In the ICU, Prendergast said, I would be allowed solo visitors, 15 minutes per person per hour—and how many brothers do I have? Clearly, I do not want to spend my final time in the ICU. I want to spend it here in my beautiful aerie.

I asked how they'd handle another intestinal obstruction. "Do I starve to death in my bed?" I asked, ever the minceur des mots. No, I was gently corrected: a gastric tube could be installed to relieve pressure and enable me to eat liquid-y things for as long as they could be processed. (I recall that at The End, we're not that interested in food anyway—as I am beginning to notice.)

Thursday, February 22, 2001: Home again, after a wonderful two weeks in Pennsylvania. I'm sitting in the waiting area at the Cancer Center for a routine blood check and notice, with some satisfaction, that I feel like a visitor, not a regular. I'm to see Marc in an hour and Karen an hour after that, so I'll get two readings on my course position. This visit's burning question is whether the rock that appears below my sternum after ingesting anything is part of me or of the disease. (I still value the distinction, even if it is illusory.)

I acquired a nice big scratch in one lens of my $700 glasses, and my reaction was "Well, we're not gonna have to worry about the expense of new glasses."

Epilogue: Mary Daubenspeck died a month after her last journal entry—on March 24, 2001. Her brother Andy says that "Mary's last days were difficult. She never gave in, really, to the idea that she was dying. Her mind accepted palliative care, but her heart never did. She struggled to the end, which was very hard for those of us who loved her—we wanted her to suffer less than her struggle permitted."

"Since Mary's death, her beloved Keeper's Cottage has become a focal point for our sense of loss (even, sometimes, anger); we spend time there doing things we used to do with her. Mary felt a special sense of stewardship for the Keeper’s Cottage. Situated next to the Nauset Lighthouse, it symbolized for Mary part of the connection of humans to something bigger, something beyond the concept of ‘owning.’"

"In the same way, Mary was and still is her family's lighthouse. Her family and extended circle of friends are aware that Mary continues to inhabit our thoughts and feelings, affect our course, light our way.”
Broken bodies, broken souls

continued from page 61

his hands clinging to mine, finally releasing me. I can only hope that he found something reassuring in that contact, some solace from his loneliness, a temporary salve for his inner demons.

I had a cousin who was schizophrenic. He spent a few years in and out of the medical and psychiatric systems—which should be truly integrated but aren’t—and he finally killed himself. He was younger than this man and always had a home and was well cared for (in some ways), although obviously those advantages didn’t save him. If he had lived longer, might he have ended up like this, on a gurney in an ER hallway, begging for help? If so, would he have gotten better care than I was able to give this man? Is there anything else I could have done? Would it have made a difference?

I continue working through the night, struggling with my own demons. But I am relieved to realize that at least I am still capable of being disturbed.

Letters

continued from page 29

that he went on to be chief of cardiothoracic surgery at Albany Medical College.

David L. Siegal, M.D., M.H.A., DC ’53
Carmel, N.Y.

Home delivery

I am a former MHMH employee and always looked forward to reading Dartmouth Medicine. My husband is a faithful blood donor at DHMC and whiles away his appointments reading the magazine. We’d appreciate being able to read it at home, too. Would you please add us to your mailing list?

Diane Burrows
South Reading, Vt.

Moving on

I was an R.N. for 19 years at MHMH and always enjoyed reading Dartmouth Medicine. I now live in North Carolina and would appreciate being on your mailing list.

Sue Broderick
Hendersonville, N.C.

See the box on page 27 for details about being added to our mailing list.

Margaret

Margaret values her friendships. Whenever she needs a ride, she knows she can count on her friends to help. When she needed high-quality eye care, a good friend recommended DHMC. Margaret is so pleased with the care she receives that she decided to be a good friend to DHMC. She established a Charitable Gift Annuity with funds from a matured CD. She liked the idea of having a fixed income for life, a charitable tax deduction, and knowing her gift will support medicine and research at DHMC. If you ask Margaret, she’ll say she didn’t do anything special. After all, that’s what friends are for.

FEATURES

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