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Introduction

Palliative care is a team specialty devoted to supporting the quality of life of people with serious illness, and their families. What is at the heart of palliative care is our focus on understanding who the patient is as a person with a life story and an identity quite apart from being sick. We learn about our patients as fellow human beings. We do this by listening to our patients and families; asking about their lives and what is most important to them; asking how they are feeling inside themselves; asking about what they hope for and what they are afraid of; and by our presence at the bedside.

Sometimes the feelings and fears are so deep and so powerful that they cannot be expressed in words. This is why we make other means of communication available. I have been awe struck at what people say in a painting, or a poem, or through their face and eyes, when they feel safe enough and supported. Just as art is a means of expression and communication to other people for the artist, so it is for our patients. Despite the unimaginable stresses and burdens imposed by illness, our patients find a way to speak what is in their hearts when we provide the tools.

EM Forster wrote, “Only connect.” This is the work of palliative care. Everyone on our team does this, from the people who bring food and keep the surroundings beautiful and peaceful, to the clinicians and therapists who render care. We connect. The connection reminds us of what it means to be human and how we can bring meaning and purpose to the most difficult experiences when we are able to speak the truth to another and be heard.

Diane E. Meier, MD
Director, The Center to Advance Palliative Care
Letter from the Editor

Welcome to the second edition of The Loom, a creative arts magazine that preserves, connects and honors the creativity and stories of the Wiener Family Palliative Care Unit at Mount Sinai. The artwork, prose and poetry in this edition of The Loom are original work created by patients, families, caregivers and staff who have participated in the creative arts therapy program throughout this year.

The work featured in The Loom reflects poignant human experiences. A child’s poem and drawing reveals his promise to care for his grandmother’s beloved garden. A nurse practitioner’s collage captures the natural beauty of the world and a person’s capacity to open to life’s experiences. A patient’s rap becomes his legacy that inspires the reader to find truth in every moment. This glimpse into the heartfelt expressions of our community gives the reader a personal gift of human connection.

Historically, a woven tapestry is a significant symbol of many ancient cultures. The loom is the structure that holds each individual thread that is used to create a strong woven piece of fabric; a metaphor for the individuals that come together to form bonds of love and support. This magazine tells the story of the creative spirit of every individual that has contributed to the evolving tapestry of the Mount Sinai Palliative Care Community.

My sincere gratitude to all who shared a part of themselves and contributed.

Sarah Yacelian
Editor in Chief
Story for my Grandma

Come springtime
you will die
And I will take care of your garden

The soil is brown
So many things grow from it
Flowers and seeds

I went to your garden yesterday
It was a lot of work

I promise to shower your garden with
The light of God.
I'm Not a Rock

People think of me
As being hard, you see.
But I am not a rock.

People trust in me
To get them from A to point B.
Still I'm not a rock.

I can't fix you, I must fix me.
I am not a rock, so stop standing
On me.
I am not a rock.

I'm just little old me
Trying to do my part
Giving every body a taste
Of my heart.
I'm not a rock.

---stop---
I thank God for this most amazing day
for the leaping greenery, spirits of trees
and for the blue dream of sky
and for everything which is natural,
which is infinite,
which is YES
—E.E. Cummings
Regardless if this world shakes
I still feel great
Because to you I'm alive
But for me I'm awake
And will take all this
make something of it
create a moment in time that u will notice
My writings will make you stay focused
make u take notice of something
hidden in you like mucus
Marvelous should be used in the same sentence
for a person who is serving life in which I believe
we all serve a purpose
But we purposely take advantage
And u don't have to own a business to manage the breath
we take each day
But we panic under pressure
Please remember under grey skies Noone forces you to do s%#t
Only we sit on the toilet of success
To do our own s%#t
Our own way
And may no man wipe away feeling that some grow to say
I could have been this I could have been that
So inherit in that feeling
Instead of spending it on crap

