

VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY MEDICAL CENTER

HOUSE ORGAN

www.mc.vanderbilt.edu/houseorgan

July 2010

Summer Reading Issue



COVER PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY KEITH WOOD

Summer Reading issue 2010

Santa Fe, Georgia O’Keeffe, and Wile E. Coyote

BY WAYNE WOOD

Within sight of each other in Santa Fe, N.M., are buildings housing the works of two great American artists.

One is the painter Georgia O’Keeffe, who has a museum dedicated to her work.

The other is the animator Chuck Jones, whose work is among those sold at a gallery down the street from the O’Keeffe Museum.

O’Keeffe is known for her paintings of the New Mexico desert, especially sun-bleached animal skulls.

Jones is also best known for his depictions of the desert. His desert is different from O’Keeffe’s, though. The Jones desert is full of towering mesas and deep gorges, and the Roadrunner is always speeding through the landscape with Wile E. Coyote in full pursuit—often with the help of Acme Rocket Powered Roller Skates, Acme Earthquake Pills, Acme Rocket Sleds, and other pinnacles of product design.

We were in Santa Fe mainly because Sharon is a great admirer of O’Keeffe. There was a special exhibition of her abstract work, which I won’t even attempt to describe in words, because the whole point of abstraction is that it’s saying things that words cannot. But we went through the exhibit twice on two different days, the better to drink in the images and feel the color and to see the world a little bit through the eyes of a great artist.

But here’s where my inner Mr. Lowbrow comes out.

I think Chuck Jones is a great artist, too.

He created indelible comic characters out of drawings on a page and sound effects.

It is really hard to be consistently funny, and Roadrunner cartoons are.

continued on page 16



4

Poetry Winner

“Change of Plan (with apologies to Poe)”
by Peg McNabb
of Network Computing Service.

6

Nonfiction Winner

“What Everyone Dies Of”
by Ginger T. Manley
of Psychiatry.



12

Fiction Winner

“The Day I Threw the Rock”
by Mandy Haynes-Bailey
of the Pediatric Echo Lab.



© 2010 Vanderbilt University Medical Center

House Organ is the magazine for the staff, faculty, volunteers, and students of Vanderbilt University Medical Center. It is published monthly, with a combined December/January issue, by the Office of News and Public Affairs of VMC. News stories, ideas, and suggestions are welcome, and should be sent to *House Organ*, CCC-3312 Medical Center North, Nashville, Tenn., 37232-2390. E-mail: Wayne.Wood@Vanderbilt.Edu.

The paper used to print *House Organ* is recycled and recyclable.

Vanderbilt University is an equal opportunity, affirmative action university.

Editor and Ex. Director of New Media and Electronic Publications: Wayne Wood

Director of Publications: Nancy Humphrey

Staff Writers: Leslie Hast and Kathy Whitney

Photographer: Joe Howell

Designer: Keith Wood, Vanderbilt University Creative Services

Summer Reading 2010

Featuring the winners from the House Organ Writing Contest

The winner of the Fiction category is Mandy Haynes-Bailey of the Pediatric Echo Lab for her story "The Day I Threw the Rock," a remembrance by a young girl with a great pitching arm who comes to the rescue of her friend Sara Rose.

The Nonfiction category winner is "What Everyone Dies Of," by Ginger T. Manley of Psychiatry, a story about the deaths of two elderly relatives in England, and how she will never hear "Onward, Christian Soldiers" quite the same way again.

The Poetry winner is "Change of Plan" by Peg McNabb of Network Computing Service, a look at what might keep an erstwhile globetrotter closer to home.

There were almost 50 entries to the Writing Contest this year, and the quality of the entries as a whole was impressive—again presenting ample evidence that the Medical Center is full of writers walking around disguised as normal people.

But the stories and poems don't stop there: contest honorable mentions are on the *House Organ* Website at <http://www.mc.vanderbilt.edu/houseorgan/>.

There you'll find:

Fiction honorable mention "Seeing Red," by Joanne Merriam of Otolaryngology, a puzzle of a story about interlocking lives and the random way that fate puts us together.

Two additional entries from Joanne Merriam, Poetry honorable mentions "Mirror Points" and "Hotel," as well as "A Dollop" by Jan Rosemergy of the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center; "Uncomplicated" by Brenda Butka of Allergy, Pulmonary Medicine and Critical Care; and "Toy Story" by Jeff High, of Cardio-Thoracic Surgery, a longtime friend of the writing contest.

Thanks to everybody who entered the writing contest and, on behalf of those whose work is here and online, thanks for reading.

Change of Plan

(with apologies to Poe)

BY PEG MCNABB
Network Computing Service

Once, during a day of training,
Overcast with spots of raining
I sat dreaming, scheming of
Adventure I may never see.
Oceans beckoned with their mystery
Old cathedrals whispered history
Mountain treks so cold and misty
Hoping soon to set me free
From my velvet agony.

The Taj Mahal, the Louvre Museum
The pyramids, the Coliseum
Call to me, a lusty, eager
Counterplay to ennui.
Then, I stop. What am I doing?
No far land is worth pursuing
When instead I could be cooing
To the grandson on my knee.
He's the sight I'd rather see.

Sometimes fate from up behind us
Sneaks a sudden gift of kindness
Balancing the wanton yearnings,
Silencing the urgent pleas.
Maybe one day I'll be found
Again exploring foreign ground
But until then I'm homeward bound.
Exploring life quite happily
Sometimes home can set you free.

