Pets of the Medical Center 2003

Richie Flowers of Anesthesiology’s dog, Snicker.
Gladys has heard it all
by Wayne Wood

I’ll bet that Gladys Smith, the person who runs the office in News and Public Affairs, thought she had heard it all. She has heard from all of us in the department for years about our missing work due to stomach viruses, headaches, colds, flu, sick spouses, sick children, sick cats, sick dogs, house closings, house refinancings, plumbing problems, electrical problems, heating problems, doctor visits, dental visits, baby check-ups—pretty much anything that can disrupt life and lead to some missed work time.

But that day in late December when I went running out of the office calling over my shoulder that I had to rush home because I had to get a squirrel out of my house—I don’t think she had heard that one before.

The squirrel in question had taken up residence in the chimney, and, when he—by which I, of course, mean he or she, since squirrel gender determination is one of my many areas of non-expertise—thought the coast was clear, would pop out of the fireplace to mosey around the house. He was in search of food or water, I guess.

This started on a Saturday. Sharon and I were in one part of the house and heard some mysterious thumping and the sound of window blinds rattling coming from another part of the house. I went to investigate and was surprised to spot this bushy tailed intruder walking across the living room. The squirrel didn’t seem afraid of me—obviously a city squirrel that was perfectly accustomed to being around people. So he just hopped up on the gas logs and climbed into the chimney.

I got a flashlight and looked up into the chimney. Couldn’t see anything but sooty bricks, so I hoped the wayward rodent had found a way out the top of the chimney and that was the end of that.

No such luck.

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Pets of the Medical Center 2003
It’s our annual look at the (mostly) furred creatures that share our houses, couches, beds and lives. And sometimes drink out of our toilets.

For These Guys, It’s Personal
Two VUMC people who care for patients have their own stories of being patients here.

Writing Contest
Dust off your quills, Royals, Selectrics, and Microsoft Words—and come July, you could be the envy of your department.
Vanderbilt people love their pets. All we have to do is ask, and we get deluged with photos of the dogs, cats, and other carbon-based life forms with which we share our lives. Here is a sample of those we received from people who responded to the call for entries in the House Organ Photography Contest. Thanks to everybody who sent in pictures—and if you don’t see your pet this time, please try again next year.

1. Julie Prim, Development and Alumni. “Sophie is a miniature American Eskimo spitz. Her favorite thing to do are eating ice cubes and playing ball.”

2. Teresa MacPherson, Outpatient Pharmacy. Katie, a 130-pound English mastiff.


5. Lauren Carlan, 6 South. Maddie.


7. Julie McFarlane, Anesthesiology. “When I saw Ellie I couldn’t resist her. She immediately bounded up to me and proceeded to untie my shoe laces.”
1. David Canfield, Trauma and Beth Canfield, Core Lab. Simon and Puddin’.
2. Amy Motley, Medicine/GI. Kayla and Macey the cat.
3. Terrell Smith, Children’s Hospital. Shelby and Happy Hound.
4. Rene Kopp, 10 North. Louie, Pebbles, and Baxter.
6. Elizabeth Card, PACU. Mack (6 years old) and Ace (6 months old).
7. Becky Chesshir, Pain Control Center. Nabi the dog and Puppy the cat.
9. Lynda Wright, Otolaryngology. Luther, Sam, Snowflake, and Samantha.
11. Corey Slovis, Emergency Medicine. Nell (in the back seat) and her stepbrother Shadow (front seat), who belongs to former Vanderbilt chief resident Seth Cooper.
12. Sandy Workman, OR. Sidney and Molly.
12. Deborah Allen, Pharmacy, Darwin.
13. Jennifer Peters, Core Laboratory, Sierra.
Written all over my face

Skulking in the Underbrush


Tongues

10. Linda Bundy, Molecular Physiology and Biophysics. Sprocket.
12. Debbie Emory, Cumberland Pediatric Foundation. Obi.

Comfort is King
Employees say they were saved by Vanderbilt’s medical care; Now they give back to patients

Andy Law and Dr. Michael Fowler are two Vanderbilt employees with very different positions, but the two share a common bond of immense appreciation and respect for the faculty and staff who save lives at Vanderbilt University Medical Center every day.

