EDITOR'S NOTE

Seeing life whole
By Dana Cook Grossman

During the 11 years that James O. Freedman was the president of Dartmouth College, from 1987 to 1998, his name appeared in these pages a couple of dozen times. Usually, we were dutifully reporting some administrative—that he had spoken at the dedication of a new building, had sponsored a lecture series, or had named a new dean for the Medical School.

But twice his name appeared here as a byline—one on an essay and once on a feature. There was nothing the least bit dutiful about our decision to publish these two articles. No one leaned on us to commit to paper some ponderous presidential pronouncement. Instead, we eagerly sought the privilege of sharing with Dartmouth Medicine's readers these compelling pieces—both of which he had originally written for other purposes.

That's because in these two cases he was writing about cancer. About a cancer—non-Hodgkin's lymphoma—that eventually claimed his life, at the age of 70, on March 21 of this year.

Everything Jim Freedman wrote was eloquent and literate—even the requisite presidential pronouncements—but these two pieces were especially powerful. Although for many years “cancer was a disease to be spoken of socially in the most hushed of tones, if at all,” as he put it, he was forthright in sharing his own experiences with the disease.

In our Fall 1995 issue, he traced the metaphorical and literal use of the word “cancer” through the ages and the scientific advances made against the disease during the 20th century.

And in our Fall 1994 issue, he wrote about learning that he had cancer. “I came to concede for the first time the certainty of my own mortality. . . . I also came to appreciate more fully that the time allotted to each of us is limited and precious, and that how we use it matters. I knew these things before, but I also came to appreciate more fully that the time allotted to each of us is limited and precious, and that how we use it matters. I knew these things before, but I also came to appreciate more fully that the time allotted to each of us is limited and precious, and that how we use it matters. I knew these things before, but I also came to appreciate more fully that the time allotted to each of us is limited and precious, and that how we use it matters. I knew these things before, but I also came to appreciate more fully that the time allotted to each of us is limited and precious, and that how we use it matters. I knew these things before, but I also came to appreciate more fully that the time allotted to each of us is limited and precious, and that how we use it matters. I knew these things before, but I also came to appreciate more fully that the time allotted to each of us is limited and precious, and that how we use it matters. I knew these things before, but I also came to appreciate more fully that the time allotted to each of us is limited and precious, and that how we use it matters.

The romantic, the tragic, the comic, the satirical—be it in his finger on the elements that, in turn and sometimes all together, are the essence of life. These emotions play themselves out every day in the birthing suits, examining rooms, and ICUs of DHMC. And, to the best of our abilities, in the pages of Dartmouth Medicine, too.

We are pleased to have a new way to share the stories—and emotions—of this place. Our online edition now contains extras. For example, this issue includes a video Q&A with Dr. Ira Byock, director of palliative care. He talks about the emotions that accompany serious illness, something Jim Freedman knew a bit about. See dartmed.dartmouth.edu/summer06/html/wl.php for this issue's web exclusives, and page 13 for the associated article (it takes a few weeks after a print edition is out before its contents are posted, but the online extras are available as soon as you read about them). You can then see expressions, hear voices, feel emotions—"see whole" the life of medicine at Dartmouth.

You can also go to this issue's listing of web-exclusives to read the two pieces that bore Jim Freedman’s byline. I now rue the fact that we shared his insights into “life and its exigencies” only twice, but I'm very glad that we did so at least twice.