PHOTO BY JOE HOWELL



Mama is going to kill me. I've lost a sock and the hem of my dress is wet and muddy in places, but at least it isn't torn. I didn't mean to go that far into the woods; but I just couldn't help it. There was a huge barred owl in the tree by the fork in the road where I should have gone right, but he flew to the left. You could tell by the way he looked over his shoulder at me that he wanted me to follow him. I was just going to see where he landed, but then I saw the mother deer and her twin fawns in the clearing past the pines, which took me to the creek bank where I saw a fat raccoon washing his supper in the water. At least I was smart enough to take off my shoes before I chased him through the creek. I don't always remember to take them off because most of the time I am bare-foot already.

My mama scolds me and frets about my clothes and hair something awful. Sometimes she even whips me because I get dirty or take down my pigtails, but it is never as bad as it sounds. She is not as mean as John Randall's mama. I see my mama's mouth try to smile when I come in the door—I am quick to notice things like that. My daddy knows it too, if I am quick enough, I can catch a wink from him before my mama sets in. I tell her if she would let me have my overalls back she wouldn't have to worry about my dresses, but she just ignores me.

See, I am not allowed to wear overalls anymore. Mama says that there are too many pockets and that I carry too much around in them. She'd fuss a little every washday, but never too much, about a lucky rock, shell or feather I'd left behind. I'd always go by the washtub to collect whatever trinkets she'd found stuck down in my pockets when she was hanging the wash on the line. But the snake, well that was the end of my overall wearing days.

See, once I forgot that I had put a snake in the front one. You know the big pocket at your chest? Well, it was the perfect spot. He was scared so I pretended to be his mother and we magically turned into kangaroos. I had just learned about them at school and thought they were one of the most interesting animals ever, until daddy told me about possums and how they carry their babies in a pouch, too. But that's another story. Anyway, he—the snake—must have liked the idea because he curled right down in the corner and went to sleep. He was just a little garter snake; no bigger around than my pointer finger. I think that was the day I threw the rock.

Well anyway, I forgot he was there and she found him. My mama is scared to death of snakes. Whew, she was so mad that day! Now I am forced to wear dresses with no pockets. Not even one!

At night I hear her and daddy laughing about me, so I know it's not too bad. Mama tells daddy that she is scared I'll turn out like Crazy Nell who lives up on the mountain in a cave with one hundred goats. They say that she runs around naked and howls when there is a full moon. Someone said that she gave birth to a litter of wolves and that she is married to a bear.

Well, that will never happen to me. I think goats stink.

The day I threw the rock, I had been playing with my best friend Lucas, but he didn't want to be a kangaroo and he had to get home in time to chop some kindling for his father. I should have left with him, but I didn't. I walked on past our usual spot, looking for a good place for a kangaroo's house. I wasn't sure where it would be. I didn't think that Australia looked like Kentucky.

There was a big old tree that had fallen down in the woods. I thought this would be a good spot for a kangaroo den so I got



JOE HOWELL



2010
FICTION WINNER

The Day I Threw the Rock

BY MANDY HAYNES-BAILEY
Pediatric Echo Lab

down on my knees and started clearing out a place beside the old oak. That's when I heard some weird noises and looked up over the tree. I couldn't believe my eyes.

There, by the water, was Sara Rose Jamison. I knew her from church and sometimes she helped Ms. Burroughs at my school. She was about five years older than me.

Everyone knew her; she was beautiful and sweet. She looked like a living china doll. My mama would have loved a daughter like her. Sara Rose had beautiful thick black hair and bright blue eyes framed with long, shiny black lashes.

My hair is bright red, like my father's side of the family, I'm told. I have green eyes and light eyelashes that you can hardly see. I also have freckles. John Randall, who I hate, says it looks like a cow farted in my face. Lucas blacked his eye the

ball like the men do in Louisville and win every game, I just know it. I know because I can throw apples twice as far as and faster than Lucas and John Randall, and they are the best two boys on the baseball team at school. I'm not allowed to play anymore because I'm a girl.

The rock flew through the air, a perfect curve that I didn't even know I could throw, and hit the man in the head. (I had been aiming for his shoulder.) It was a good sized rock, almost as big as one of our apples. It struck his right temple so fast and hard that he never knew what hit him. He never even turned around. He just fell to the ground still holding Sara Rose's hair, her small breasts exposed.

Sara Rose screamed then. Boy did she scream! I stood up all the way, but I still couldn't speak. She was screaming as she

**It was a good sized rock, almost as big as one of our apples.
It struck his right temple so fast and hard that
he never knew what hit him.**

day he said it, even though I could have done it myself, so he got a whipping instead of me. Lucas is always doing stuff like that for me.

Anyway, it took me a minute to recognize that she was Sara Rose. She was crying. I wondered why she was here, and then I noticed a basket at her feet. She had been hunting mushrooms; there were a couple of fat morels beside her basket (my daddy's favorite). She must have gotten sidetracked like me and walked farther than she meant to.

Then I smelled him. I smelled him before I saw him. He smelled mean, like the stagnant water where I find the leeches I threaten to put on Lucas when he won't play with me. But worse. He smelled like a bad dream. I had never seen this man before, but Sara Rose acted like she knew him or at least she didn't seem surprised to see him way out here. I thought that maybe he had been fishing in the creek or checking on a still. Daddy had told me about the stills that were out in the woods. If I ever saw one I was to get away as fast as I could. Rule number one for playing in the woods—if it ain't yours, don't touch it. That covers anything from fishing poles to moonshine stills.

