

Whitman was right when he wrote that the marrow of the human tragedy is found in the hospitals. Even though I'm closer now, at least professionally, to working in a hospital, I feel those lessons get short shrift. "What is bilirubin?" my professors ask. "How does an eosinophil differ from a basophil?"

Lessons about compassion and how to face grief need to be re-learned continually, their meanings more clearly perceived. If witnessing suffering is painful, then the clinic's response, how Mary Beth and Johanna and other volunteers react to it, is heartening. A man may come to the clinic's door asking for vitamins, Tylenol, a splint, two socks, and a trip to Nevada, pronto! and no matter his demeanor, Mary Beth or Johanna

will respond evenly, kindly, and often with "Hon" at the end. In all likelihood, four of his five requests will be satisfied. He will feel better when he leaves than when he arrived. At the clinic in Kensington, I learn how to minister. I learn, on a deeper level, that the hand extending the bandage is also bleeding, and, like the wound toward which it travels, can be restored by the very arc of its movement.

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Here Come the Drums

*Life's a "bowl of cherries" some souls say
Others sing aloud, "only a cabaret."*

*Life's really a parade with a lilting tune
So join the marchers before it passes too soon.*

*When feet follow beat, there's much excitement and fun
An adventure to remember when the parade's long done.*

*Come blow your horn, clang the tympany
Or just be a parader and walk silently.*

Joseph D. Wassersug, M.D.



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