

DEPARTMENT OF SURGERY WEEK OF MAY 25



<https://www.sidneydailynews.com/news/174715/fighting-on-the-front-lines-against-covid-19>

As we finalize this week's edition, we find ourselves on Memorial Day. We stand together honoring our fellow citizens who defended our country so we can have freedoms that few others have.

Today also has another special meaning: we also reflect upon the lives of the heroes of the COVID pandemic: the heroes who gave their lives caring for those affected and our fellow citizens who have passed. We will not allow their deaths to be in vain.

As we move to our final episode, let us remember those patients for whom we cared. In prior years, Dr. Lambert organized a Grand Rounds commemorating patients who had passed. That event, I remember clearly: Dr. Larkin's singing, Dr. Meyer's cello, and the beautiful readings.

As we cannot have a similar, live Grand Rounds event at this time, please submit any narratives, poems, artwork, music, etc. to help us, as a Department, honor the lives of the patients for whom we have cared.

Thank you to Dr. Max Hazeltine who provided the impetus for this initiative.

REFLECTIONS: ON BOOKS

Of Books and Cooking

I usually associate books and reading with my mother. As a child, I thought books were only meant for schoolwork, and the idea of pleasure reading was nothing but revolting to me. I was between 8 and 10 years old when I first asked my mother to teach me how to cook. One of my school friends was constantly bragging about the dishes she was already making, and that annoyed me. It may have been my competitive nature kicking in. Or maybe my young mind had already registered that a woman's skills in the kitchen were a social asset in my culture. So I decided that I too must cook... and since I was already behind, I needed to start learning ASAP! My mother gave me a probing and stern look when I made my request. Her gaze unwavering, she handed me my untouched copy of *David Copperfield* by Charles Dickens and said "Why don't you go work on this instead? And when you're done, write me a summary". By her facial expression and tone, I knew the conversation was over whether I liked it or not. So in the melodramatic and stubborn way of children, I convinced myself that my mother understood "absolutely nothing".

Now, I cannot remember when or why I picked up *David Copperfield*. Maybe deep down I wanted to be like Mom, who could quote French and Haitian literature on a whim. Or maybe I thought that reading may do me some good after all since she suggested it (I always valued what Mom had to say, though I hated to admit when she was right). Regardless of the reason, I dove into the pile of books she relentlessly bought me, and actually enjoyed them. Slowly, we became reading partners. By the age of 14, we were having conversations on the themes and development of the characters in the books she gave me, most of which she had already read. We had two favorites: *The Count of Monte Cristo* by Alexandre Dumas and *Kane and Abel* by Jeffrey Archer. To date, I think these books paint exemplary depictions of: a) the controlling grasp of jealousy and greed, and how they can lead us to do the unthinkable, b) the cruelty we can impose on one another, c) the bitter taste but unimaginable rewards of patience, d) how adversity can help us attain our maximum potential (though in the moment we only see the obstacles), and lastly e) how the combination of hard work, determination, and passion will never leave one empty-handed. Of course, I didn't fully grasp all of this at 14. But Mom would reference these books often in the coming years, even prompting me to re-read them. That was a great advice; because time and maturity proved to me that these themes were indisputably real-life lessons.

At 15, I left my mom in Haiti to move to the US and could hardly boil an egg. Though I did well academically, it was a very difficult social adjustment. So what did I do? I kept reading. Mom and I always had a penchant for the classics. We continued our discussions via phone on Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*, Hugo's *Les Miserables*, and Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*. But now I had American literature/fiction at my fingertips; and I spent many hours with Toni Morrison, Zora Neale Hurston, Larry McMurtry, and Barbara Kingsolver, among others. So to answer the question of what books mean to me, I will answer that they

have been inanimate teachers that helped me understand, or at least accept, certain facades of human nature. They have been a refuge, an escape from reality to another place and/or another time. But most importantly, they have been a common interest/bond between my mother and I, which has survived distance and close to two decades.

Ultimately, I became a good cook. Fast forward to age 30, I prepared a lavish Christmas dinner for my family and it was a hit. Mom who was visiting for the holidays, complimented me. Thinking back to our first conversation on cooking, I teasingly reminded that my culinary skills were no thanks to her, and that she has yet to pass on some of her recipes. The look she gave me this time was loving, tender, mixed with a tablespoon of amusement and a teaspoon of sarcasm. “You became a pretty good cook without me”, she replied. “But do you think you would truly read as you do now, if I didn’t push you?” Well one thing hasn’t changed in all these years: I still very much hate it when she’s right.

More of my favorite books (in no particular order)

- Cutting for Stone, Abraham Varghese
- The Heart is a Lonely Hunter, Carson McCullers
- The Lonesome Dove, Larry McMurtry
- The Love Machine, Jacqueline Susann
- An Ambiguous Adventure, Cheikh Hamidou Kane
- Their Eyes were Watching God, Zora Neale Hurston
- Sophie’s Choice, William Styron
- Nervous Conditions, Tsitsi Dangarembga
- Love in the Time of Cholera, Gabriel Garcia Màrquez
- The Poisonwood Bible, Barbara Kingsolver
- Infidel, Ayan Hirsi Ali

For anyone who speaks French and may want to sample Haitian literature, I highly recommend Gouverneur de la Rosée by Jacques Roumain, L’Heure Hybride by Kettley Mars and La Marginale by Margaret Papillon. They are available on Amazon. Happy reading.

