: Rita Pisasale
Owner - Berenice’s Salon
Location: Charleston, SC

Photographer: Mark Sloan
Subject: Jean Collier
Location: Charleston, SC

Photographer: Michelle Van Parys
HUMANITAS

Do you want to be a part of the next HUMANITAS?
Submissions may be sent to:
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