It’s a respect brought on by first-hand knowledge.

Both men received lifesaving medical care at Vanderbilt — Fowler, in 1978, when he was six, and Law in 1992 when he was 38. The traumatic events shaped their character and lives, and in Fowler’s case, his career path.

Fowler, born in 1972 to William and Carol Fowler of Johnson City, Tenn., was in an automobile accident in Virginia when he was a few months old, and doctors found that he had a difference in blood pressure in his upper and lower extremities. The physician who treated Fowler told his parents that he would likely grow out of it.

When he was two years old, his new pediatrician in Johnson City diagnosed the condition, coarctation of the aorta, a congenital defect in which there is a narrowing of the aortic arch, the main artery that delivers blood from the left ventricle of the heart to the rest of the body. The defect leads to restricted blood flow to the lower part of the circulation so blood pressure in the arms and head is high, but low in the legs.

Approximately 10 percent of newborns with congenital heart disease have coarctation of the aorta.

Fowler’s pediatrician referred the child to Vanderbilt where he became the patient of Drs. Harvey W. Bender Jr., now professor of Cardiac and Thoracic Surgery, Emeritus, and Thomas P. Graham Jr., Ann and Monroe Carell Family Professor of Pediatrics. In 1978, when Fowler was six, Bender repaired the congenital heart defect with a subclavian flap repair, a technique that he helped pioneer.

“The repair I had at Vanderbilt was so innovative because it uses real vessel (taken from his arm) to repair the defect rather than plastic grafts,” Fowler said. “If I had had a plastic graft put in, I would have required surgery every time I grew.”

“I shook his hand and told Dr. Graham that he and Dr. Bender had saved my life when I was a child. I’m sure he gets that kind of thing all the time.”

“Dr. Bender was the pediatric heart surgery ‘guru.’ There were folks coming here from all over the country,” Fowler said. “Drs. Bender and Graham literally saved my life. I had the surgery, had no problems, and got checkups periodically.
If I had not had the surgery, I probably would have only lived until my late 20s. In the distant past, people probably weren’t diagnosed until they had heart failure or strokes. Technically speaking, I’m on borrowed time.”

Two years ago, Fowler was on call for the first time during his fellowship when he saw Graham for the first time in 20 years. “I recognized him immediately. Maybe it was his knee caps that I recognized because I remember specifically hugging his legs when I was in the hospital,” Fowler said. “I shook his hand and told him that he and Dr. Bender had saved my life when I was a child. I’m sure he gets that kind of thing all the time, but he shook my hand, asked me what I was studying, how I liked Nashville, and how I liked being at Vanderbilt. He couldn’t have been any more courteous.”

Fowler also visited the room where he stayed in the round wing of Medical Center North. “I remember the toys. I was always envious. They had a really nice toy collection in the playroom.”

Fowler said he considered becoming a cardiologist or a cardiac surgeon, but that diabetes was a better fit for his personality. He believes his experiences as a child shaped the kind of doctor he is becoming.

“My experience as a child makes me more empathetic,” Fowler said. “I can remember what it’s like to have a catheterization, a chest tube after surgery, and to stay in the hospital for weeks. I really look forward to being a member of the faculty. I know that we do a fantastic job of taking care of patients because of what I experienced and what I see every day. I look forward to being able to provide the same level of medical care to my patients that I received, very cutting edge, using the most recent discoveries and technology.”

**BACK FROM 80 PERCENT BURNS**

Randy Law was employed at Vanderbilt as a special procedures technologist in radiology in 1992 when doctors and nurses at Vanderbilt saved his life. He was working on his boat in his driveway when it exploded, blowing him first into the air, then into his yard. When his next-door neighbors ran outside Law told them to call an ambulance. When emergency personnel arrived, they made the decision to call for LifeFlight. The helicopter landed nearby in the Mt. Juliet Elementary School parking lot, and Law was transported to Vanderbilt.