I know you can't bare it
In matter of fact of life no Mrs Garrett
So repeat my words and fly like a parrot
Thrilling defines a person who is spilling
their emotions on the earths surface hopin they will slip
And resurface on their own without getting nervous
So don't let this wordsmith’s verses be worthless
Splurge it
As I emerge with time
Rhyme cuz I'm nice at what I do
To pursue happiness
Regrets will be left back at the door
And I just walked out the front
Ready to explore and I'm going a far distance
without saying four
It's the allure of pure strength that requires me to
go full strength
Can't fall like a person who faints
Did stupid things
God knows I ain't no saint
But these stains help me to sustain
To keep me strained from The Dude I know I ain't
I smile cause it keeps me contained
Cry cause it relieves the pain
So don't ever feel ashamed
When tears run down your face.
Yes I often find
The one who's so divine
He's never too busy, He always find time
er that up hill climb

So upon a rock I stand
Holding tight to the master's hand
He teaches me, love, strength, how to endure.
Surely the Devine one has the cure

There's nothing too hard for Father God
I find comfort in his staff and rod
So upon a rock I do stand
Holding tight to the Devine one hand

Red Light
Flowers, fruit, and coffee.
Bearing Witness

Rooms cloaked in
Sadness
Confusion
Hope and compassion
Love in a way
It has never been before.
Anticipation
Ritual
Grief
Transition unlike any other
The long corridor—endless silence,
drenched in uncertainty—
mixed with respect.
Loved ones and strangers
holding a sacred space
Guests in humanity
bow to a moment of life.
Some question
others trust
what lies beyond.
The elevator door opens
and opens
and opens.
Deep inhale
the wonder of tomorrow.
Survivor from Sziget

"Tell me the truth," spoke the memory
"It's the only way I can face reality"

Once she uttered these words to a Nazi,
then escaped into the woods

For years she hid among the partisans
scratching for food and footsteps

erasing horror with sunlight
she succumbed to dappled hope

spared life resumed wistful
there was Viennese coffee, schalig
doöns tortes and ball gowns
cabbage strudel fed war-torn men

and now a flutter of lashes
landing on rouged cheeks,
gypsy sheets in disarray, Eva
with a shrug of her shoulder

breathed these same words
confident upon her deathbed

"Tell me the truth"
The truth will do.
Wrap Me in Your Love

Wrap your arms around me
Be my life raft when I’m adrift at sea.
When thought unsettles
Intervene to still the mind.
When I wander in the desert,
Let me rest in the shade of you
When I’m parched, let me drink you
When I’m lonely,
Let me travel in your company.
When I’m confused and frightened
Silence these thorny fears.
When I wander in the burning cold
Wrap me in the cloak of your compassion
Warm me.

Preserve in me that part which lives in you.
Be my eyes when I’m blind
Be my ears when I’m deaf
Be my heart. Be my soul.
Be my actions, be my actions.
In the thick of night
Wrap your arms around me
As I sleep, be my dreams.
Wrap your dreams around me.
And in the hurry of goodbye
Wrap your peace around me.
Envelop the time
That envelops the flesh.
While I’m here
And when I’m done
Wrap me in your extraordinary love.
And bring me safely home.
You are on My Mind

You are on my mind more now than before.
I miss your laugh, smile and talking to you
I close my eyes and I can see you
Without your help I would not be the woman
I am today
Or the mother I am becoming

The day God called you home was the most devastating
day of my life
How could he take someone so loving?
You had such a heart of GOLD
Everyone that came in contact with you loved you.
You had this GLOW when we would come to visit.
I loved seeing my Chinita with you.
It reminded me of when I was a little girl.

I can sometime close my eyes and hear your laugh.
I can hear you telling me in Spanish
"Lisette ponte un poquito de color en su cara"
(Lisette, put a little color on your face)

You are on my mind more now than before
But as long as I can see you when I close my eyes
I know you will always be with me.
Support for the Arts Therapy Program at The Hertzberg Palliative Care Institute is provided through the generous donations of Joseph Hertzberg and Margaret and John Ruttenberg. For more information and to inquire about submissions to The Loom please contact:

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