

## A Fortunate Man

**Biographical Sketch submitted by H. Ward Trueblood in honor of his  
Class of 1960 50<sup>th</sup> Reunion  
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My choice of medicine as a career was solidified at Earlham. I did not exactly know how chemistry was going to fit in, but I liked understanding the structure of the natural world. Cell Biology with Bill Stephenson was the best class for preparing me for medical school. Of course the whole faculty set a theme for academic excellence coupled with service. Medicine has been a perfect choice; I still practice it, teach it, and study it.

The second great choice after career is picking the person you wish to live with the rest of your life. That decision involves some luck, an adventure, personal growth and hope that they will stay with you in spite of who you really are. I met Nancy Young at Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania where she was a nurse and I, an Intern. I proposed over short wave radio from Vietnam and sent her a diamond in the mail. She now has a psychoanalytic practice. After 45 years Nancy and I remain best friend, soul mates, supporters, and addicted to our nightly touch.

Children are probably the biggest thing any of us do, and here again is some luck, but we hit two home runs with Hope and Nathan. Hope graduated from Earlham in 1990 is a wine maker and mother and Nathan taught Physiology at Earlham for four years and is now embarking on a new career as a Physicians Assistant. Hope and Nathan are loving, thoughtful, productive adults who married well and produced 5 spectacular grandchildren.

I have discovered 5 sources of true satisfaction and pleasure in the last 50 years: acquiring knowledge, performing learned skills, helping others, communicating and exercising. Each of these produce their own free standing pleasure but you can imagine how wonderfully the first three fit into being a surgeon.

What is love if it is not expressed in helping someone in need, freely, when you don't have to; just because of an inner generosity that comes from a place you don't understand. Once started in this caring business, I found it provided an intangible return.

Medicine can be the sponge of another mysterious drive of the human engine; the unquenchable drive to know more of the world around us. As Aristotle said "all human beings by nature desire knowledge". Obviously medicine is an ever growing challenge. The field of surgery adds the demand of perfecting eye hand skill to perform a procedure. This is rewarding like any hard learned skill. A very wise surgeon and partner said to me near the end of his life, "there is a certain ecstasy in surgery that the non surgeon will never know" and I believe that to be so. When surgery is performed with mastery and is folded in with the human interaction, and the caring part, it jumps the endeavor to another level and becomes very special for both physician and patient. After 46 years and 20,000 surgeries, I must also say there can be some one-way, lonely streets working on desperately injured and ill patients when one looks failure in the eye. It is in those times when there is only one essential prayer, "*make me an instrument,*" because it affects the inner state of the prayer, is not selfish, and our limited power is obvious.

In the last fourteen years I have discovered the pleasure of writing poetry, meet monthly with my writing group, and even published a book in 2008, "To Bind Up Their Wounds". Poetry writing is introspective and proves to be another outlet for one of these mysterious human drives; to communicate.

I run bike swim and play golf three to five times a week and found it to be a social outlet. Exercise gives me a sense of well being. Evidence based medicine even says it is good for us!

Finally I find myself volunteering three days a week; two working with a team of six old guys remodeling houses for charity, and by the way, both gaining knowledge and performing a skill. One day each week I teach third year medical students bedside diagnostic skills. It is very moving to see the generosity of the ill patient; when asked permission for a medical student exam, even when they need help, people say yes. I am impressed with the honesty with which they tell their story. The medical students also reassure me of the idealism and seriousness of the future crop of doctors. Life is filled with teaching moments and medicine is filled with mentoring. Actively teaching medical students and residents heightens and multiplies the deep satisfaction that flows from helping someone in need.