“I remember riding in the helicopter, all of that. It was just a well handled medical case all the way down,” he said.

By the time the severely injured Law arrived in the emergency room, he had begun swelling and was having trouble breathing. He received a tracheotomy as soon as he arrived. He was cared for by Dr. John A. Morris Jr., professor of Surgery, and Dr. John B. Lynch, now professor of Plastic Surgery, emeritus. Law received second and third degree burns over 82 percent of his body, and was soon transferred to Vanderbilt’s Level 1 Burn Center. The Vanderbilt Burn Center is a regional burn center that is staffed by physicians, nurses, therapists and support personnel including psychiatrists and a chaplain who work as a team to apply the most advanced technology and treatment methods to care for severely burned patients, as well as the emotional trauma of the patients and their families.

Law remained in the burn center for 42 days, and was hooked to a respirator for 16 of those days. He required many grafts on his arms and legs, but somehow his face escaped the worst of the burns.
Skin peeled from his face, like a chemical peel, but somehow it was spared the most severe burns. Law believes it's because he raised one of his arms in front of his face to shield himself from the explosion. "It got me good under my arm and down my chest. I had on a pair of shorts and the fire just melted them," he said.

"I had worked in Radiology for 18 years and I knew a lot of people from here and other hospitals. Through all of their prayers, I made it. It was really pretty spectacular. I was as bad as most burn patients they have, bandaged from head to toe. I don't remember a lot of it because I was so heavily sedated. Two nurses would bandage me, and as soon as they were done they would have to do it again because I was soaking the bandages. When I finally got out of bed, I couldn't support my weight. I was purple. I didn't have any skin on my body. What portion of my body wasn't burned, they scraped for grafts. I was just one big bloody mess from head to toe. Even the tops of my feet are grafted. People don't think about your skin being an organ, but it keeps everything in the world out of your inside, so it's actually the most important organ you have."

Law said he had recovered in six months, and took a job in radiology in Lebanon, to be closer to his home and his rehabilitation. He took the burn center's instructions seriously and wore the pressure garments they gave him every day for 15 months. The garments covered his face, chest and legs.

"There are many burn patients out there who have strictures, and can't raise their arms. That's because they didn't wear their outfit (pressure garments) and do the rehab exercises. Day after day I had to stretch. It was a real ordeal, but I did it."

Law said he has immense admiration for the doctors and nurses in the Burn Center. One of his nurses, Heather Weaver, still works there.

"The people there do such a wonderful job. I don't know how they do it. Patients are severely injured, then after days of sedation, you hurt. There are lots of emotional changes."

Law returned to work at Vanderbilt three years ago where he is now a CT technologist in radiology. Occasionally, he returns to the Burn Center to help with imaging.

"I didn't want to go over there at first, and told them here that I didn't, but it was hindering the progress of work not to go. My first few trips over there were weird. It was strange, but now I've been back on many different occasions. I've been able to talk to patients and families. A lot of them are in the gutter of despair when they're over there and think they'll never get better. I like to reassure them that they're getting the best care here. I tell them that Nashville is lucky to have a burn center like this. It couldn't have happened any better for me. It's a fate of God that brought it all together. I really didn't think I was hurt that bad when it happened. Once I got on my feet, I realized how bad it had really been."

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**Proposals invited for Community Giving Campaign funds**

The Vanderbilt Community Giving Campaign Allocations Committee invites campus-affiliated organizations that offer direct social services to the Nashville community to apply for funds. James Hudnut-Beumler, 2002 Vanderbilt Community Giving Campaign Chair, heads the committee that includes nineteen faculty and staff members.

