

Shifting Dullness

July, 1995



"Doctor, you must stop addressing your Medicare patients as Comrade."

Inside this extensive issue:

- **Nothing much**
- **On the Ward**
- **Burned by the Boards with RA**

On the Ward with Ard

As Duke trims down and converts to a managed care system there will be fewer labs and procedures for learning purposes of which to take advantage. No more daily hematocrits to teach you the value of a steady level of red blood cells or no more of those extraneous MRI's to prove to you that the brain really is in the head. Those days of extravagant learning are now a thing of the past. The medical student will be challenged to learn more on a decreasing budget that is partially financed by his or her increasing tuition (that seems like the only thing around there that is not being managed). There are a few who have decided to accept this challenge and lead the way to increasing your learning power exponentially with the minimum effort.

One of the many opportunities to learn offered to the medical student in this vast oasis of knowledge here at Duke is the "on-call" experience. This is offered on virtually every rotation in which you will come in contact. Generally speaking, being on-call requires that you spend extra hours, usually until 12 midnight or even overnight, in the hospital and participate in the activities of your "team." The activities of the team vary widely, usually based on the given specialty and the personnel of the team. As a medical student, your given responsibilities may include tagging along behind a resident, keeping him or her company or providing the entertainment for some recreationally deprived residents by dazzling them with your sheer ignorance of the subject matter. However, on most occasions, you will find yourself busy doing physical examinations on newly admitted patients or doing procedures on patients on your team or holding a retractor late into the night. Obviously, all of this could occur without your presence (except the entertainment part),

so why are you required to be there? The principle behind having a medical student on call is that the more time you spend in the hospital, the more you learn.

However, as I have personally proven time and time again, it is possible to spend enormous amounts of time in the hospital and leave as dumb as you entered. The key to being on call is to not be on call. I know this is confusing—being and not being all at the same time; how is it done? Simple—you spend time in the hospital but you do the things *you want to do*. Duke offers a wide variety of alternative activities for those on call. You could enjoy television in the lounge or chats with colleagues in the cafeteria, or my personal favorite, long rides on the rapid transit train. All you need to do is to announce to your resident or intern that you are going to the "library" to work on your "paper," or that you need to go "somewhere quiet" to do some "reading." Once out of sight, it is probably advisable to call back periodically to make sure there isn't some emergency that they need the medical student to resolve, like holding a retractor. Otherwise, leave as early as you can without causing much of a stir; 10:00 p.m. is reasonable; 7:00 p.m. may be a tad bit too early. This will definitely make call a much better learning experience. ■

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Upcoming Events Around Duke and Durham

Chris Gamard

1. **Music:** As always, there are plenty of shows to be seen in the triangle. In July, the Walnut Creek Amphitheatre will host the following concerts (tickets sold through Ticketmaster):

Sat. 7/8	Lynyrd Skynyrd	7:00pm
Wed. 7/12	Yanni	7:30pm
Tue. 7/25	Live	7:00pm
Wed. 7/26	Dave Matthews Band	TBA
Fri. 7/28	Earth, Wind & Fire	TBA
Sat. 7/29	Allman Brothers Band	TBA

Also during the summer, Raleigh's City Market will host FREE concerts at sunset every Saturday night starting at 7:30pm. July's shows range from Jazz to big bands to bagpipes. City Market is between Greenshield's and Big Ed's (call (919) 783-8535 for info). Not to be outdone, Durham has its own free concerts on

the last Thursday of every summer month as part of the Durham Alive series. Ben Caribe appears on 7/27. Show starts at 5pm at the Durham Civic Center Plaza.

2. **North Carolina Museum of Art:** Experience the south through the eyes of artists in the museum's latest exhibit, "Passionate Visions of the American South: Self-Taught Artists from 1940 to the Present," which runs through August 27th. Admission is FREE to this and many other great NCMA exhibits.

3. **Los Torros:** Still haven't been to the DBAP? Don't worry, there's ample opportunity to catch the Bulls at home in July. Here are the dates: Fri. the 7th through Sun. the 9th, Wed. the 12th through Fri. the 14th, and the whole week of Fri. the 21st through Thurs. the 27th.