–Catherine Beauharnais, MD (PGY2)

I realize this may be my last contribution before we head back into our Divisional territories. Inevitably, as we head into the ‘Restoration’, we will get busier tending our own fields. But I hope we cultivate and sustain the best of what grew out of this crisis as much as is possible. I pledge my support to that effort.

1. “Make yourself well” Florence “Rusty” Dennis (Cher) from the Movie Mask
2. “Always have a non-medical book on your nightstand.” Walter Pories, M.D. – when I was on staff at East Carolina University

Books (like art, music, theater arts, exercise, surgery) require complete creative engagement, dedication, and focus – something to be preserved and cherished. I choose books in three different categories and most times am working through all three at once – most times protracted of course.

1. Classics that I have never read – ‘the one on my nightstand’: Have even combed through my childrens’ rooms to find leftover books from their honors classes – right now that book is Betrothed by Marconi
2. Something either funny, spiritual, or inspiring – nonfiction oftentimes fits in here – right now it’s funny = America (The Book): A Citizen’s Guide to Democracy Inaction by Jon Stewart
3. An Audible that has a great story, takes me to a new place through a wonderful narrator – right now that is The Scent Keeper by Erica Bauermeister

–Janice Lalikos, MD (Division of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery)



I was never an avid reader. I would grow up being the TV junky. I even did my homework in front of the TV to the dismay of my parents. But, no, I didn’t always spend my time watching shows like Underdog, Flintstone’s, Banana Splits, Gilligan’s Island, Bewitched, etc. (though I probably saw each episode 4 times). I also watched educational television, news, documentaries, and the like. If I read anything it was National Geographic or youth encyclopedias. Reading was always a forced entity by school. A do-good English teacher with his/her idea of important reads that I felt were quite boring. This tradition of being a

bad reader even followed through residency. I almost never read any textbook until chief year. Now I don't tell you this to advocate you do the same. The difference is I lived the textbook a little more than you did. The educators in my residency had a little freer time to instruct. We could do CASS type lectures on Saturday. I had a lot more hours in house to live the textbook. By the time I started to read Sabiston, etc. my chief year, I found myself flipping through the pages quickly as I knew all this stuff from either experience or my mentors' repetitive teachings (special thanks to my mentors still active including Drs Arous, Stoker, Rao, Gulati, Blute, and... I hope I didn't miss anyone). The only subject I struggled with was immunology and transplant which I just did not like, sorry Adel.

As a junior attending, I had kids early. So, when I had free time, or on a vacation, I was playing with them and letting my wife have some down time and read. She is the avid reader. As I grew older, I found I liked visual or audible fiction and nonfiction. It certainly helped that my sister in law headed up the audio books dept at Random House. I got a lot of free stories that I only had to listen too. And for you kids out there, these used to be called "books on tape" which you played on your Walkman (look it up).

Now as far as actual books go... yes, I do know how to read and I can read, but I can't say I am the go to person to tell you the times bestseller or that book was the best of author X. I did enjoy the Lord of the Rings series back in the day (I like the movies better though). With that caveat in mind, here are some books that I did enjoy: One Summer: America 1927 by Bill Bryson. What a time and year to live in. You would never imagine so many historic and life changing events that intersected in this year. World War Z by Max Brooks. What can I say, I love zombies. Unbroken, by Laura Hillenbrand. Such an incredible story of overcoming the worst the life and the human condition can endure. I have others but that's enough for now as you're probably too busy on Netflix, Amazon Prime, Hulu, or HBO now.

-John Kelly, MD (Chief, Division of General Surgery and Minimally Invasive Surgery)

Writing that made an impact on me. This is really difficult. I am sure nothing I write will be significant enough to match the existential dread we are all experiencing.

I have a lot of favorite books. Anything by Michael Ondaatje, and in particular The English Patient. The movie was good, but the book was exceptional. The writing felt more like poetry or jazz than prose. I think the story is about disconnection. Everyone, from the Canadian nurse, to the Sri Lankan sapper, and most importantly to the Hungarian cartographer mistaken as the "English patient" was living in isolation, though they were together in a monastery. This was ostensibly caused by being brought together by their roles in World War 2. In reality, their isolation predated the War, and maybe is our human condition. Some characters were successful in "finding their people," and others were not. The "English patient" is an anti-hero who realizes his mistake too late, then makes a journey that can be described as brave, desperate, disturbed, ultimately doomed. I would recommend reading it for the fantastic writing. Then tell me what you think.

