

A close-up photograph of a teal-colored typewriter. The words "ONCE UPON A TIME" are printed in a black, serif font on a piece of paper that is being typed on. The typewriter's carriage and the curved metal frame of the keyboard are visible. The lighting is warm, highlighting the texture of the paper and the metallic parts of the machine.

ONCE UPON A TIME

**2019**

**John J. Frey III, MD**

**Writing Award Submissions**

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## Expressions of Love

By Caitlin Regner

Dusk is approaching,  
Your day is nearing its end.  
We stand still, quiet.  
Our evening ritual begins.  
We take a long moment,  
Surveying one another with delight,  
Treasuring today.

Suddenly, your famine overtakes you.  
You begin your ravenous search for nourishment.  
When you find it, you affix yourself with a determination that implies permanence.  
You claim your stake and glance my way to make it understood.  
As you devour your prize you become voracious,  
Your small hands grip me with strength that would not seem possible.  
We are enmeshed in battle,  
Your hands grasping my face, neck, hair with wild ferocity,  
Your feet maneuvering swiftly at the edge of our enclosure.  
I am amazed you are still feasting.

I begin to engage my forces.  
First, a small brush along your side.  
Next, a caress of your underarm.  
And you are smiling, laughing,  
All the while retaining control of your territory.

We carry on this way.  
Eventually, I abandon my assail.  
Grateful, you initiate one final effort,  
Consuming with renewed vigor.  
But you are weary and worn.  
The campaign has taken its toll.

Gradually, all fighting ceases.  
Your eyes are blanketed, no longer flashing around our encampment.  
Your breathing is deep, overtaking your entirety.  
Your small hand rests heavy atop my bosom like a small white flag of surrender.

I examine you one last time.  
I am awed by the expansiveness of your existence.  
How can a person so small fill my heart beyond measure?

I softly lay you in your bunk.  
As I retreat, your eyes flicker open.  
A final smile, eyes close,  
and we part.

## **Old soul**

By Ildi Martonffy

I refuse to indulge another piece

About how the good white doc realized

His hard-living patient was not that different from him after all

For the working man with hands to prove it

Or the woman with more loss than love

Should tell their own story

And if we listen

We might start to understand

## Ahimsa (non-injury to living beings)

By Ildi Martonffy

She offered me some cucumber slices or, really, as much as I wanted - which I suppose, in retrospect, is a strange introductory volley.

She felt my pulses. Three fingers each wrist. "You have a lot of mental energy" she said.

I felt a ray of pride begin to spread from my core but the way she pressed her lips together just slightly, as though securing a freshly plucked blade of grass before pressing it between her thumbs to make it whistle, made me second guess my hubris.

On the table came the suction. She warned there might be bruises later which conjured The Machine, The Pit of Despair. Wesley, the unmasked Dread Pirate Roberts, came out okay as - surely - would I.

No "Pressure, tingling." She was more honest than we western docs. "This might hurt but let me know if the pain lasts."

It's true, I thought, most pain lessens with time just as all bleeding stops.

In the end, our oath was the same.

## One Block

By Melissa Stiles

One block, One walk  
So routine, he does not glance back  
Nose to the ground  
Tree by tree we go

Summer is full, light chatter fills the air  
Weekly rituals surround  
Lawn mowers and Leaf blowers blare  
Trash bins rumble out one by one

In the distance,  
A neighbor rarely seen  
Walks slowly, methodically to the curb  
Does not look up,  
Focused on the task  
Mundane for most  
His thin connection, his thread

Returns through the car-less garage  
Door grumbles closed, Curtains are shut  
Now alone-her heart, they say-his routine uncertain  
Years on the block turn into days

Tail wags, looks back  
Eyes ask, plead  
One more block?

## Crackfall

By Jon Temte

Worms that  
 escaped last  
 week's heavy  
 rains and dried  
 on the path,  
 reconstituted,  
 froze, and, now  
 are thawing

Dog and I  
 take note - a  
 bonus from our  
 recurrent  
 traverses among  
 the trees

Last night under spring  
 snows cranes  
 and geese  
 huddled in  
 fallowed fields  
 peepers quiescent  
 in transient ponds

But today  
 this morning  
 under vivid  
 unrelenting  
 sun the crusts  
 loose, the bones  
 snap, the  
 binds relent

Dog and I  
 walk amidst  
 a windless  
 crackfall  
 not dodging  
 alive in  
 the presence  
 of a bright  
 spring  
 morning

Crackfall (*noun*). Phenomenon of separation and falling of ice or snow from branches, usually due to the effect of direct sunlight; often accompanied by cracks or snaps.



