



Untitled #2

Digital photograph

By Robert W. McCollum, M.D.

This photograph belongs to a series of floral still lifes called “Playful Petals.” That whimsical title and the insightful image are vintage Bob McCollum. The dean of Dartmouth Medical School from 1982 to 1990, McCollum died last fall after a long illness. But his sense of humor and spirit of discovery never waned. “The drive to observe and share observations with others has pervaded my life,” he reminisced last summer, shortly before his death. And at a celebration of his life in October, there were as many chuckles as tears, as colleagues shared amusing anecdotes. McCollum grew up “on the flatlands of Texas in a modest farming family,” recalls his wife, Audrey McCollum, and he was deeply affected by a family vacation to Colorado when he was five. “I marveled at the beauty of the Rockies,” he once explained, “and photographed them with my box Brownie [camera] so I could share the views with my friends and relatives.” Even as he became noted for his research in virology and vaccines, art remained a lifelong interest. He took courses in watercolor and acrylic painting, was a founder of the DHMC Arts Committee, and continued to take photographs—eventually making the leap to a digital camera. He “produced thousands of photos, including intimate images of our children and me,” recalls Audrey McCollum, “as well as the intriguing people and vistas he encountered during travels to distant places. The basement of our . . . house shelters shoeboxes filled with slides.” She adds that her husband was “long attracted to the work of Georgia O’Keeffe. He shared with her a delight in exploring the often-unnoticed interiors of his subjects. It was probably not coincidence that as his own illness worsened, he was drawn toward expressions of new life seen in springtime blossoms.” ■

For a **WEB EXTRA** with links to more about McCollum, as well as more images from his “Playful Petals” series, see dartmed.dartmouth.edu/su11/we01.

