

Tribute to Robert Hippen, MD

Jeffrey Brown
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“How’s it goin’ señor?”
those words indelible
in my memory of the man
that I am now forced
to say goodbye to.
It is not fair that I shall
never again critique a new poem,
that I will not see him
in another Tuba Christmas
or across the battlefield
of a hardy RISK! game.

I want the chance again
to discuss work
or life in general,
R Crumb,
or jazz,
but I am denied.
His wit and insights
are gone from me forever —
and sadness fills the void. ❖



Dr Robert Lee Hippen, Jr
1952-2008

Editor’s Note

Robert Hippen, MD, was a long-time Northwest Permanente Radiologist at the Skyline Medical Center in Salem, OR. Dr Hippen passed away suddenly in early September. He is survived by his wife and son. Dr Hippen was a member of *The Permanente Journal* Review Board for many years and a frequent contributor to the Soul of the Healer—his contributions will be missed. A colleague of Dr Hippen wrote this tribute in his honor. Following are two poems Dr Hippen had submitted recently that had yet to be published.

Honorable Mention

Robert Hippen, MD

On her good days she might
apply a little make-up, as if
she had someplace to go, and cared.

On those days
she would wear the
diamond studs and the morning
rose up like fire in her cheeks.

“Legs still strong,” she would say,
and talk about her day,
which was like most days,
and each day she expected
I would arrive, and most often
I did, though it was over ten years
since her eyes first called me
to her fallen breasts, and sometimes
I doubted I would ever return.

Whether she had wanted children,
or had them and gave them up,
or why she didn’t marry,
I never knew,
and me a family man.

In those days there was
a chill to her rooms that even
her thin smile could not remedy,
so mostly she just sat there
and waited it out.

And all that time
she could not recall
why she had first asked
me to come; over ten years
gone by, and still the old girl
did not remember my name. ❖

Old Man Waiting at a Bus Stop

Robert Hippen, MD

The bent figure,
black hat tilted down,
rain dripping off the brim,
back to the wind.

You’ve been waiting
like this most of your life,
worried you would miss it,
worried it would come.

Now you pause and hold your breath.
The headlights a faint glimmer ...
will you sing hallelujah,
dance in a puddle one last time? ❖