## Requiem for Sperry Chalet

By Jon Temte

the sun breaks this morning with memories of hiking  
 Glacier National Park  
 with my dad after my mom  
 died  
 Egg yolk yellow upon the cut September field

another morning – looking down from the high  
 trail to our tents below — my brothers and  
 sister-in-law  
 rising later in the cirque  
 Blue and orange against the green rocky  
 meadow

that morning we—my dad and I—stopped by Sperry  
 Chalet and dreamed  
 of staying there some future night  
 as time and better finances might allow Grey-  
 brown weathered timbers set on a grey rock  
 basement of time

in that thin morning air we climbed to  
 the edge  
 of the glacier; my 13-year old foolishness snapping my  
 father's beloved  
 hiking pole while leaping  
 among the rock and dirty white ice  
 still before noon, his anger  
 constrained, yet palpable and this  
 comes back to me clearly  
 through 45 years  
 of reflection's smoky haze  
 the egg yolk yellow sun rises this morning  
 over  
 the cut September field forest fires  
 across Montana  
 consuming the chalet and funneling Black  
 charred particulates  
 into thin air  
 the belch of a furnace 1400 miles  
 distant  
 to color my memories

*[note: Sperry Chalet was built in 1914 by the Great Northern Railway and was one of two remaining backcountry chalets in Glacier National Park. On August 31, 2017 it burned during the Sprague Fire.]*

## 18

By Susan Golz

It felt like no choice, so why is it pro-choice?

18 years, 18 years and on your 18th birthday You found out it wasn't his?

Sterile basement, covered faces, Praying loudly, still not stopping Stronger, stronger, louder, louder, Ripping, tearing, watching, crying.

Wake me from this unpeaceful slumber take me sister, take me running, Give me back, my little something,

Help me not hear crying echoes, stop the noises in my head,

All my life it will still haunt me

Tiny voices in my head.

## He Said ...

By Susan Golz

Don't keep it he said,

it will be too hard he said.

The world can't take it he said

They aren't ready he said.

They will be cruel and they won't fit in he said.

They will hurt you he said.

Then he stopped talking...

Until...

I'm here he said

I'm proud he said

I love him he said

I'm Happy he said

I'm Sorry he said

## Privilege

By Susan Golz

I am here by myself, in all of my whiteness, Why are you not following me?

I wear Nike and hoodies, why are you not scared of me?

My hands in my pockets as I approach you, why do you not shoot at me?

I raise my voice when I speak but you aren't threatened by me

Now I come back with my brown family and now you are following me.

We have Nike and hoodies and now you are real scared of us.

No hands in our pockets, too risky with them you might shoot

You follow us closely and think we don't know.

We notice, it happens in the places we go.

These little brown children that are now all grown, I worry at night for the pain that they've known The judgement that's passed, the hate they endured, before speaking a word.

I'm frightened for them and you are frightened by him

They are judged at the moment you look at their skin and their clothes and the way that they speak, the music they dance to, the laughter they keep.

That is my privilege and yours,

and it doesn't belong to them.

## Just the 3 of Us

By Susan Golz

Alone But Together

Happy but Broke

Scared but Safe

Disappointed but Joyful

Worried but playful

Street not Book

Tears and Laughter

Free and Reduced

Black and White

Green and Brown

Brother and Sister

Mom and Kids

Heart and Soul

## Northeast

By Susan Golz

Practice Family

Watch one

Do One

Teach one

Paper

Birth Death

Hands held

Tears

Laughter

Reach and Read

Advice

Respect?

Goodbye State

Change

Credentials

Caring matters

Compassion matters

Experience matters

Goodbyes

Welcomes

Residents

Teachers

Friends

Work

Family

## Daddy

By Susan Golz

I want to call you  
You were the one I called  
Who cared and worried  
Who watched and cheered  
Protected and provided  
Laughed and embarrassed  
Followed and guided  
Your hugs were like no other  
I miss them , I miss you  
I loved them , I love you  
Did I thank you enough?  
Did you know how much you were loved?  
Could I have saved you?  
Should I have saved You?  
Did I let you down?  
I can't believe you aren't here.  
The world doesn't feel right without you visible and touchable.  
My Daddy

## GAM

By Susan Golz

the favorite words

that touch my soul

Her little face

Those wildly curls

The energy that is your space

Your tender hugs

that funny smile

You own the room

You have our hearts

Oh little one,

At two years old what have you done?



## My Sweet girl

By Susan Golz

the minute I heard,  
The second I knew  
All of my dreams of you  
Were coming true  
I knew that I loved you  
I longed for your face  
To hold you and tell you  
I just couldn't wait

I looked at your face we met eye to eye  
A Daddy, an Auntie a Mama a Gramma  
Were made  
On the precious, warm day that my sweet girl arrived

## Green eyed Boy

By Susan Golz

You made me grow  
Together we faced  
More than you should know  
I let you down,  
I picked you up  
We made it through

Green eyed Man  
My gentle soul  
I know your heart  
I watched you grow  
I felt your pain  
I dried your tears  
I know your joy  
I see her face  
it is like yours  
Your green eyed girl

## The One With the Curl

By Susan Golz

The Hope is...

That your daughter is strong, kind  
loyal and smart.

Her worries few and her laughter loud.