The Allocations Committee distributes gifts left undesignated by donors in the Vanderbilt Community Giving Campaign and collected in the previous calendar year. This year the committee has $34,764 to grant to applying programs. Last year, the committee provided $41,443 to 24 programs.

Interested programs need to request and submit an application. In addition to a completed application, programs must submit a program description and a proposed budget. To request an application, please contact: Vanderbilt Community Giving Campaign Allocations Committee, c/o Office of Internal Campaigns, Box 357500 Station B. The application deadline is March 19, 2003.

For additional information on the Vanderbilt Community Giving Campaign Allocations Committee, please contact the Office of Internal Campaigns at 343-8759.

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**Staff Council seeks grant applications**

The Medical Center Staff Advisory Council (MCSAC) is now accepting applications for grant funds raised at its 2002 Annual Needles and Pins crafts fair and bake sales. These funds will be granted to areas within the Vanderbilt Community that benefit staff, faculty, patients, and/or Vanderbilt affiliated community projects.

Available funds are limited and a percentage of total funds will be allocated to the Employee Assistance Program, said Bettie Ferguson, president of the MCSAC. Requests for items that are routinely the responsibility of departmental funding will also not be considered, she said.

Those interested in submitting an application should complete a Grant Application Request Form, available from Lynn Crittendon at 343-3707, and return it to her at B-802, TVC (5510) no later than February 28.

Those selected to make a presentation to the council will be notified by March 14, 2003. The presentation itself will be made during the meeting of April 16, 2003. Grant funds will be allocated during the beginning of next fiscal year, which begins July 1.

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**Sysco no longer part of discount program**

Robert Orr-Sysco no longer participates in the Vanderbilt Staff and Faculty Discount Program. The listing in the December/January issue included Sysco in error. We’re sorry about any inconvenience caused by the mistake.
VUMC people contribute to Hospital Hospitality House project

- Nurses and other care providers at VUMC raised more than $30,000 in construction costs for the Hospital Hospitality House, a place where families of out-of-town patients of all area hospitals can stay.

  Sharon Adkins of VUMC’s Center for Parish Nursing and Health Ministries and a board member at HHH said that many patient care staff from the Medical Center donated out of their pockets, while others raised money through bake sales and other means.

  The HHH, located only two blocks off the Vanderbilt Campus on Reidhurst Ave., is adding to and updating its accommodations, and one of the new rooms will have a plaque acknowledging the contributions of VUMC people, Adkins said.

Harris Teeter purchases can help Children’s Hospital

- Those who shop at Harris Teeter grocery stores can use the chain’s discount card to benefit the Children’s Hospital.

  According to the Children’s Hospital Development Office, by using the discount VIC card and telling the cashier to link to Together in Education code 4186, five percent of the purchase price of Harris Teeter private label items will be donated to the Children’s Hospital, the only accredited hospital program in the state.

  Questions about the program can be directed to the Children’s Hospital Development Office at 343-6469.

CALL FOR ENTRIES: House Organ Writing Contest

DEADLINE MAY 16

For the 19th year, the July House Organ will be the Summer Reading Issue, filled the winners of the House Organ Writing Contest—poems, short stories, and nonfiction pieces contributed by staff, faculty, and students of VUMC.

Every year demonstrates that the Medical Center has a lot of people with literary talent walking around disguised as regular people, and the House Organ Writing Contest is a chance to show everybody what you can do.

The rules are pretty simple.

There are three categories: poetry, fiction, and nonfiction.

There are no length restrictions in the poetry category.

The fiction category is limited to 4,000 words.

The nonfiction category, which encompasses journalistic writing, memoirs, feature stories, historical pieces, profiles of interesting people, or anything else that’s true, also has a 4,000-word limit.

Please indicate the category of your entry; sometimes it’s a little hard for the judges to figure out what is fiction and what is nonfiction.

All staff and faculty of VUMC, except those who work in News and Public Affairs, are eligible. Medical, nursing, and graduate students are also eligible.