I started to walk over and help her pick up her mushrooms, thinking that was why she was crying, and then I noticed that the front of her dress was torn. I bet she was worried that her mother would scold her. I wanted to tell her not to worry, mine never got too mad. Then something happened.

The man walked up to her and slapped her across her face. Then, with his left hand he grabbed her hair and with his right hand he reached up and tore the rest of her dress open. The top half of her was naked in broad daylight! She just stood there crying silently. I wanted to scream. I wanted to tell him that if Lucas was here, he'd be sorry.

I wanted to yell, "Kick him!! Hit him in the eye!" but something odd had happened and I couldn't talk. So I did the first thing that came to my mind without even thinking. I picked up a rock and threw it.

I have a great arm. If I had been born a boy—which I should have (then I could wear overalls every day)—I would play base-

pulled her hair loose from his hand. Then she stood up from where she had fallen and looked at me. We both ran. She ran one way and I ran the other. We never said a word to each other. We just ran.

I ran as fast as I could. I was in such a hurry that I didn't even stop to turn over the big rock at the beginning of our path. I always checked there on my way home for fat night crawlers. If there were some good ones, I would pick them up (which is another reason I need pockets) and drop them in the mulch pile by our hen house. Daddy and I would use them when we went fishing.

Anyway, like I said, I was in a hurry. I just wanted to be home, safe and snug in my own bed that my daddy had built with his two hands and under the quilt that my mother had sewn for me. I wanted my mama and daddy, wanted them sitting at the table—even if my mama scolded me for being late and barefoot. She hated it when I went barefoot, even though most everyone I knew at school did. She said that young ladies should wear shoes—another reason I should have been born a boy (I hate shoes).

I wanted to forget the look in Sara's eyes. It was a look of complete helplessness. I wanted to forget those tears running down her face and the sound, which wasn't really any sound at all, of her crying.

But most of all, I wanted to forget the look of embarrassment she had on her face. It made me ashamed, like I had been spying on her.

When I got home, my mama was putting my plate on the table. Something had happened at our neighbor's house, so the focus was not on me. She was in a hurry to get to Mr. and Mrs. Gamble next door, so she didn't even notice my bare feet. Mrs. Gamble was expecting her first baby and my mama was one of the best midwives around. Shoot, even Luke's daddy asked for her help in birthing his prize bull three years ago.

Daddy was listening to his favorite radio show, so he sort of whispered like he does when the radio is on when he asked me if I was hungry. I nodded and he smiled at me. I almost started

crying then but I felt that if I started I wouldn't be able to stop. I knew that he wouldn't ask me any questions about where I had been or why I was late. I wouldn't have to say a word. My daddy never seemed to notice what time it was, except in the mornings, when he would head out to work in the fields. He was never late, not even once.

He had his favorite mug beside him on the floor by his rocking chair. Daddy would be sipping his corn liquor until his show was off. Sometimes he would sit there all night, burning a fire and sipping from his mug. I could always go and sit with him if I wanted to; I knew that I was always welcome. I wouldn't have to say a word to him if I didn't want to and tonight I didn't. I don't know if I could have even if I had wanted to. I just wanted to go to bed, but I had to eat or face my mama when she came home later.

Before I sat down to the table, I filled the basin with warm water from the woodstove and scrubbed my face and hands till they glowed. Once I started I didn't want to stop. I scrubbed my feet and legs, and if I could have taken a bath without raising too much suspicion, I think I would have soaked and scrubbed all night. I felt dirty and I didn't know why. I was scared that I would bring the smell of that old man in the house. Scared that he might be able to track me down that way.

I was so tired that I went to sleep as soon as my head was on my pillow, and I didn't move until morning. I was scared that I wouldn't be able to sleep and that I'd have nightmares about that old man, but I was so exhausted that I slept like a rock. No wonder I forgot about the little garter snake left behind in my overalls. Poor little thing, I can just imagine how scared he must have been after my Mama started screaming when she stuck her hand in that pocket. I ran to save him before his poor eardrums were ruined, but she had dropped him and he'd slithered off the back porch before I got there.

The following Sunday I looked for Sara Rose at church, but she wasn't there. I heard her mother tell Mrs. Sutton that she wasn't feeling well. "Did she eat a bad mushroom?" I asked. As soon as I said it, I knew that I shouldn't have. The look on Mrs. Jamison's face told me so. I wish that I could have taken it back.

Mrs. Jamison didn't answer me but she turned as pale as a ghost. For a second she looked just like Sara Rose. I looked away, trying to find an escape, but she didn't take her eyes off me until Mr. Jamison came up and took her elbow. She whispered something in her husband's ear and he turned to look at me. I practically ran out the side door when his eyes met mine, they were the saddest eyes I'd ever seen. All I could think about was the look on poor Sara Rose's face and her torn dress.

I never told anyone about that day. I never said one word about that scary man, about throwing the rock, or Sara Rose's bare breasts. I thought I might tell Lucas, brag about my pitching skills at least (it *had* been a beautiful curveball), but then I'd have to tell him how embarrassed Sara Rose was and it just didn't seem like something you should talk about. Life went on as usual and I forgot about it.

I didn't see Sara for about three weeks after that. When I saw her that first time it was at the grocery and she wouldn't look at me. I didn't know why, but I was glad. I wanted her to forget that I had seen her crying, and that I had seen her standing practically naked in the woods. I was so uncomfortable.

Then I heard that they had found her uncle in the woods out past Mr. Crutcher's field. I hadn't even known that she had an uncle. The story was that he had fallen and hit his head on a rock. He must have died instantly, they said. No one seemed too

surprised; the stories going around town were that he was a mean old drunk who kept to himself and lived longer than anyone expected. It didn't seem that anyone liked him much.