4. **Fourth of July:** If you're not skipping town for the beach or D.C. this holiday, check out the annual Festival for the Eno occurring on July 1st, 2nd, and 4th at West Point on the Eno City Park. Activities run from morning to early evening and include arts and crafts, food and music on four stages. Have a safe one! ■

Shifting Dullness

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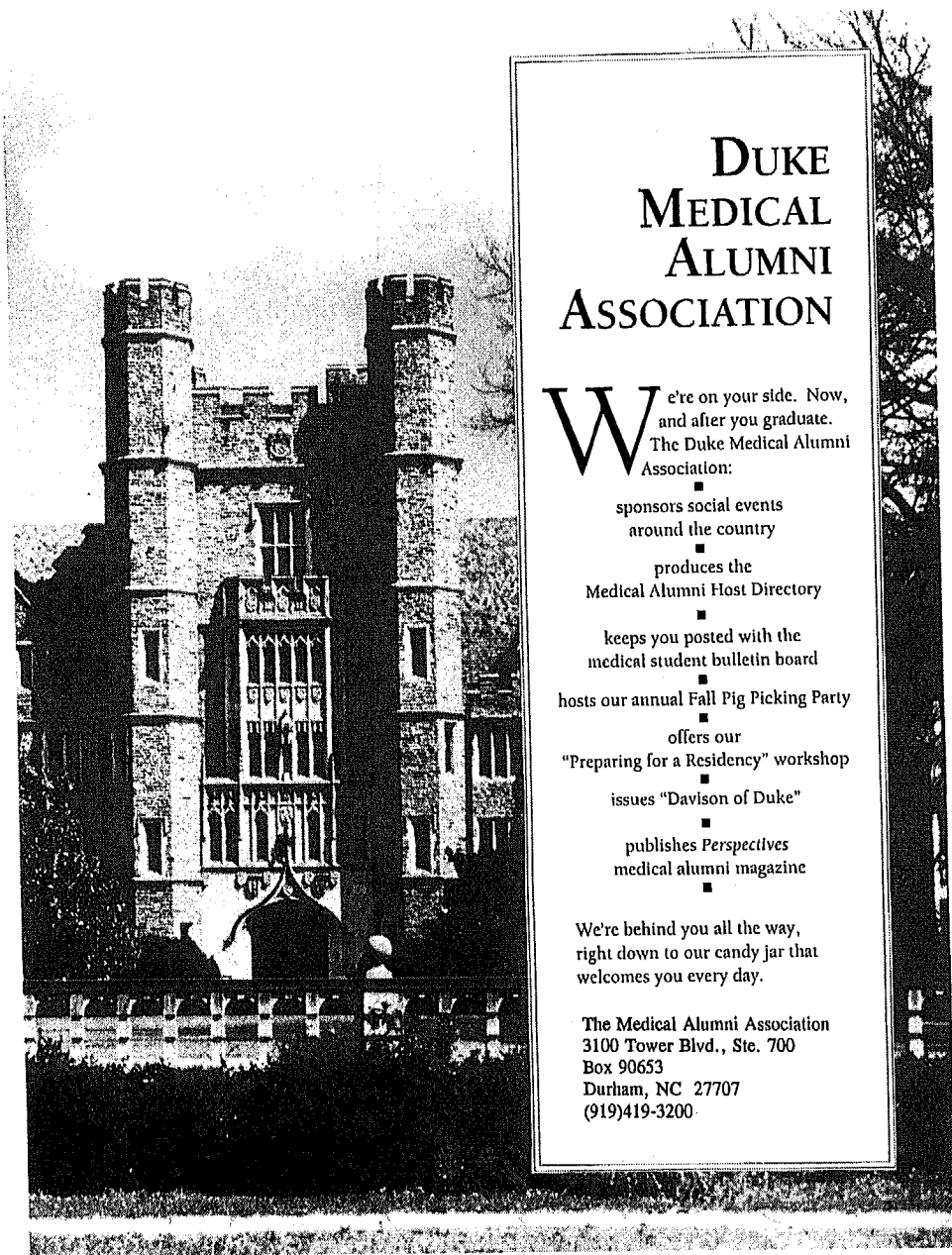
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Shifting Dullness is a Duke University School of Medicine production. Any and all submissions are welcome and need only be placed in the "Shifting Dullness Box" located underneath the candy shelf in the Deans' Office.