Submissions are limited to three per category. Each entry must be typed, double-spaced, and have the author’s name, place of employment or school, and a phone number on the first sheet, OR may be e-mailed, with the same information, to wayne.wood@vanderbilt.edu.

E-mailed entries should be either included in the e-mail by using the cut-and-paste feature, or may be sent as an attachment saved in rich text format (RTF).

Entries will not be returned, and may be edited for space, clarity, or style before publication.

Deadline for entry is Friday, May 16. The entry must arrive by the deadline date.

The winners will be published in the July House Organ. If we have room, we’ll also publish some honorable mentions.

Send entries to the email address above, or to:

House Organ Writing Contest
CCC-3312 Medical Center North 2390

Address any questions to the editor, Wayne Wood, at 322-4747, or at the e-mail address above.

CHECKLIST FOR ENTRIES:

Author information: Name, department or school, address, and phone number.

Entry information: Category—fiction, nonfiction, or poetry. Check to be sure your work is within the length requirement.

E-mail entries must be submitted by cut-and-paste into the body of the e-mail, or sent as an RTF file.

Must arrive by Friday, May 16.

Faculty and staff provided membership plan at Legends

- Legends Club of Tennessee, a golf course in Franklin, Tenn., owned by the University, has announced a new membership program for Vanderbilt Faculty and Staff, says Angela Votta at the club.

  The club’s non-refundable initiation fee for a Vanderbilt faculty or staff regular membership is $7,200, and is now payable in 72 monthly payments of $100. Monthly dues are $215 for an individual, or $258 for a family.

  To tour the club, or discuss details of this special offer and other membership options, call Votta at 791-8100 extension 222.
The next day, same thing. In the afternoon we heard something moving around. A quick census of the dogs revealed that the crack canine security squad—dogs who frequently bark furiously at thin air—was peaceably doing away, unconcerned that their home was being invaded. The squirrel was in a back bedroom this time, looking out a window. I circled back through the house and opened the front door. My logic was that the squirrel was looking for a way back outside and given the chance would run out the door to freedom.

I went back and sort-of herded Mr. Bushy Tail toward the living room so he could make his departure, congratulating myself on the shrewd plan I had concocted. It soon became apparent that I was premature in my pride at having outsmarted the squirrel; he ran past the open front door and hopped back up into the chimney.

Sharon later said she heard me plaintively cry, “No, don’t go that way!” at the squirrel’s back as he ran by. So the day that Gladys had seen me run out of the office on a squirrel removal mission was Day 3 of the occupation. I had put a baby gate, which we normally use to keep the dogs out of the living room when we’re not home, in front of the fireplace so our little gray friend wouldn’t be able to get back out. I still was harboring some fond hope that he would get the message and climb out the top.

Didn’t happen. Sharon called from home and said that the squirrel was rattling the baby gate like Jimmy Cagney working the bars in an old prison movie.

When I got home this time, though, I had my plan in place. I opened the front door again. I took away the baby gate. And I waited. After about a half hour, the squirrel hopped out into the living room, looked around, and went past the open front door again, into the dining room.

I couldn’t believe it. I put the gate back over the fireplace opening, so that the front door was the cunning little beast’s only way out. And then I headed into the dining room to engage in strategic squirrel herding (at least that’s the way I’ll describe it on my resume).

As I walked through the living room the arrangement of furniture is such that I lost sight of the bottom of the front door. Mr. Squirrel apparently took advantage of that moment to take his leave. To my distress, I didn’t actually see him go, but I knew that a return to the fireplace was out of the question, and a thorough check of the dining room, the subject’s last known whereabouts, was negative. And when I walked out into the front yard, there was a squirrel in a tree looking down at me. Might have been my imagination, but I think I saw a little snicker.

When I got back to the office I told Gladys about all this. I shook my head about the whole thing, but Gladys just listened, I’m sure mentally composing one more chapter in the memoir she can write after retirement: I’ve Heard it All.