

A gift is something that is given to someone without the expectation of receiving anything in return. A gift usually makes you happy, and often shows you how much someone cares. We are gathered here today in thanks to celebrate the amazing gifts that have been given to us, the medical students of the Pennsylvania medical schools. We gather here to thank our donors and their families for giving us the ultimate present: the ability to bring humanity to the study of medicine.

I'd like to tell a quick story. There is a medical student among us today whose family suffered a great tragedy a month before he began medical school. His mother suddenly and without any forewarning passed away. His mother was everything to him, and he felt as though the world around him had come to a standstill. This student was heartbroken, thinking that his life had come to an end. He almost chose not to come to medical school because he had lost all of his will power. However, in saying his goodbyes to the most important woman in his life, he promised her that he would not give up, and would instead continue on his journey to achieve his dream. When it came time to make funeral and burial arrangements, however, this young man had a realization. His mother had always wanted to be a teacher. He was able to make her final dream come true and helped her make her lifelong passion come into fruition. Upon her passing, she became an anatomy teacher of sorts. Medical students at a university in Southern California would be taught anatomy by his mother, and she would go on to make an enormous impact in the future of medicine.

The medical student I have been referring to is in fact myself. When my mother passed away at such a young age, a month before my white coat ceremony, I was devastated. I even lost my motivation to continue on with my career in medicine. However, this final selfless act by my mother reminded me of something. It reminded me why we are doing this. It reminded me that we are dedicating our lives to the study and practice of medicine, similar to all of our donors. We are dedicating ourselves to improving the lives of our patients, similar to our donors.

To the families, friends, and loved ones of the donors in attendance, I want to thank you on behalf of all of us medical students in Pennsylvania. I truly recognize how difficult your loss has been, as I have had a similar loss. We recognize the sacrifices you have made to allow us to learn from your loved ones. I want to thank you for your dedication to us, the doctors of tomorrow, as we learn our lessons from your loved ones.

Life is as disappointing at times as it is beautiful. Losing a loved one is never easy, and never becomes easier. However, the beauty in life is seen, I believe, in the moments when individuals act selflessly for the good of others. The people we are celebrating and remembering today did exactly that: they made the most selfless decision in allowing us to learn medicine from them. On behalf of all medical students, I want to thank them for their gifts, allowing us to learn anatomy in the most humanistic way possible. Because of your actions, we will learn more about life and may discover the next cure for a devastating disease. You will never be forgotten. May you rest in peace.

Eulogy #2

Angela Saponaro, PCOM

We are all here today to celebrate and appreciate many wonderful people for the memories they shared with us on Earth and the spirit they bring to all of us now. I am honored to express with you how their gift of life has left an impression on me.

I remember the day we first met our donors. We were all a little unsure of what was to come and how the experience would be moving forward. I definitely did not realize that I, just like all of you, would form a special relationship with all of the extremely selfless and amazing people that shared their lives with us. After the first few days, I started talking to my donor! I would say good morning, check in with him from time to time and say, "bye, bud!" when I left for the day. Eventually, that nickname caught on and we affectionately called our donor, Bud. From then on, Bud became a special part of my life and even a part of my family.

During my time with all of the donors, I had the privilege of meeting salespeople, IT specialists, home keepers, accountants and many others. Their love and personalities shined not only while they were living on Earth, but even did so every day I got to be with them. I felt their presence in lab and out of lab. They supported and encouraged me and my classmates during times of stress and times of learning. I did not truly understand the gravity of their impact on my life, however, until I had to say goodbye. As my time drew near an end in lab, it dawned on me that this was the last time I was going to be with Bud. When I went to whisper him a goodbye, I was overcome with emotion. I felt sadness at first; but then I felt him there with me and I smiled. I realized then, that Bud was not just with me in the lab and during the next few years of medical school, but he will be with me for the rest of my medical career and the rest of my life.

There are truly no words to express the appreciation and love, we as medical students, have for your loved ones and for all of you. Not only have I gained a role model and a friend, but Bud, just like many others, gave me the chance to chase after my dream of becoming a doctor. I hope it brings you comfort knowing that your loved ones are truly with us even if they cannot be here on Earth. Please know that their selflessness and generosity has meant the world to me and is something that inspires me to keep pushing every single day. I want you to know that their impact has spread far and wide, even though they are not able to be on this earth with us. Their amazing spirits are not only with all of you, but are also felt daily by people like me.

Terry Pratchett said, "No one is actually dead until the ripples they cause in the world die away." Bud was my very first patient, followed by many others who gave us this amazing gift. The ripples caused by your loved ones will continue to spread as I help many patients in the future, just as they will continue to flow within your hearts.

Eulogy #3

This piece is inspired by 4321, a novel by Paul Auster that muses about the different paths that a person's life may take.

321

By Lev Litichevskiy

After Mrs. B's husband died several years ago, she got to thinking about what would happen to her own body after death. Did she want to be buried? Cremated? After looking online, she learned about another option, a way to donate her body to medical research after her spirit no longer needed it.

No, actually, Mrs. Bancroft donated her body because of her son. Will is a medical student, and he told her how life-changing anatomy class had been for him. How powerful it was to learn from such a visceral experience.

Or maybe! Dr. Bancroft did it because she was a medical professional herself. For a while, she was adamantly against the idea; she saw firsthand as a medical student what happens in anatomy lab. But as she and her husband grew older, they started discussing the idea again. They began to feel less worried about what would become of their physical bodies and more concerned about what would happen to their spiritual selves. Why not? they said.