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DAVISON COUNCIL NEWS Announcements

New Representative

Congratulations to Gayle Howard, MSTP, who was recently elected to serve as the MSTP rep to the Davison Council!

CIBA-Geigy Service Award

This is an award provided to a rising MSIV who has shown outstanding dedication and leadership in the area of service to the school and the community. The award includes a set of CIBA-Geigy atlases as well as recognition at the senior dinner in the spring. There was recently a misunderstanding regarding the nomination process for this award. To clarify, the MSIV's will be asked to nominate someone they feel qualifies for the award. A person can nominate him or herself and/or someone else in the class. Along with the nomination, we ask that you include a brief description of the service activities of the nominee. This information will aid the Elections Committee in making the final selection. A nomination form has been distributed by Davison Council, so if you haven't checked your box in awhile...that may be the reason why you haven't yet heard about this.

For the Children

The Children's Miracle Network Fair was held on Sunday, June 4, 1995. Spearheaded by Jenny Sung, service VP, the Fair (and the Kiss-a-Pig contest) brought in \$1000.00 to the CMN. Many thanks to Jenny for a successful fair!

F.Y.I.

The Davison Council has changed the location of its meetings. We have moved from the Duke South Student Lounge to the conference room (M133) in the Dean's Hall. Our next meeting will be July 11, 1995 at 5:30 p.m.

Research Opportunity: Good Pay

--A Research Assistant needed for chart review. Excellent reimbursement. 40 to 50 hours of work, to be completed by August 1, 1995, done on your own time with no fixed schedule. The research topic is "Causes of Abdominal Pain in Children with Myelomeningocele." Research Assistant will be a co-author of the resulting paper. If interested, please call the secretary of Dr. Gordon Worley, Ms. Deborah Lasater, at 684-3173 or 684-6669.

**HAVE A
HAPPY
FOURTH
OF JULY
HOLIDAY!**

-----From the Staff of Shifting Dullness



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Roadside Assistance continued.

Alamos is a testing facility.) I'd had bad omens about this whole affair, startling dreams and such. But I was not prepared for what awaited me.

At the door stood three guards carrying standard-issue SKSs, with prominent USMLE badges on their shoulders. As I approached, a voice thick with accent accosted me. "Your papers, please."

Forfeiting over my measly admissions slip along with a small charitable contribution to smooth through that awkward recognition phase, I prayed that all would be well. I prayed that Herr Commandant would acknowledge my name on the list and not brusquely sentence me to a few weeks hard labor resurfacing Science Drive.

He paused. He glanced through his files, pulling out a card bearing a photo of me. He fidgeted. He fingered the blued gun metal next to his side. "And how do I know this is you?" he retorted.

Nervously, I fished through my bag and dug out several alternate forms of identification: passport (mine), driver's license (mine), birth certificate (mine), naturalization papers (not mine, but I figured anything could help). He shuffled casually through the papers, frowning slightly. "Your papers seem to be in order," he replied, obviously dismayed. "Sign here."

Placing my John Hancock on the appropriate line, I hurried into the room before he changed his mind. From behind me in the line I could hear the muffled shouts of a classmate failing the identification check. He was dragged from the room, kicking and screaming, to be summarily shot and fed to the dogs. Ah me, so it is with the Boards.

Inside the testing facility were a myriad of tables, stretching as far as the eye could see, each table watched by a guard like the ones at the door. I picked my way across the room to my desk (number 13, I might add), and seated myself. The guard assigned to my table was quite impressive: crew-cut, jack-boots, medals

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on his uniform proclaiming him as intimidator *par excellence*, with a specialization in routine whippings and decapitations. My, this was going to be fun.

As I acquainted myself with my surroundings, a Lieutenant Colonel took the podium. Silence washed over the masses of students as he described how to record the basic identifying information on our answer sheets. Once this was done, he turned back to the podium and announced in his stiff, accented voice, "You will not leave the testing facility unless accompanied by one of our highly trained and devious guards. You will have three hours to complete the test book in front of you. Are there any questions?"