I wondered if he was out in the woods the day I ran into Sara Rose, the day I saw her with that bad man. Maybe if he were there, that wouldn't have happened. Surely her uncle would have stopped that man before I had to throw the rock, before she had been so humiliated. Even if he was a mean old drunk, I'm sure he wouldn't have let that happen to Sara Rose...

The next time I saw Sara Rose, it was at church, a few weeks after her uncle died in the woods. It was on the same Sunday that I had to stand up and recite some prayer my mama made me memorize from 1 Chronicles 4:10. I didn't want to do it. I was scared that I would forget the words and embarrass myself, but all the other girls had taken their turn and now it was mine. I told mama that if I could wear overalls, then I could write the verse down and keep it in my pocket. That way I could practice up until the second that I had to recite it, but she wouldn't budge. She told me that she purposefully picked the one she did because it was short and would be easy to remember.

I was scared that no one would like the way I sounded. Scared that I would make a fool out of myself and have to fight John Randall the following Monday at school. He was always trying to pick a fight with me and I was giving him the perfect reason by standing up in church dressed like a girl in my petticoat and black patent leather Mary Jane's. Mama told me to just be myself, after threatening me with a switch to leave the ribbon in my hair, and she promised me that everyone would love it.

Anyway, I looked up and there she was, Sara Rose. I had been looking at my mama, but she was making me nervous. I could tell from all the way up at the front of the church that mama was holding her breath when I looked up and saw Sara Rose. We held each other's stare as I began:

"Oh, that You would bless me indeed,
And enlarge my territory, that Your hand
Would be with me, and that You would
Keep me from evil."

She put her hand to her chest as I spoke, and for a minute I felt like we were the only ones in the church. She seemed to be hanging on every word. When I finished she nodded and smiled at me. There were tears in her eyes and a look that I didn't quite understand. She looked like the girl I used to know but older somehow. I was glad that she looked happy; now I could forget the Sara Rose I saw standing in the woods. I knew that whatever had just passed between us had closed the door on that memory. I nodded back and she mouthed "Thank you."

I smiled back at her and I felt proud. Mrs. Jamison hugged her and smiled at me over Sara Rose's shoulder. I was glad that she was smiling too, and happy that I had something to do with it. I noticed Sara Rose's father dab at his eyes with his handkerchief. I took my seat beside my mama as I felt the blood rush to my cheeks and ears. I could only imagine how red they were. Mama squeezed my hand and I sat up a little straighter in the hard oak pew. I don't know why I worried so much about reciting this in front of our church. I sort of liked all the attention.

I snuck another glance at Sara Rose. Boy, she and her mother must have really liked the verse! They were smiling almost as big as my mama.

2010
NONFICTION WINNER



I thought it was just routine, but when the second call came a day later, this time from the coroner himself, I knew I had become a person of interest.

What Everyone Dies Of

BY GINGER T. MANLEY
Psychiatry

While some people may want to go out with a flourish, most of us say we want to die quietly, with dignity. A dignified death usually means not having to experience unreasonable life-saving or life-preserving efforts without our explicit consent. Sometimes our precautions and best-laid plans work; unfortunately sometimes they don't. As a registered nurse and as a family member, I have been a part of both situations, and that is where this true story begins.

My husband's step-mother, Jean, lived in Great Britain before she married DeWitt, my father-in-law, when she was in her forties. Despite her voluntary immigration to the Colonies, Jean remained British to the core. At the same time she embraced all American holidays with great enthusiasm, something everyone who knew her found delightful. In our family there were two certainties connected to holidays with Jean. One was she would try to cook an American-style meal and the other was she would sing at the drop of a hat—and she would do both very badly.

A Christmas Eve family tradition developed around watching the modern film version of *Little Lord Fauntleroy*. "As the villagers and gentry of 19th century England gathered in their little church for services, they sang the Anglican hymn, "Bless my Soul, the King of Heaven." Jean always chimed in loudly singing off key and off beat, to the great amusement of all her adopted family.

Jean and DeWitt lived near Charleston, S.C., in their retirement until a wasting illness robbed DeWitt of his independence and of his opportunity to live out his life in the country which he fiercely loved. In 1986, Jean determined that he could get better end-of-life care under the British National Health Plan, for which she was still eligible in her home country, and they boarded a plane bound for the U.K. DeWitt came off the plane behind the wheel of his motorized scooter, tooting the bike horn that Jean had attached to the handlebar. The couple settled into a first floor flat in the village of Seaton near Jean's earlier home of Sidmouth on the coast of eastern Devon.

While DeWitt was still somewhat mobile, Jean would often load his scooter into their motor car and take them off for a morning coffee or an afternoon Devonshire cream tea in a neighboring village, helping DeWitt maneuver the scooter along the narrow cobblestone streets and sidewalks, scowling and grumbling if anyone dared block their way with another vehicle. She always wore classic English garb—tweed skirts and jumpers in cool weather; Liberty prints or Laura Ashley's on warmer days.

Three years after they moved to England DeWitt died as expected in his bed in the front room of their flat, attended by home nurses and neighbors. We had visited them six months earlier but none of his immediate family could be there at the end. By all reports, it was a "good death."