That she takes time to feel the warmth of the sand and the cool of the waves.

The rough of the mountain and the power of the rocks.

Believe when she lays her head down at night, sleep comes easy and peaceful to her.

Make sure she knows she is loved and gives love back.

That she feels the comfort of that love and pride around her no matter where she is.

AND when you say thank you for being an extension of me,

that she truly listens and hears How magical and amazing and adored she is.

and That little girl with the curl always knows she is very, very good

## Repeat

By Susan Golz

Porch step, porch step  
Just here waiting.  
Can't you see you are all he wants?  
Can't you feel the pain inside him?  
Doesn't his heart remain with yours  
Feel his beating, know his pain  
Watch the green eyes flood with water.  
Shoulders drooping, slumping walk  
I can't help him, except to love him  
He is precious, and so worthy  
Not deserving of this hurt  
All he wanted was his Daddy  
To protect him and to teach him  
And to be there when he said

Porch step porch step  
getting dark now , come inside  
I can't take this pain away.  
I will hold you and always love you,  
And be here to dry your tears.

Repeat

## When We Dance

By Brenna Gibbons

On admission, someone placed a blanket over you  
tented by a wayward elbow  
ankle exposed, *en pointe*  
Altogether some uncanny posture, bent upward at the waist  
the shape a nail takes on errant swing

How could I take your history?  
Cloaked in catatonia  
your forever eyes unblinking, dark and deep  
I glanced away uncomfortably,  
confiding in the cheese sticks piling on your tray

On Wednesday a few words fell out  
then paused, repeated  
some tempest erupting in your mindseye  
Frozen mouth agape,  
breath curling on the edge of confession;  
a visitor was muzzling you

He kept you up last night  
watching from the corner, you said,  
told you to quit your job, and  
that the medicine would poison your mother

If you'd just take your pills!  
Your nurse pleaded a hundred ways,  
in the voice we use with dogs and children  
We crushed them in your applesauce

On Thursday you returned to us, willowy limbs freed  
to put on fuchsia lipstick  
Your plaits were shining and middle-parted  
In the arc of your eyebrows  
grace and light  
where yesterday was only shade

You raved about your daughter  
Uncensored by the corner-man  
A brilliant dancer, your spitting image,  
"When we dance we knock 'em dead."

Did you clear the chairs  
for rehearsals in the kitchen?  
Like my dad and me,  
our sacred countertop concerts?

On Friday you gave a grand, lithe gesture, like wings unfolding  
paired with a seated *relevé*  
a movement memory of when your daughter lived with you,  
before you grew ill  
I understood then, the torment when your visitor intrudes,  
his wicked Midas touch —

How offensive the pathos,  
your affliction paralyzes what makes you most alive.

## FMS Haiku

By Bill Schwab

For the several years when I have been attending on the Family Medicine Service at St. Mary's I have invited the residents and students on the team to join me in writing haiku about their experience. I tell them that when you think in poetry you think differently, and that this can open channels of mind and heart that provide a valuable perspective on the people for whom we are providing care and their medical conditions. I explain the simple rules of classic haiku – 17 syllables arranged in three lines of 5-7-5, though note that there are those who vary that format which they can do if they wish.

A haiku on haiku:

Words on a taut string  
Parsimonious language  
Less talk, more meaning

There are no expectations. Some residents and students have written some very thoughtful pieces and others have not found a voice in this exercise. I always begin by offering haiku of my own, these are some selections:

We take a listen  
We take your history too  
What will we give you?

\*\*\*\*\*

Diabet-obit:  
"Lost courageous battle  
against chocolate"

\*\*\*\*\*

Shaking while baking  
Ataxic in the kitchen  
Staggering impact

\*\*\*\*\*

A man of few words  
Painful communication  
Talk don't heal the hurt

\*\*\*\*\*

Blood pressure still high  
Meds upon meds upon meds  
Ain't got no power

\*\*\*\*\*

Diuretic wars  
Whose orders will reign supreme?  
Epic battle

\*\*\*\*\*

Pleasantly confused  
He looks much better today  
Glasses make the man

\*\*\*\*\*

Sarcopenia  
Muscle mass stolen by time  
Memory gone too

\*\*\*\*\*

Transfer to Hospice  
Trip to heaven's waiting room  
Last ride of your life

\*\*\*\*\*



## Buried Treasure

By Markus Eckstein

“On guard!”

I raise my hands over my head. The cold breeze finds its way under my jacket and gives me goosebumps.

“Walk the plank!”

I feel the hard plastic point of the sword I got for my son’s sixth birthday press into my spine.

“Go on! Arr!”

“Please, Mr. Pirate, I don’t have any gold,” I say.

“Oh, you don’t?” The pirate sounds confused and momentarily deflated. He takes a minute to consider, and then says, “But you probably know where it’s buried, don’t you?”

“I have a map,” I say.

He is unable to suppress an excited giggle, then he growls: “Well, you better give it to me, or I’ll feed you to the fishies!”