Somewhere in the back, a hand was meekly raised. A quavering voice responded with a query inaudible at this distance. The Lieutenant Colonel turned to the microphone. "Guards, please remove the student and have him decapitated. You have three hours to complete the test book in front of you. Any questions? Good. I thought not. Begin."

A spontaneous sympathetic discharge swept over me, leaving me sitting in a puddle of sweat, shaking and trembling. I opened the book and began. Questions flew past like midnight salvos in some dark war. *Boom! Immunology! Wait - what's this coming - oh no - Wham! Embryology!* And then, about half-way through, I came across a truly troubling question:

Question 42: The mechanism of action of the quinolones involves inhibition of which of the following enzymes? (Duck.)

Well, the question was simple enough, I guess, except for that surreptitious "Duck". What did this imply? Was it part of my question? Just then, my guard peered closer at my sheet and unholstered his billy club. Taking the question's advice, I ducked and the billy club narrowly missed me. My guard chuckled his sinister laugh and mumbled, "You lucked out this time, punk."

As I answered the question and moved on to the next, from across the room I heard a sharp

team shuffled past and soon shuffled out bearing my wounded comrade. Apparently he did not duck.

I turned the page, to be confronted by some rather curious line drawings. One showed a person spread-eagle and prone on a table. Another showed a person drawn into a fetal position. A third showed a person passed out in his chair with comically-drawn intoxication bubbles rising from his gaping mouth. A fourth and final showed a person sitting upright, glazed eyes open wide. The question beneath the pictures read:

Question 76: Which scene correctly shows a defense mechanism used by medical students confronted with Step 1 of the USMLE? Pausing briefly, I chose the obvious answer.

Ridiculous question seemed to follow ridiculous question without end. No, I don't think I'll ever see Rathke's Pouch. And I've never even heard of Hansen's node. Cephalization of blood flow? That sounds vaguely familiar. The innervation of the stylopharyngeus muscle? *Three per second spike and wave?* Trust in McNamara, folks, it's on there.

Finally, I finished the requisite 180 questions. I even got to answer the nifty "bonus" question. Flipping back, I scanned through some of the more puzzling questions. Ten minutes later, the Lieutenant Colonel took the podium again. In his gruff accent, he announced, "Stop. Drop your pencils. Anyone continuing to write is in violation of the USMLE Fairness in Testing Code, section 423, paragraph 3. Guards, seize all offenders and throw them off a building."

With a brief rustling, three guards at various positions around the room grabbed fellow classmates and marched them screaming out of the room, as the remaining guards whisked away our testing materials. The Lieutenant Colonel took the podium again and announced, chuckling, that there would be a one hour break for lunch.

Great. *Only three more books left.* ■

Shifting Dullness

Duke University
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Let me tell ya 'bout them Boards . . .

by Michael DiCuccio

And so, for weeks, I, like may of my classmates, became Hermit Boy, confined to my desk studying many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore. I pounded pathways endlessly. I memorized subspecies of *Streptococcus* that I hope I never see. I crammed information about confusingly similar drugs that I'll never use into what space was left in my cranium. In short, I studied for boards.

The day of the ill-fated exam finally came. I awoke at some ungodly hour of the morning (like 6:45 - you second years will note the irony), amazed that I could even be alive at such an hour, momentarily forgetting that bit about Surgery. I ate breakfast and, with my roommates, headed to the Searle Center, Temple of the Boards.

As we waited, drug names bubbled unbid-

den out of my unconscious. Tolazamide. Tolnafate. Tolbutamide. Toll House cookies. Tolmetin. Even ones I'd never heard of, and was sure I was making

up in fits of hallucination; I don't think I'll ever prescribe *phentoloperacetaminophylline*. Not usually being one to suffer from verbigeration or clang associations, I wrote it off as the brief reactive psychosis I and so many others had entertained the last few weeks.

And so, at 8:15, I stood in the thronging line for entrance into the testing facility. (I'm sorry, the Searle Center is not a *testing facility*. Los



Continued on Page 6