Pat and Jim, their next-door neighbors, were unfailing in their kindness to DeWitt during his decline and later to Jean, who had developed Parkinson's disease during DeWitt's final years. Never much of a driver even when she was healthy, Jean was a true menace on the road once the Parkinson's had stolen her reflexes. She gave up her motor car and replaced it with DeWitt's motorized scooter, which Pat and Jim regarded as infinitely more dangerous than the car. They watched in dismay as she would scoot up and down the village streets, completely disregarding all roadway courtesies and rules. If Jean couldn't make it into a shopkeeper's store, she parked in his doorway and tooted the horn until someone came out to attend to her.

When we visited Jean in Seaton a few years after DeWitt's death, we missed seeing Pat coming and going next door and we were surprised to hear she had died.

"What did she die of?" I asked.

"She died from what everyone dies of," was Jean's response. No matter how many times and how many ways we asked the question, we always got the same answer.

If I looked out the plate glass window in the front room of

Jean's flat, across the esplanade, turning my head to the right along the horizon of the English Channel towards the chalky cliffs to the west, I could see a little of Beer Road, just as it made its ascent from the beachfront of Seaton to the bluff town of Beer. The scene was a favorite of painters, among them Jean, who had captured it in water colors and in charcoals. While living in the Charleston area, she frequently hung her water colors of Rainbow Row and the Gullah women on the fence at St. Phillip's Church during Spoleto and other arts shows, and she did the same with her paintings at local art shows in Seaton.

The Big House on Beer Road

My husband and I had once walked up Beer Road. Trekking is a national sport in England and almost every roadway is crossed by public footpaths. We followed one such trail leading off the road to the right into a wide garden which swept up against a stately manse. Elderly residents in wheelchairs accompanied by family members were enjoying tea and sherry in the garden. We enjoyed sitting there for a while as we recovered our energy from the steep climb. On another occasion when we were riding in a car up Beer Road we wound slowly then suddenly descended sharply until just around the bend to the left emerged the front of the same estate—Check House, so named from the checkerboard pattern of the tile work over the front entrance. I used to think if I ever had to be in a nursing home in the south of England, Check House would be the one I'd want. The building has obviously stood at this juncture for most of the past century and additions have been made upwards and alongside, but none have interfered with the beautiful gardens that spread from the back of the house to the bluff.

Jean put up a good fight to stay in her flat, once locking herself inside and phoning the local constable to complain that her family was forcing her to leave it, but eventually she had no other choice. She moved to Check House, taking with her what she could and leaving the rest behind in her flat in Seaton.

On our next visit to England to visit Jean some three years later, we arrived at Gatwick Airport tired from our transatlantic journey. Beer is about three hours by car from Gatwick so we spent the night with Jean's brother, John, and his wife who lived near the airport. Before we set off on Friday morning, they warned us her condition had deteriorated quite a bit, but they also told us that a few months earlier she had reveled in the party thrown in honor of her eightieth birthday.

Jean was sleeping on her bed when we walked in, her thick curly hair smudged with grey and framing her thin face. Arrayed on a table next to her bed was a stack of some fifteen or twenty of her colorful wide brim hats. Standing at the base of the table were her water colors and brushes. On the wall above her bed hung one of her recent paintings of the entrance to Check House with every tile exactly aligned and every pillar upright and even.

I looked out her window across the garden to the vast openness of the English Channel. Because of the foliage I couldn't quite see all the way back to the esplanade in Seaton, but I could imagine the scene. The 2 o'clock tea trolley arrived, waking Jean, and we were offered pots of English tea and/or small glasses of sherry. Jean opted for tea and I chose sherry for myself. The staff member helped her into her chair.

In the years that had passed since we had last seen her, she had experienced many of the ravages of Parkinsonism, most notably the onset of tardive dyskinesia, commonly known as TD, a side effect of the anti-Parkinson's medicine, which kept her body in almost constant motion. Hands and arms waving,

legs and feet dancing in random, useless movements, Jean was almost completely unable to keep herself seated in the chair. Every few minutes she would slide to the floor and I would help her back into her chair. Despite this, she stayed true to her persona, costumed in a Laura Ashley red print dress, with her pearls at the neckline and wearing the oversized wristwatch she had worn all her life. Her hair had always been her best feature—naturally thick and curly—and today was no exception. Cut shorter than usual at her jaw line, it still fell forward into

Back home I had recently read a story in our local newspaper about a retired RN who was campaigning to have everyone she knew get “Do Not Resuscitate” tattooed across their chest. It seems she had been witness to one too many Code Blues done on patients who had not already put their wishes in writing or where the papers could not be found at the time of the emergency, or even worse where family members disagreed among themselves despite their loved one’s notarized and recorded instructions.

The 2 o’clock tea trolley arrived, waking Jean, and we were offered pots of English tea and/or small glasses of sherry. Jean opted for tea and I chose sherry for myself.

her face as she glided off the chair again, and I made a mental note to purchase a hair scrunchy for her.

I glanced at the Check House painting.

How, I wondered, could she have done this work with such precision when she cannot even raise her teacup to her mouth?

The nurse who had entered the room noted my puzzled look and told me that Jean painted almost every day and never with any TD symptoms.

Amazing, I thought.

More Sherry in the Garden

We returned to visit Jean each ensuing day, bringing her the scrunchy, which wouldn’t stay on, and some of her favorite chocolate candy, which she couldn’t eat. On the morning of our planned departure from Devon—a Monday—we checked out of our hotel and made our way to Check House for good-byes. We intended to drive to the Lake District to continue our vacation for another week. We found Jean seated on the floor of her room, dressed in another Laura Ashley—this time a grey print. The frame of her bed was gone and in its place was the mattress, placed directly on the floor.