I turn around and see my son. A tuft of hair sticks out from a bandana wrapped around his head. An eye patch covers his left eye. The plastic cutlass I bought for him at Target for \$6.99 is shining in the sunlight. He is adorably menacing.

“Go on, give it to me. Arr!” The kid scowls at me, and I can’t help but smile.

My son, Stevie. God, I love him. He’s a shrimpy little thing and not the best in school (hell, it’s just the first grade, who cares?), but man, does he know how to have *fun*. He learns about King Arthur in class, and the rest of the day we’re knights saving the princess (his mom). He sees a horse trotting across a pasture on the drive to church, and boom, he’s a cowboy for the weekend. I’m glad that he has such a great imagination, that he’s so good at make believe. Sometimes pretending protects us from what’s real. And he’s still just a kid.

“Okay, okay,” I say. I reach slowly into my jacket pocket with mock caution and withdraw a thick piece of yellow parchment. I hand it to Stevie, who unfolds it, and – *jackpot, baby, exactly the response I was hoping for!* – his eyes light up. He scans the paper, and with a finger trembling with excitement he traces the trail of dotted ink to the X near a crappy sketch of a tree. (I drew the map last night, then crumpled the paper and soaked it in a pot of coffee to make it look old. I burned the edges with a match, too, just for a little extra effect.) Stevie looks up from the map and smiles at me.

“Come on, Dad,” He points at the X. “There’s treasure!”

I guess he forgot that I was supposed to be his captive.

“Aye, aye, Stevie!” I say.

“That’s Captain Stevie to you!”

He runs off towards the mailbox, as instructed by the map. I jog along behind him. I hope he stays this young forever. Truth is, I need Stevie. He’s about all I got right now. My nine-to-five at the moment is at a Smith’s, behind the deli counter. For the last eight years I worked in advertising, designing posters and jingles and whatnot for various companies. Then it all hit the fan – you know how it goes – and I got laid off. Now it’s salami slicing by day, and treasure hunting (or whatever else Stevie’s pretending) by evening.

“I think we’re getting closer,” Stevie says. He speaks in a ceremonious whisper. “Dead men tell no tales, huh, Dad?”

“That’s right, Captain,” I say. “Yo-ho-ho.”

“And a bottle of rum!”

We go around the mailbox and walk by the fence between our yard and the neighbor’s. Stevie’s eyes dart rhythmically from the map to the fence as we stroll along. He’s following the map to a T – only deviating once to

step on a particularly crunchy-looking autumn leaf. There's another chilling breeze, and I put my hands inside my pockets. I feel the cell phone in my jeans, which reminds me that Amanda hasn't called yet. She should be done soon.

My wife, Amanda, she was always the smart one. Even back in college, when I was studying (if you could call it that) how to make greeting cards more aesthetically pleasing, she was buried in books about calculus and chemical reactions.

Six weeks ago, we found out that her cancer was back. About a year after Stevie was born, she was diagnosed with breast cancer. Stage IV. The bad one. I remember when we heard the news, I bawled like a baby, but Amanda took it like a damn champion. I still feel the heat of shame rise in my cheeks when I think about it: my wife finds out there's only like a 25% chance she'll still be alive in five years, and *she* is comforting *me*? That's messed up, man.

She started on chemotherapy, and good lord, she looked like absolute hell. She had to quit work (she used to be a pharmacist at Smith's Food and Drug, which is how I got hooked up with the job at the deli). She lost all this weight, and her bones stuck out like a skeleton wrapped in a thin layer of yellowing skin. Her eyes were dark and dim, a combination of lack of sleep and fading hope. Part of me wondered if the chemo was just killing her faster.

"Don't let the boy see me like this," she told me, she *commanded* me. "I don't want the boy to see me like this." Stevie was about two or so when she was at her worst. Amanda never called him by his name until her cancer was cured. I think it made it easier for her somehow, but it was a hell of a lot harder on me. When she got better, she started calling him Stevie again.

Then a month ago, we had one of her routine follow-up appointments, and some guy comes in with a tie and a white coat and a fake frown, pretending to give a shit, and he says, "I'm very sorry to tell you this but the cancer is back and we'll do everything we can and blah blah blah..." Stevie has been "the boy" again for the last month.

"Over here!" Stevie screams, and he plops down on the grass at a spot that roughly correlates to the X on the map. There is a small mound of dirt in the lawn.

"I think this is it!" Stevie exclaims. He's right. I buried the treasure before I took Amanda to the doctor this morning – her first round of chemo for the second time. I begged her to let me be with her, but she said, "No, the boy needs you. Be there for the boy." Tears sparkled in her defeated eyes as she said it, and there were some in mine too as I dug a small hole in the hard October earth to hide the treasure. As I pushed the cold dirt over the little cardboard box – my hands freezing, dirt under my fingernails – it felt like burying a coffin. "Be strong for the boy," she had said, and then she kissed my cheek and walked into the hospital. We still haven't told Stevie about the cancer. What would we say?