Mrs. B loved to garden. Especially after her husband had passed, gardening helped to get her through her days, to fill the void in her heart. She had an extensive vegetable garden -- tall tomato plants, neat rows of radishes, and giant cucumbers -- but also an amazing variety of indoor plants: curling vines that wrapped around doorframes, a floor-to-ceiling ficus tree, and succulents lining her windowsills.

Mrs. Bancroft was so incredibly proud of Will and her other two children. She and her husband spent much of their retirement flying around the country visiting the far flung places that the kids had ended up: Will studying medicine in Seattle, Emma dealing with two kids and a full time job as an accountant in Phoenix, and Samuel in his last year of college at Vanderbilt.

Dr. Bancroft never did have kids. She and her husband just weren't interested. She loved her job delivering babies as an obstetrician, and he loved being a high school math teacher. As they joked with each other, they already had enough kids in their lives.

One day, while she was on her knees weeding in the garden on a beautiful, sunny spring day, Mrs. B's aging heart gave out. Losing her husband had taken its toll, and her heart just stopped.

No! Actually, it was at night. All the flying around, visiting her kids all over the country -- she didn't realize it, but Mrs. Bancroft had developed a clot deep in her legs. One night, the clot broke off and traveled to her lungs. She didn't wake up the next morning.

That's not it either! Dr. Bancroft actually died from cancer. A tumor had been growing on her kidney. When she and the doctors finally figured out the cause of her rapidly deteriorating health and how serious it was, Dr. Bancroft decided not to seek treatment. She died at home, holding her husband's hand on a cold winter evening.

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The truth, the real truth, is that I don't know what life was like for the once-living, breathing human that generously donated her body for my medical education. Even though I learned nearly every inch of her anatomy, I don't know what she was like, whom she loved, where she had traveled, whom she had met, how she spoke, or what she believed. I didn't even know her name. But I can be sure that since she was a donor, she was brave, selfless, and generous. I'm extremely thankful to her and to her family.

Thank you all for listening.

## Eulogy #4

Anthony Schwab, Temple University

Good afternoon everyone. My name is Anthony Schwab and I am a first-year student at Temple University School of Podiatric Medicine. I'm both honored and humbled to speak before you today to remember and acknowledge your loved ones. Anatomy is the foundational subject to any health professional's career, whether they know it or not. Within the anatomy lab, medical students find themselves in the early morning and late into the evening visualizing, tracing, and writing anatomical pathways out on a white board. It is a pretty daunting task to understand such complexity and beauty that textbook pages certainly do not do justice to.

As podiatry students we are required to take a General Anatomy and Lower Extremity Anatomy Course in order to cover the whole body with a specific focus on the lower limb to prepare for both our general and surgical practices. In my opinion, only through experience can we gain an intricate understanding and full appreciation for the inner workings of the human body. The gross lab is where students interact with their first patient and it is commonly their first experience with mortality, so the initial days in the lab can be stressful. As time progresses, a relationship is established with the "patient"-both working and emotional. Within the ensuing weeks and months, the trepidation felt after meeting our first patient turns into an eagerness to return to the lab to master every detail presented to us. Concluding an entire year in the anatomy lab, it has been by far the most rewarding and memorable experience of my medical education thus far.

As student doctors, we are taught to be personable, kind, knowledgeable, and empathetic-embodying many other qualities while being able to interact with, treat, and diagnose our patients. Bequeathing one's remains for the benefit of the future physicians you see here before you today is one of the most unselfish gifts a person can bestow to someone they don't even know. According to some sources, about 95% of Americans claim they support organ donation, while around 48% are actually organ donors. To each and every family member and friend of the donors that have helped mold my medical education-thank you. How strong your loved ones must have been. We are all reminded today of their peacefulness, and forever indebted to them for their selflessness. For in their rest, with your family's grace, we all were able to take on the first stage in fulfilling our biggest dream. We are forever grateful, humbled, and filled with gratitude. God bless you all.

## **Eulogy #5**

### **2019 Celebration of Remembrance Eulogy, Michael Koerner – Temple University**

I had no idea what to expect the first time I was to meet my donor. To be honest, I was nervous, we all were. Outside of the occasional brush with death during a family member's funeral, I had never spent time with anyone who had passed. Death represents the unknown, it's stigmatized and frightening.

All of those feelings dissolved when I met my donor. He was a person, not an unknown. He was someone's son, brother, maybe even father. After spending the greater part of the last four months with my donor, it's the strangest feeling to know so much yet so little about someone. His calloused hands showed years of hard work. Lines worn deep on his face recounted countless smiles. His barrel chest showed he enjoyed life to its fullest, sharing plenty of laughs. His heart so full of love, our professors would say it's probably a bit too big.

Despite not knowing him in life, I can tell you that he was selfless and gracious, giving us the greatest gift of knowledge. He was our first patient, arming us with the skills we will take forward to serve the countless individuals placed in our care for the rest of our lives. Without his and all of our donors' gifts, none of us on this stage could continue on our path, perusing our passion and ultimate goal to help others. That is something I will always remember, and will forever be thankful for. That is how I will remember my donor.

### **Concluding Poem: The Gift**

With heart slow

A choice made

To give without reward.

Mortal coil without spark

Wordlessly teaches after life.

Trace the paths

Through subtitle clue

Branch, root, and stem.

Explore the forest

That gives our light.

Its trails now clear

From one choice

One gift.