“I like sitting on the floor,” she told us in response to our stunned question.

“I told them to just take the bed out of the room. It was too much trouble to have to climb back in every time I fell out.”

I was dismayed. Something felt very wrong and I could not ignore it. I wished I had thought to bring along my stethoscope when I packed for the trip.

“I think she’s dying,” I told my husband, and then I told the floor nurse the same thing.

“No, dear, she looks like this all the time. We just moved the bed out so she wouldn’t get hurt. You know we’re not allowed to use restraints anymore,” the nurse told me.

“Yes, I do know that. I’m also a registered nurse, and I think she’s dying. I want the supervisor called here immediately. What are the plans if she dies? Do you have advanced directives signed for her?” I asked.

“No, we don’t do that in this country. If she dies we’ll call the EMT’s. But she’s not going to die. She always looks like this,” the supervisor told me.

“You’ve got to do something,” I wailed on my cell phone to Jean’s brother, John. “I think she’s dying and there are no ‘Do Not Resuscitate’ orders.”

“We don’t do that here,” the supervisor reminded me, gently tapping my arm. “But I will ask doctor to come by and see her this afternoon when he leaves his surgery.”

Just a year earlier I had been the health care proxy for my mother in the United States as she transitioned from this life. While it was terrible to see her condition deteriorate, I knew that everything had been done that could be done and her time had come. I sat with the hospice nurse who took her history and who then certified that she was hospice eligible.

“You must be a nurse,” she had told me after completing the process. “Whenever I see these very ill elderly patients who are actually doing pretty well, I know that they must have a daughter who is a nurse and who is managing everything for their parent. She’s in good hands.”

She’d smiled and patted my shoulder as she left. I never saw that hospice nurse again, but she was with me in spirit a few days later when I stood in the doorway of my mother’s nursing home room and declared to the floor nurse that they could not again take my mother to the hospital where I knew she would lie on a gurney in the emergency department for ten or twelve hours. She was now a hospice patient and that meant palliative, compassionate care, not urgent care. The floor nurse put her hands on her hips, narrowing her eyes, and informed me she would put my refusal in her notes. I told her to write down every word I’d said. My mother lived another two weeks and she never had to go back to the emergency department or be resuscitated.

“Maybe you’d like some sherry in the garden, dear,” offered the supervisor.

The sun was warm this September morning and I enjoyed a couple of glasses of sherry while Jean was assisted to lunch in the dining room. She was still seated in her wheelchair in her room when I rejoined her after the meal. As I entered her room, she told me she needed to go to the bathroom. She was very thin by now, and I probably could have picked her up and carried her for the journey, but we had managed the short walk well all weekend with her leaning on me, so I saw no reason to change our routine now.

The medication nurse had withheld her morning dosage of Parkinson’s medication because of the increased TD symptoms and in retribution Jean’s limbs rigidly refused to move forward. Thinking I might provide a verbal cue for her reluctant legs, I said, “Onward, Jean. Onward,” to which she

responded by breaking forth loudly into "Onward Christian Soldiers." Seizing the moment, I joined in the songfest/parade, and as I marched in place and she stood motionless with her hands on my shoulders, we sang together, "Marching as to war. With the cross of Jesus..." Suddenly her hands slipped from my shoulders and she sat down hard. Her head jerked back. Her face blackened and her eyes dilated and rolled back in her head.

I have seen lots of people die, almost all of them in the course of my work as a nurse. Traditionally death has been defined as occurring when the heart ceases beating for a certain period of time, usually several minutes. As technology has advanced, definitions of death have expanded to include brain death and complete organ failure and ethical issues are

"She's died again," he said.

I conveyed the news to John.

Fifteen minutes passed and the supervisor came through the conservatory and out in to the garden, walking towards me.

"Mrs. Manley has expired," she said. "Would you and your husband like to visit her now?"

Jean was lying on her side on the mattress which was still on the floor. The charcoal tint of her skin matched the hue of her dress. I reached down to caress her hair and one of the nurses asked if I would like to lie down next to her.

Well, that's a new custom I thought, but maybe that is how they do things over here.

"Yes, thanks," I said, stepping over her and placing myself spoon style next to her somewhat still warm body.

**"I have just examined Mrs. Manley," he said,
"and she is fine. She has just had a seizure, but she's fine now."
"She is not fine," I asserted. "She is dead."**

always raised about maintaining functions after death to preserve organs for harvest. Death certificates are supposed to list the cause of death, i.e. "myocardial infarction" or "complications of childbirth" or "drug overdose." All of these are important for classification systems, but really what everyone dies of is heart stoppage.

I had never seen anyone die so quickly and completely without warning as did Jean. Trying to absorb what was happening, I thanked her for her life and for letting us be a part of it, and then I summoned someone to the room.

"She is Not Fine. She is dead."

The supervisor and the floor nurse suggested I remove myself to the garden while they sent sherry out to me. I called John in London to tell him of Jean's demise and we spoke briefly of funeral plans. While I could not see Jean's room from my seat in the garden, I could see through the conservatory window into an interior hallway. In a few minutes I saw paramedics rounding the corner heading toward her room. Moments later a man wearing a white coat headed in the same direction. About twenty minutes later, we were summoned to the dining room, where the white-coated man solemnly introduced himself as a doctor.

"I have just examined Mrs. Manley," he said, "and she is fine. She has just had a seizure, but she's fine now."

"She is not fine," I asserted. "She is dead."