Stevie starts digging at the ground with his hands. His blue jeans look more like camouflage with all the grass stains and caked-on dirt. He is laughing, almost hysterically, as he claws at the earth.

"I feel something!" He shrieks, and seconds later the cardboard box is in his hands.

"Whatchya got there, Steve-O?" I ask, trying to sound curious.

Stevie pulls the patch from his eye to get a better look. He brushes the dirt off the box and tries to read what's written on the side.

"Mo-Modell...R...R..." (He's just in first grade, remember?) He hands me the treasure, a gesture of complete trust. "Hey, Dad, what's this say?"

"It says, *model rocket*." I underline the letters with my finger as I read, but I don't think Stevie is watching too closely.

"A rocket?" Stevie says. Then he gets it. "A rocket!" Stevie screams. "Cool! Can we try it out, Dad?"

"You bet, big guy!" We open the box and start assembling the plastic pieces, right there in the grass. It takes us about five minutes, and we're left with a sleek little red rocket, ready for take-off.

I walk with Stevie to the street. Our neighborhood is usually pretty dead at this time of day, so I think it'll be okay. We set the rocket on the stand in the middle of the road. I attach the wires to the engine and hand the launch button to Stevie.

"Alright, not until I say it's okay, got it, Stevie?"

"That's Commander Stevie to you," he says. He can go from swashbuckling pirate to space-exploring astronaut in the blink of an eye. Or in the beat of a heart, and I think about the chemo that's pumping through Amanda's right now. She had been gaining her weight back, she was healthy, she was *happy*...and now this all over again. My heart breaks thinking about her. But my God, she's so strong.

"Ok, Commander, count us down," I say, and the crack in my voice is disguised by a whisper of wind.

"Ten...nine...eight..."

I see the joy in Stevie's face, the excitement. I hope that never goes away. What's going to happen if Amanda dies? The boy needs his mom. I can't do it without her.

"Seven...six...five..." Stevie's voice gets louder the closer he gets to zero.

I work at a deli – a *deli* – and chemo costs a hell of a lot more than \$8.75 an hour. I tell Amanda I love her every morning, and, come evening, every day I feel like a fraud. Remember when she found out she was dying? *She* comforted *me*.

"Four...three...two..."

Somedays I feel like giving up. I don't want to see Amanda suffer. I don't want her to be sunken and hurting and for all her hair to fall out. I don't want her to *die*. And most of all, I don't want Stevie to find out. How could he possibly make believe that pain away?

"One...blast off!" Stevie slams his thumb down on the launch button. There's a brief tearing sound, like fire ripping through air, and then a whistle as the sleek red cylinder shoots into the sky. Stevie cheers, his arms over his head, jumping up and down. He's beaming, his eyes are fixed on the rising rocket.

I see the rocket only as a pinprick reflection of red in my son's eyes, but I don't look up at the sky. I can't take my eyes off Stevie. I know in my heart that Amanda won't make it through Round Two, and I know I'll have to tell Stevie before it's too late. But Amanda's right: I have to be there for the boy. God knows he's here for me.

**END**

## Shoulders

By Markus Eckstein

*Lub-dub. Lub-dub.*

Do you hear it? The sound your heart makes when you're alive? The first pair of valves close, then the second. The myocardium contracts somewhere in between, and blood is sent to circulate through your vessels, as perpetual as a run-on sentence. But even run-on sentences reach end punctuation eventually.

*Lub-dub. Lub-dub.*

So you didn't kill yourself yesterday. Don't beat yourself up. Maybe you just wanted the sentence to end with a bang. The noose is a period. The sidewalk is an exclamation point.

*Lub-dub, lub-dub, lub-dub.*

It's a shared human desire to long for attention. Hence the sidewalk. Do your feet feel secure? That ledge isn't very wide. Are your legs shaking? Go on, look down. Is this how God sees us? Tiny people, tiny cars zipping across a concrete petri dish? Every day they go to work to make money to pay for gas to take them back to work. Eight hours on the job, eight hours of sleep, an hour commute (two if there's traffic or the liquor cabinet needs refilling), four hours of Netflix...that doesn't leave a lot of time for the kids.

*Lub-dub, lub-dub, lub-dub.*

Do you feel it? Does the rate increase as the breeze flutters your collar, twenty stories above the street? This is how it feels to be alive. Take a step, and you won't need to come up with an excuse to get out of bed tomorrow.

*Lub-dub lub-dub, lub-dub lub-dub.*

It's really humming now, huh? Can you hear it? The sound your heart makes when you're afraid? Funny, isn't it, that it's the same sound it makes when you're in love. Maybe that means something.

*Lubdub lubdub lubdub lubdub.*

You lift one foot off the ground, balancing like a crane. Yoga in the sky. Congratulations, you've achieved the milestone of a three-year-old. Now walk.