The Boys in the Boat, by Daniel James Brown, is the best sports book I have read. This is a surprise, as it is about crew, a sport I knew little about and which only allows descriptions of the stroke rate and of something called swing. Swing can best be described as a sort of synergy that occurs when the individuals rowers are completely in rhythm. The author does a great job of describing the world in the years after the Great Depression and leading up to World War 2. The hardship experienced at that time put our own into proper context. The climax is the gold medal 8-man crew race in the Berlin Olympics, and well worth the wait.

I think we are all drawn to transcendent experiences, letting us see beyond our reality. The above books do that for me. –Rich Perugini, MD (Division of General and Minimally Invasive Surgery)

SHOUT OUTS

- Congratulations to Dr. Jorge Lujan-Hernandez, of PRS, who was elected to the UMMS Gold Humanism Honors Society last week. Dr. Lujan-Hernandez joins Dr. Bakke (announced last week) as one of only six residents across the institution elected by UMMS students into the Society due to his compassionate care of patients, families, students, and colleagues. You are truly deserving!

UPCOMING GRADUATION DETAILS

- PRS: Virtual Graduation will be Friday, June 19 from 6-8 pm with individual family meet and greet for 30 minutes each for graduate's families and then formal program to begin at 7 pm. Details to be distributed
- The General Surgery and Fellowship Graduation will be held virtually on Saturday, June 20 from 4-7 pm. To help celebrate our Chief General Surgery Residents and Fellows in Minimally Invasive and Colorectal Surgery, please join us: <https://umassmed.zoom.us/j/93162187472>. We will also be celebrating Drs. David Meyer and Suzie Hill and their completion of the Surgical Research Scholars' Program.

Please help us make the final newsletter during pandemic time a success. Our final issue, which will be released in early June, will celebrate our **graduates across all residencies and fellowships** in the Annual Graduation Issue.

In addition, in reference to the introductory paragraph, we welcome any **contributions that help commemorate the lives of the patients for whom we cared during the COVID pandemic**. Any form of contribution is welcome.

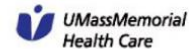
Finally, please send items that you would like to be included on a list called **“Good Things We Learned During Pandemic.”** Feel free to steal an idea from John Krasinski and send “good news” in general. We love to highlight your successes-professionally and personally.

Let us remember, when we go back into our normal lives, what we achieved during this time period. While much was challenging and at times particularly difficult, many lessons were learned. As we transition, let us remember those good things, and let them propel us through the year and future together.

This newsletter reflects the entire department—and we ask for submissions for any members. Each one of you has been so integral to the past few months. Please send your contributions to Jennifer LaFemina or Katherine Bakke.

COMMUNITY

Caregiver Wellness Resources



Center for Mindfulness
774-442-4681 | mindfulness@umassmemorial.org
www.umassmemorialhealthcare.org/umass-memorial-center-mindfulness

Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
800-322-5327 | eap@umassmed.edu
Marlboro Hospital EAP: 800-311-4327
HA-Clinton EAP: 800-445-1195 (www.coastlineeap.com)

Employee Health
508-793-6400 (M-F, 7-5)
employee.healthservices@umassmemorial.org

Employee Wellness Program (myHealthMatters)
Thomas Ward, Wellness Program Manager
508-334-6414 | myhealthmatters@umassmemorial.org

GME Wellness (Resident & Fellow Wellness)
Steve Bird, MD | steven.bird@umassmemorial.org | 508-421-1422
<https://umassmed.edu/well-being/gme-residents-and-fellows/>

House Office Counseling Services
Alan Brown, MD | alan.brown.umassmemorial.org
Tina Runyan, PhD | christine.runyan@umassmemorial.org
508-856-4672 (confidential voicemail)

Medical Student Wellness
Michael Hirsh, MD | michael.hirsh@umassmemorial.org
Mark Miceli, EdD | mark.miceli@umassmed.edu

EMOTIONAL

MENTAL

SOCIAL

ACADEMIC

PHYSICAL

SPIRITUAL

OTHER RESOURCES

COVID-19 Information for Employees
<https://www.umassmemorialhub.org/coronavirus-information-for-employees?covid-19-alerts-&covid-19-page=true>
UMassMed Well-Being
<https://umassmed.edu/well-being/>

National Suicide Hotline
800-273-TALK (800-273-8255)
Crisis Text Line: text HOME to 741741

Office of Faculty Affairs
508-856-3244 | faculty.affairs@umassmed.edu
<https://umassmed.edu/ofa/>

Peer Support Network
bwell@umassmemorial.org | 774-441-7907

Physician Health Services (PHS)
Steven Adelman, MD | 781-434-7404
<http://www.massmed.org/phshome/>

Student Counseling Services
Ruthann Rizzi, MD
SCS@umassmed.edu | 508-856-3220 (M-F, 8-4:30)
Emergency Mental Health (EMH): 508-856-3562

UMMHC Self Insurance Program Support Services
Timothy Slowick | timothy.slowick@umassmemorial.org
(508) 334-5402 (confidential voice mail)

Wellness Coaching
bwell@umassmemorial.org | 774-441-7907