"No, you are mistaken. She is talking. She doesn't remember what happened and I am pretty sure this won't happen again. I think you and your husband can continue on with your plans for your holiday. I need to get back to my surgery, but if I'm needed I can come again."

We were sent back to the garden and told we could visit her in a few minutes.

More sherry for me.

I called London again, telling John to hold off on the funeral plans for now. While John and I spoke, my husband ventured back inside and shortly reappeared in the garden, looking somber.

As I lay there, the door to her room popped open and in stepped the paramedics.

"Surely you don't plan to try to resuscitate her again," I asked.

"Yes, ma'am. We have to do that until a doctor tells us to stop."

Working in slow motion, they began to assemble their equipment.

Summoning images of poor Terri Schiavo in Florida, I threw my full body over Jean and began screaming. "This is inhumane. She's brain dead. She wouldn't want this. Let her go."

The nurse supervisor signaled my husband that he would have to get me out of there and he pulled me off Jean and up from the mattress and partly drug and partly pulled me out the side door of Check House. There was no garden or sherry here—just the alley way where supplies were carried in for the kitchen and where the garbage was hauled off.

I phoned John again to tell him about the insanity going on inside Jean's room and cursed the medical system that would allow such a thing to happen. After what was probably fifteen minutes, the white-coated doctor again appeared, escorting us back to the dining room.

"Mrs. Manley is dead," he said.

"Yes, I told you that an hour ago," I replied.

"A Rebel to the End"

We were not allowed to re-enter her room but one last glance backward as we were escorted towards the front door of Check House revealed that yellow plastic tape—the stuff of CSI—had been placed across the entrance of Jean's room.

We found a bed and breakfast where we could stay for the rest of the week and waited for plans to be made. Jean's funeral was set for Friday in the little parish church. A grave was dug in the community cemetery at the top of the hill but no casket was placed in the hole. Jean's body was being detained in Exeter, some fifty miles away because the coroner had opened an inquest into the "unexpected death of Mrs. Manley." When the coroner's office first contacted me by phone on the after-

noon after her death, I thought it was just routine, but when the second call came a day later, this time from the coroner himself, I knew I had become a person of interest.

"Mrs. Manley, can you tell me why you thought Mrs. Manley was going to die that day? You were alone with her in the room when her condition first changed? Can you describe exactly how she appeared to die and what you did? Did you check her for a pulse? Can you tell me why you insisted she not be resuscitated? I understand you are a registered nurse—why did you not immediately summon help when she seemed to be in distress?"

My husband, an attorney who had been designated the trustee for Jean's account after his father died, had spent the previous Friday in the Sidmouth office of the solicitor who managed her account. Our routine had been to visit England about every three years, and both men anticipated that Jean might not survive until we visited again. "What will be the plan for disbursing the funds after Jean's death?" he had asked the solicitor. "When will the funds become available?"

The words rushed back over him as he sat in our room and heard my end of the second conversation with the coroner. He paled and began to tear.

"You could spend the rest of your life in a British jail," he mouthed to me.

I reached over to take his hand and began to take his pulse—it was thready and irregular. I realized Agatha Christie had taken over as our tour guide and it wasn't looking too good for me or for him.

Friends and family came from all parts of England for Jean's send-off. Gathering for the post-funeral luncheon in a local restaurant, her friends were eager to hear from me about her final moments. I recounted her attempts to walk and her bursting out in "Onward Christian Soldiers." Elizabeth began to chuckle.

"Well, of course that's what Jeannie would do. She loved drama, you know. That song is banned in England. The Archbishop of Canterbury has declared it to be a warmongering song and we are not allowed to sing it anymore. That's Jean—a rebel to the end."

Everyone seemed to think this was exactly as Jean would have planned her death and "wouldn't she have loved to be here to have one last party?"

"Oh, you're caught up in the Shipman Syndrome," Jean's friend, a physiotherapist, told me when I disclosed the ongoing inquest.

"Dr. Shipman was found to have killed about 200 of his elderly patients who were residents of nursing homes and now if anyone dies unexpectedly in a nursing home or hospital when attended by a nurse or doctor, a coroner's inquest is automatic. It's not personal about you."

We flew out of England on Monday, one week after Jean's death. When we cleared U.S. immigration in Chicago without being arrested I let myself exhale for the first time in days.

The formal coroner's report arrived in the mail a couple of months later. It said she died of pneumonia and advanced atherosclerosis. I didn't really need to read it. Whatever the findings, I knew Jean had died of "what everyone dies of."

I have never sung "Onward Christian Soldiers" aloud again. I don't want any drama at the end. I have all my advanced directives in place, but if you see me come through the emergency room doors and the papers are not there, check out the tattoo on my chest before you take any action.

2010 HONORABLE MENTION

The Hotel

BY JOANNE MERRIAM
Otolaryngology

The hotel loves the plastic cards keyed to their metal locks. It whispers about love and business to the useless damask quilt you throw on the floor and to the walls' strange texture.

Its register is full of lovers. Let it give you ideas. Let yourself get lost in the folds of the blackout curtains, in the topology of the cashews in the tiny fridge. The end point of democracy: every room the same. Everyone's a king.

The hotel is every woman you've left behind. Let yourself be deceived by the wave of her hair, by the warm, quick voices of the strangers stripping the pillows. Even the ice buckets come in pairs.

Later, you'll sit in the carpark staring blearily at a map to the airport. You're alone again and you'll have to do your own crying.

Longtime employee dies in highway accident

■ Pamela Haynes, an executive secretary in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, died June 5 near Bell Buckle, Tenn., as the result of a motorcycle accident. She was 49.