*Lubdublubdub lubdublubdub.*

Or maybe not. You don't need a reason to live, you just need a reason not to die. Yesterday it was the mold on the wall. You threw the belt over the ceiling fan, and then in the corner you spotted a work of art. Speckles of green forming the face of Jesus. Or maybe it was your mom. Either way, you weren't about to hang yourself with them watching.

*Lubdublubdub lubdublubdub.*

So what will it be today? Hurry up and find something, that other foot is about to join its lover in the air. What's that? A bird! A pigeon swoops over the city below, singing *coo-roo* and wobbling in the wind.

*Lub-dub lub-dub, lub-dub lub-dub.*

Beautiful? I've never liked pigeons. Too dirty. But beauty can be found even in dirty places at times. You don't need to be able to articulate a reason in order to be inspired.

*Lub-dub, lub-dub, lub-dub.*

It's slowing down. That bird really did it, huh? You're not going to kill yourself today. Hey, that's fine by me. I'm just here to hang out on your shoulder, whisper in your ear, help you see another perspective.

*Lub-dub. Lub-dub.*

What's the guy on the other side telling you? All bullshit, I bet. You think one of us is an angel, the other a devil, but I'm not sure who's who. Maybe we're both a little of both.

**END**

## The Perfect Storm

By Ellen Evans

Jane Doe, a 65 year old woman, comes in for an acute same day short office visit with an upper respiratory infection. I have 20 minutes to help her and document the encounter.

In addition to addressing her reason for visit, imagine if all the things we are supposed to do when we see a patient came up in the same appointment. It would be “the Perfect Storm”.

Put a mask on and document in the chart that personal protective equipment is worn.  
She speaks Mandarin. Get an interpreter on Language Line.

Introduce myself. Ask how she prefers to be addressed. Enter this in demographics.  
The patient brings her granddaughter in with her. Get consent for her to be present and document this in the chart.

She needs to change into a gown, so I can listen to her lungs. Talk with the patient first. Leave the room while she changes. Then return.

She has mobility issues. Have the medical assistant come back in to help you assist her onto the table.  
Review nurse’s note and relevant past medical, surgical and family history.

Secure the computer screen when getting supplies that were not in room. Open again when returning.  
Tell the patient “I am logging into your chart” and “I am logging out of your chart” as you do this.

She has a sore throat, feels feverish and has palpable anterior cervical lymph nodes. Calculate Centor score and discuss the risks and benefits of rapid strep testing. She wants the test.

During the discussion I mention that we are an influenza study site. She would like to participate. Ask the medical assistant to print more labels while going to the lab to get the study kit. Collect the rapid strep and flu study samples. Label them in her presence after confirming her identity. Walk them to the lab. Return when the results are available.

The rapid strep test is positive. She is allergic to penicillin. Fill out the culture and sensitivity form on the strep order.

Review the risks, benefits and side effects of alternative antibiotic therapies, azithromycin and clindamycin, so you can do shared decision making. Get informed consent.

Pause while she responds to a text message.

Read a scroll across the bottom of the computer. “The phones aren’t working at West”.

Enter the prescription. Fill out the antibiotic ordering tool.

The wrong pharmacy was entered in the chart during rooming. Call to cancel the prescription order sent to the wrong pharmacy. Enter the correct pharmacy. Resend the prescription. Fill out antibiotic ordering tool again.

She is on warfarin. Discuss use of that medicine with her, and what taking antibiotics could mean. Arrange for her to come in early for her next INR.

Assess smoking status, readiness to quit, and offer assistance. Click multiple buttons in more than one screen to document this was done.

Ms. Doe asks if she could follow up with me on some other issues. Add myself to her care team. Address her elevated blood pressure. Evaluate cardiovascular risks. Schedule a nurse BP check and a follow up appointment with her primary clinician to review the results and address appropriate decision making. Check to see if her diabetes labs are up to date. They are not. Order hemoglobin A1C and lipids. Update her medication list. Fill in a reason for those that have been discontinued or changed. There are some discrepancies between what she says she is taking and the medication list. Review specialist's notes and call her pharmacy to confirm what she is taking. Remove the travel medications still on her chart from last year. Review Learning Assessment and offer help for any positives.

She remembers she is due for her monthly refill of oxycodone started by her primary clinician for her chronic knee pain. Check PDMP, last medication agreement and urine drug screen. Calculate morphine milligram equivalents per day. Discuss her risks due to high MME, sleep apnea, and benzodiazepine use before bridging one month only in primary's absence. Prescribe Narcan. Fill out the insurance prior auth pop up.

She screens positive for falls risk. Provide intervention including a recommendation that she taper off her benzodiazepine and decrease her oxycodone. Order physical therapy.

She screens positive for depression. Conduct brief depression interview to evaluate, further assess for safety and provide initial intervention. Have her schedule follow up.

