



Experience

Expérience

Dr. Price Sparling is a physician and dance artist living in Victoria, BC.

Austin Taylor, former chairman of the Toronto investment firm ScotiaMcLeod and a leading figure in Canada's financial community, died in Vancouver on Dec. 19, 1996, at the age of 66.

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Bay Street Jockey

Sydney Price Sparling, MD

Written aboard the ferry *Spirit of British Columbia* on its last sailing of the night. Austin Taylor's memorial service had taken place in the afternoon. Memory filled the sail.

A hulk of a man
always hankering for a challenge
the scent of success flaring his nostrils
the mighty Jockey of Bay Street.

Keen of eye and daring in vision
a mound of a man
no
a mountain of a man.

Always interested in the other
curious about the globe-trot of this unconventional physician
"Come in"
"You'll stay for dinner"
and encouraging
"Publish the poems"
"Ambassadate the world".

Austin was my Hernando Island patient and my friend
all the world in one huge man
constellated by a family he loved.

Crusty patriarch in the corner chair
cigarette burns on the pine floor.
Impossible at times —
demanding,
smoking, eating,
swelling.

Three hundred pounds, barely able to walk,
riddled with a silent malignancy.
Three hundred pounds, barely able to sleep,
deprived of the peace of night.
Cantankerous.

Betsy walked the meadow, Riley flushed out quail.

Inside that hulk lurked a phantom, Fear.
I should have clenched my fist and boldly plucked it out.
It veiled the loneliness of the heart, the longing for affection.

How to caress a body of edema and ulcer
inhabited by malignancy?

How painful, how sorrowful.

Rant against this retreat, these ravages.

How small, how vulnerable.
Jockey without a horse.

"Money, are you there?"



Mania infects the final horse-trading
fortunes fail and disappear.

"Family, are you there?"

"Did you ask for God, Austin?"

Tears dampen the last mad moments.

Cremation.

Smoke and ashes.

In the morning I will turn to the east.
To the west the sea is calm.

Yes, Austin, you were singing *Amazing Grace*
as I drove along the dark, wet highway to the ferry.

God was kissing you.

An invitation

Experience



CMAJ's Experience section offers a forum for physicians to reflect on the often-unanticipated opportunities for growth that arise in our professional and personal lives.

"Experience" can mean the lessons of the past or the knowledge gained as events accumulate. But it can also describe our engagement with the present: times of difficulty, moments of insight. For physicians, it begins with direct encounters with people whose "illness experience" enters our professional and personal experience.

Physicians have used this new forum to reflect on family illness, uncomfortable questions about the right to die, personal confrontations with mortality and the ghosts of humanitarian medical missions.

CMAJ invites inquiries from authors interested in sharing their experiences and personal perspectives to enrich the thinking of others. Contact John Hoey, MD, Editor-in-Chief, CMAJ; tel 800 663-7336 ext. 2118, fax 613 523-0937 or e-mail hoeyj@cma.ca. If writing, please include your telephone number.

Une invitation

Expérience



La chronique Expérience du JAMC offre aux médecins une tribune de réflexion sur les possibilités d'épanouissement souvent imprévues qui se présentent dans nos vies professionnelles et personnelles.

Le mot «Expérience» peut signifier les leçons tirées du passé ou les connaissances acquises au fil des événements. Il peut aussi décrire notre engagement envers le présent : périodes de difficulté, moments d'introspection. Pour les médecins, l'expérience commence par des rencontres directes avec des gens dont le «vécu de la maladie» envahit notre expérience professionnelle et personnelle.

Les médecins ont utilisé cette nouvelle tribune pour présenter des réflexions sur la maladie familiale, des questions troublantes comme le droit de mourir, des confrontations personnelles avec la mortalité et les fantômes de missions médicales humanitaires.

Le JAMC invite les auteurs intéressés à faire part de leur vécu et de leurs perspectives personnelles afin d'enrichir la réflexion d'autrui. Veuillez communiquer avec John Hoey, MD, rédacteur en chef, JAMC; tél. 800 663-7336, poste 2118; télecopieur 613 523-0937; ou courrier électronique hoeyj@cma.ca. Si vous vous adressez à lui par écrit, veuillez inclure votre numéro de téléphone.