In addition to serving for the past year as executive secretary to Obstetrics and Gynecology Chair Howard Jones III, Haynes' past employment at Vanderbilt included time in the Department of Cardiology, Continuing Medical Education, and Procurement and Disbursement Services.

Survivors include husband John David Haynes of Murfreesboro; parents Gene Leonard and Donna Jean Roebuck Greenwood; children Michael Charles (Stephanie Marie) Salimbene and Heather Nicole Bobo; grandson James Ryan Bobo; and step-grandchildren Rachel (Terry) Wilkey and Taylor Throneberry.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations in Haynes' memory may be made to Family & Children's Service, 201 23rd Ave. N., Nashville, TN 37203, or fcsnashville.org.

And, if you turn your head a squint just right, Roadrunner cartoons are even profound.

I'm not kidding. Think of it: Wile E. Coyote is absolutely convinced that the only thing standing between him and the achievement of his dream is finding the right thing to buy, the right technology. If he just buys the right thing (from Acme, of course), he can be happy. And when the technology fails him, and the Roadrunner sticks out his tongue and zips away, Wile E. picks himself up from the bottom of the canyon and—what? Questions his approach to life? Nope—he orders something else.

Chuck Jones manages to say something about human nature in a seven-minute Looney Toons cartoon that it would take a French existentialist 350 pages to say. Without a single laugh.

There's also this: when you enter the Chuck Jones Gallery, there's a bench that has life-size figures around it: to the left, Wile E. Coyote; to the right,

the Roadrunner; and behind, a cutout of Chuck Jones.

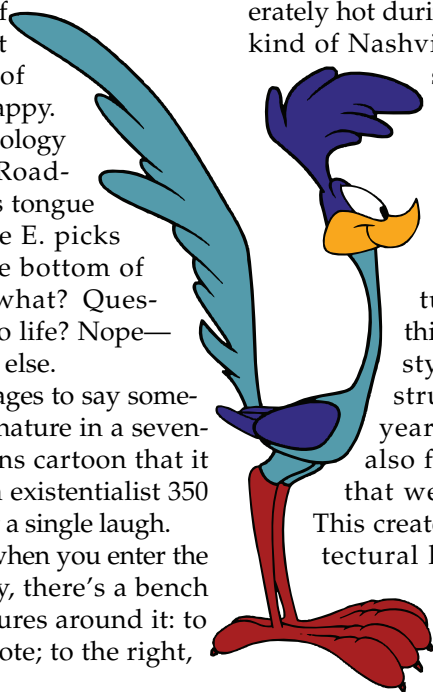
Chuck Jones, American artist. Sharon took my picture on the bench.

Trying to describe Santa Fe may be almost as futile as trying to describe O'Keeffe abstracts. Clear blue desert skies, intense sun, cool at night, moderately hot during the day, but not the kind of Nashville heat that sits outside the air conditioned house licking its chops.

People in Santa Fe may have gone a little overboard on the adobe-style architecture, though. Everything seems to be adobe-style. There are adobe structures hundreds of years old, but there are also faux adobe structures that were put up last week. This creates an oddly flat architectural landscape in which a beloved historical landmark looks remarkably like

the Target, Hyundai dealership, Walgreen's, and the International House of Pancakes, all of which are also in muted adobe colors.

What a minor quibble. One night we drove to a high point in the city's Museum Hill area, which was pretty much deserted after dark, and, moreover, actually *dark*. We watched the sun set, leaving a crescent moon and shimmering Venus in the Western desert sky, and then we watched those setting, too. The stars came out. Sharon even saw a shooting star. I was looking the other way and missed it, so she got to make the wish.



2010-2011 Vanderbilt University Directory

■ The annual directory process has begun for the 2010-2011 Vanderbilt University Directory. The information for the directory is pulled from the online PeopleFinder application. The following information from PeopleFinder will be listed in the directory.

- Name
- E-mail Address
- Department Name
- Department Phone Number
- Location

Please review your information in PeopleFinder to ensure that it is accurate. If you need to update your information you can login using your VUNetID and ePassword. Once in the application, select the Personal Update link. The following fields can be updated:

- Phone Number
- Voice Mail Number
- Fax Number
- Titles
- Location
- Delivery Address

You should contact your Directory Responsible Person (DRP) if any other changes are needed or if you experience problems. To find your department's Directory Responsible Person:

1. Go to the People Finder website (<https://phonedirectory.vanderbilt.edu/cdb/index.jsp>)
2. Under "Department Search" (on the left hand side of the page) enter the Department Name
3. Click the "Find" button.
4. There will be a "View" button on the left side of the name.
5. Click the "View" button and the Directory Responsible Person's name will listed on the page with the department information.

If there is not a Directory Responsible Person listed for your department, please contact peoplefinder@vanderbilt.edu.

Don't miss more Honorable mentions online

Honorable mentions are on the *House Organ* website at <http://www.mc.vanderbilt.edu/houseorgan/>.

There you'll find:

Fiction honorable mention "Seeing Red," by Joanne Merriam of Otolaryngology, a puzzle of a story about interlocking lives and the random way that fate puts us together.

Two additional entries from Joanne Merriam, Poetry honorable mentions "Mirror Points" and "Hotel," (also in this issue on p. 15) as well as "A Dollop" by Jan Rosemergy of the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center; "Uncomplicated" by Brenda Butka of Allergy, Pulmonary Medicine and Critical Care; and "Toy Story" by Jeff High, of Cardio-Thoracic Surgery, a longtime friend of the writing contest.