She was in the emergency department with abdominal pain last month. She had a benign appearing adrenal mass on CT. Address incidentaloma on imaging following standardized protocol. Order follow up CT to be done in 6-12 months. Add adrenal mass to problem list to be sure this is not forgotten.

She heard about the "All of Us" research project on TV, promoted by UW. She would like to participate. Leave the room to get the informational handout for her. Return and discuss the pros and cons of participation. She needs a work excuse. Write letter, go to printer to get it, sign it and give it to the patient.

She wants to be able to see her own chart and lab results on the computer. Activate My Chart in the room. Penicillin allergy is on the header. Go to allergy screen and click reviewed before I can close the chart. Review problem list. Click the reviewed button so it counts for coding.

On reviewing the chart, you see that 6 months ago she had pneumonia and the radiologist recommended a follow up chest x ray. She is already in a gown. Find nipple markers. Page x ray tech.

Perform hand hygiene 5 times according to UW rooming protocol flow diagram.

Do all the coding. Be much more specific now for Medicare Advantage programs.

Click the HCC (Hierarchical Condition Category) buttons. First address items on her problem list to satisfy HCC (preferred) or click not addressed.

Discuss medical power of attorney and advanced planning. Fill out forms with the patient.

Document the visit. Risk management prefers we do this at time of the visit or immediately after. List a supervising physician after making sure they are in the clinic or available by phone today.

Patient decides she cannot wait for results and requests you leave a message on her voice mail or with her husband later today. Get authorization to communicate form.

She has a big copay so she would like you to peek at a mole during this visit. It is suspicious.

Get the iPad. Mark the mole. Take multiple photos. Upload to Haiku. Schedule biopsy.

Update health maintenance at every visit. She is due for colon cancer screening. She has a history of colon polyps. Explain why she is not a candidate for Cologuard. Open the colonoscopy order and answer the questions. Recommend Prevnar. She decides to postpone her decision about that for one year. Go to separate screen to postpone. She has heard conflicting advice about mammogram frequency. She asks if she should have a mammogram once a year or once every other year. Review USPSTF and ACOG recommendations. She decides to have a mammogram this year. Place order and fill out order form. Recommended she have a flu shot. She declines due to history of allergic reaction. Confirm this was an allergy. Click edit modifiers to permanently exclude her from flu shots. She had her bone density elsewhere. Enter date to satisfy HM requirement. Type patient instructions and fill out the follow up section. You cannot favorite any instructions in references. Search for handouts.

List a Life Goal.

She says she shouldn't have had a deductible for her last visit because it was a physical. She is upset about this. Review the note. Several problems were addressed. Explain carve outs and give her the patient relations contact information.

Jane Doe says her 16 year old granddaughter, who is with her, has a sore throat too. "can't you just add her in, it will only take a second". Call parent for consent to treat. She screens positive for food insecurity. Address that. Talk with the adolescent alone. It is required for the medical assistant to pend a chlamydia test for her. Discuss with the granddaughter that we do not need parental consent to do this test, but her parent will see the bill. She does not want the test today but agrees she needs it. Provide resource hand out with information on where she can get free testing. Remove chlamydia order and corresponding diagnosis codes from order entry. She is due for her second Gardasil. She faints. A nurse assist is called. Fill out incident report.

Listen to your student's presentation about this patient (teaching is one of our missions). Read and discuss their note. As an APP I must type a completely new note in the chart for all students.

Now that we have open notes it is recommended on U Connect. "One method providers have instituted to mitigate the request for chart amendments is to involve the patients in the development of documentation. Consider sharing the screen, reading the note out loud for understanding, expanding abbreviations when necessary. If the patient does wish to have something clarified or changed, a dialogue can take place at the time of the visit."

Remind patients that their proxy can see full office visit notes now. Help her change her proxy status.

Between patients:

Review lab and imaging results.

Answer telephone and My Chart messages.

I am also covering a partner's inbasket.

Do your required on-line trainings (compliance, computer upgrade, quality assurance, HIPPA).  
Respond to emergencies. Call consultants. Look things up on Up to Date and other references.  
Work with a mentor to improve Avatar scores.  
Do committee work.  
Participate in pilot projects.  
Spend at least 20 minutes a week on a quality assurance project.  
Enter all your receipts for your recent CME into Oracle.  
Empty the shred bins.  
Huddle with your medical assistant.  
Check in with triage.  
Review upcoming schedules for errors.  
Review charts for tomorrow and start pre-charting.  
Answer curb side questions from patients who are staff at the clinic.

We have been told to be empathetic and see patients that are late.  
We are told to have respect for peoples' time and see them within 15 minutes of their scheduled appointment.  
We must respond to patient complaints that they don't get enough time with us.  
There has been an increase in the number of patients we are expected to see per hour.  
Patients are told to expect a response to phone calls and My Chart messages within 2 hours.

As she is leaving Ms. Doe says, "thank you, you have been very helpful". This really means a lot. But I can't help thinking that I missed another opportunity for a real connection.



