The word “epilogue” usually appears at the back of a publication or the end of an article, on a section containing what radio commentator Paul Harvey calls “the rest of the story”—events that postdate the main body of the work.

Although this commentary comes at the very beginning of the issue, it is, in fact, a “rest of the story” epilogue. Actually, make that rest of the stories. From time to time, readers ask us “Whatever happened to . . . ?” such as and such an author or subject from a past issue of Dartmouth Medicine. Or authors or subjects themselves write to let us know what happened after our writers turned off their tape recorders and our photographers put their lens caps back on. So this is an update to several stories from past issues—and one in this issue.

In our Winter 1998 issue, biochemist Connie Brinckerhoff wrote about dealing with breast cancer. She explained that walking her dogs every day had helped her cope with her chemotherapy and radiation treatments—so we illustrated the article with a lively photo of her and her husband, Bob, with their three dogs.

Several months ago, I got an e-mail from Connie Brinckerhoff. “I was at Smith [her undergraduate alma mater] for a few days this week,” she wrote, “and the picture of Bob and me with the dogs surfaced as a point of discussion. People love that photo! It is a tribute to . . . [photographer] John Douglas for capturing all the energy. I am glad everyone likes it so much—the reason for it [that is, the photo’s connection with her cancer] seems to have been lost, which is great!” It is indeed great news that Brinckerhoff is now in good health.

So, too, is medical student Paul DeKoning, who wrote in our Spring 2002 issue about being diagnosed with lymphoma during his first year at DMS. He had been in remission but was undergoing a new round of chemotherapy at the time his piece was published a year and a half ago.

We just heard from DeKoning that he’s now “doing famously. I’ve decided to split my fourth year,” he said, “spreading it over two years.” He plans to take some extra electives and also work overseas next summer in a mission hospital. “As well,” he added, “I’ll be taking the opportunity to slow things down a bit and smell the roses. While it does mean another year of school, I think the pace of that year will be more enjoyable. . . . And what’s more, it means another year at Dartmouth. It’s a great place to be. You couldn’t pay me to be anywhere else. That’s not an idle statement. Dartmouth is a special place.”

Sadly, not all of our epilogues are good-news ones. Readers who recall our Fall 2002 cover story—featuring striking oil paintings of operating-room scenes by surgeon Joe Wilder, a 1942 Dartmouth College graduate—will be sorry to learn that Wilder died on July 1 in New York City of a coronary arrest. But his artistic legacy serves as a reminder of the powerful connection between medicine and art.

The final epilogue affirms the fact that medicine involves art in the word’s broader sense, too. An update on this issue’s cover feature, it is an especially sad “rest of the story.” Local French teacher Kathy Boisvert, who’s pictured on the cover (she’s the one on the left), was paired with medical student Rebecca Cogswell through DMS’s Patient Partnership Program. As Boisvert battled back breast cancer several times, her relationship with Cogswell came to transcend the program that had brought them together. At the time the photos were taken and Boisvert was interviewed for the article, she was doing fairly well.

But as this issue was going to press, we got word that Boisvert’s health was declining fast . . . and then that she had died on September 15.

The root of the word “epilogue” is the Greek leg- ein, which means to gather or say. In Dartmouth Medicine, our goal is to gather in and then “say”—that is, share with you, our readers—moving stories like these. Boisvert was willing and, in fact, delighted, to be part of our cover article (which starts on page 32) because her relationship with Cogswell, a medical student many years her junior, meant so much to her. It’s clear that one of Boisvert’s legacies is a doctor-to-doctor who understands in a powerful way the human side of illness and the humanity of the ill.

You know, despite the tears pricking my eyes as I write these words, what that augurs for medicine is good news. DeKoning is right—Dartmouth really is a very special place.

Dana Cook Grossman

Dartmouth Medicine

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