## Servant Leadership - There's No Place Like Home

By Denise Grossman

### Prologue:

For five Fridays during the Spring of 2019, I had the privilege of attending a Servant Leadership course offered by the Continuing Studies Department of UW-Madison.

The phrase "servant leadership" was coined by Robert Greenleaf in *The Servant as Leader*, an essay he first published in 1970. The concept is "the servant leader is servant first", putting the needs of others first to help people develop and perform as highly as possible.

A class requirement to earn the certificate was an oral presentation on the final day of class. The sky was the limit... We were encouraged to share how we would apply the principles we learned in any aspect of our life.

Since I've always been passionate about the well-being of our youth, the theme I chose for my presentation was *Servant Leadership ~ There's No Place Like Home*.

### Presentation:

How many of you grew up watching Mr. Rogers Neighborhood or watched it with your children? To open, I would like to share a quote from his book, "The World According to Mr. Rogers – Important Things to Remember"

Who in your life has been such a servant to you? Who has helped you love the good that grows within you? Let's just take ten seconds to think of some of those people who have loved us and wanted what was best for us in life, those who have encouraged us to become who we are tonight - just ten seconds of silence.

No matter where they are, either here or in heaven, imagine how pleased those people must be to know that you thought of them right now."

While it is important for us to apply what we have learned about servant leadership in our workplace, I believe it is equally, if not more important to live out these principles and teach them to our children.

Many great servant leaders were strongly influenced by their parents who were servant leaders themselves.

Martin Luther King Jr. said "I had a marvelous mother and father. And I think my strong determination for justice comes from the very strong, dynamic personality of my father and I would hope the gentle aspect comes from a mother who is very gentle and sweet."

Nelson Mandela's father was chief of the village where they lived. As a boy he grew up in the company of tribal elders and chiefs who groomed him to be a future chief.

Mahatma Gandhi had many influences in his life but none was greater than his mother who upheld in her own life that the greatest form of love meant the willing sacrifice of self for another.

It was Mother Teresa's mother who greatly influenced her character and future vocation. She instilled in her a deep commitment to charity.

Moreover, Robert Greenleaf wrote that his father was his original model for a servant-leader.

Our children of today are our leaders of tomorrow. I invite you to consider whom or what is shaping your child?

While there is much goodness in the world, children are bombarded daily by influences determined to rob them of all innocence and feeling for their fellow man. Many are growing up in an environment where they are over-stimulated, over-entitled and terminally self-involved. Absent of authentic role models, this environment is increasingly flush with negative media that promotes loudness and flash over goodness and societal impact. It's a habitat where engagement in character development is low or absent and an emphasis on looking good is prioritized over being good and doing good.

As their stewards, those entrusted to raising them, I believe we need to ask ourselves, what kind of leaders would we like them to become and how can we best shape their perception of what it is to be a servant leader, one who wants to serve, to serve others first.

Some schools, recognizing the need and importance of servant leadership have incorporated it into their curriculums. During my research I came across an article about elementary students getting a lesson in servant leadership. Local businessman and author, Gerald Baldner came to a third grade class one day a week for five weeks to teach students about the tenets of servant leadership.

When interviewed, one student commented, "When Mr. Baldner came into our classroom, he taught me how to be a good person. If he would not have come into our classroom, I would not know what servant leadership was, but thanks to him, I do. I know I will always listen, use empathy, encouragement and forgiveness."

There is no doubt our kids are growing up in a me-centered world and are not being taught to look around and see what other people are going through. But it's never too late... Young people need to see that serving is rewarding. Those rewards include a sense of satisfaction and a feeling that what you are doing is meaningful and significant. But what is the best way for parents to go about ensuring their children become servant leaders?

Research shows that more is learned when it is experienced. When this finding is paired with additional research that reveals a person's spiritual and value-based foundation is firmly laid in childhood, not adulthood, a great lesson is learned about the importance of teaching children to serve. It has proven...if we give children opportunities to become engaged in serving others, it increases the likelihood they will become healthy, active citizens.

If more is learned when it is experienced, then the simplest of tasks can teach big lessons in serving.

Consider...

How does a child learn to wash a car? Dad puts a soapy rag in those little hands, and the child does what he or she sees Daddy doing.

What is the best way for a child to learn how to care for a garden? They till the soil and water the rows of seedlings alongside an adult who has harvested vegetables season after season.

At first glance, what we see is a child learning to perform a new task. However, it is easy to overlook another major thing that is happening: the child longs to enter the adult world and be part of something of value. They want to be involved in something that stretches who they are and to be part of something that causes a change for the better.

As parents and grandparents, we have a responsibility to help our children and grandchildren become people who value what matters most, whether it is helping others, showing compassion, acting bravely, being a good citizen or persisting in challenging times.

Today I am challenging you to think about teaching your children to serve in a more intentional, more hands-on manner. Modeling and teaching a servant lifestyle will leave children convinced that it is not just an adult activity, but they are able to make an investment in their world.