

OUT ON A LIMB



CAROL MARSHALL

Guitar, skis and kisses equal healing

As a reporter, I know I am supposed to carry with my notebook a degree of skepticism and a curious professional distance. I had neither the morning my assignment brought me to the Center for the Healing Arts in Novi. I knew without statistics this program works, and from my cheek flicked a tear wept for the girl I was 12 years ago.

See, I'm no miracle of medicine. I figured out long before holistic medicine gained acceptance my survival depended on my old guitar, a pair of skis and kisses.

First you crumble

My journey began in a greasy spoon diner from which I could see the International Bridge, joining Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan to Canada. I worked the second shift alone, pouring coffee, grilling liver and onions, and baking pies.

My only customers that hour were my professor, Tom, and his wife, Marianne. In the rough-and-rustic Upper Peninsula you can call your professors by first name, and your surgeon phones you himself.

When the call came, I put down my coffee and cigarette, and picked up the kitchen phone.

Tom and Marianne grew silent as my voice resonated. "Just tell me now," I demanded. "I, working until 10, and I won't wait until morning. Tell me."

My sutures stung in nervous sweat. My hands fumbled with the phone chord, from which I began to wipe away grill grease. Marianne averted her eyes from the telltale surgical tape on my suddenly-pale forehead. The word I heard next changed my life immediately and permanently: Melanoma.

The next few months were a blur. Surgery. Bills. To chemo or not to chemo? More surgery. Radiation? Tests. Needles and chemo. Very aggressive cells. Stage four. Research and more research. The oncologist told me the best odds he could give me were 50-50.

Road to healing

My surgeon came as close as anyone did back then to understanding how to treat this warrior woman as much as the body that had betrayed me. He respected me when I was not convinced that chemotherapy was any more effective than surgery and my immune system.

He saw me monthly, and accepted my home-grown treatment approach. He respectfully wrote in my file that I was cross-country skiing three times a week. I practiced guided imagery and meditation. I played my guitar daily, and for some reason James Taylor music seemed the most therapeutic, and he scribbled "Sweet Baby James"

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We want your health news

There are several ways you can reach the Observer Health & Fitness staff. The Sunday section provides numerous venues for you to offer news, information including Medical Notebook (upcoming calendar events); Medical Newsmakers (appointments/new hires in the medical field); and Medical Briefs (medical advances, short news items from hospitals, physicians, companies). We also welcome newsworthy ideas for health and fitness related stories. To submit an item to our newspaper you can call, write, fax or e-mail us.

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Healing Arts



Providence Center bridges gap between healing, curing

BY CAROL MARSHALL
SPECIAL WRITER

Somewhere between the sacred and the scientific, the journey to wholeness begins.

Cancer patients have for more than two years come to the Providence Center for the Healing Arts, not only for help in curing their disease with state of the art medicine, but in healing their lives through a variety of classes, services and celebrations, including yoga, reiki, art and music therapy, and therapeutic massage.

"A cancer diagnosis brings permanent and meaningful change to your life. It's not always for the better, and it's not always for the worse, but it will always mean change," said Elena Weissman, Providence Center for the Healing Arts supervisor.

Few patients are prepared for such a change, so the hospital built the center to bridge the gap between curing and healing.

Of science and soul

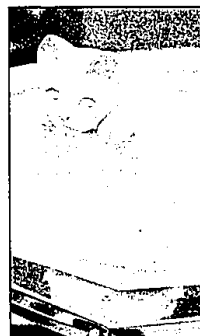
It was a doctor, radiation oncologist Bill McLaughlin, who originally thought of incorporating such a program into Providence's Assarian Cancer Center in Novi and Providence Cancer Center in Southfield.

"Dr. McLaughlin felt we weren't doing enough for our patients in this healing journey. We kind of zapped them with radiation and sent them on their way, but we needed to address the patients' needs from an emotional and spiritual aspect," said Weissman.

The Novi center, built between the radiation therapy and chemotherapy wings of the hospital, is a brick-and-mortar reflection of the hospital's commitment to help patients heal.

"This is really a premiere facility in the country. People come from all over the United States and Canada to see how we do this. A lot of hospitals pay lip service to, or may even want to, have a center like this, but then they convert a broom closet for space. Here, the center really reflects how we've incorporated this philosophy of healing into everything we do, Weissman said.

The philosophy of "holistic" treatment is based upon addressing patients'



Cute cat: A well-equipped ceramic studio is located in the basement. Larry Snell's figure of a kitten sits on the edge of the kiln, used to fire the students' work.



STAFF PHOTOS BY BILL DRESLER

At work: Wednesday afternoon's yoga class draws a crowd to the atrium.

tions through creative activities.

Activities in the Art Gallery include an art display, which changes monthly, a ceramics studio and art studio, and music and art therapy classes.

"Pretty much everyone accepts the right-brain, left-brain model. The problem is we're not dichotomous people. Those two things leave out your spiritual side, your physical needs and need for love and human contact or connection. That's your soul

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Hazards lurk as patients flock to alternative medicine

Nearly three-quarters of heart patients surveyed in a new University of Michigan study used some kind of alternative medicine approach to help them heal, but dietary supplements chosen by one-third of them could interact with their heart medications to raise their risk of further health problems.

Fortunately, the vast majority of those who used alternative medicine techniques told their doctors about it. "Heart patients seem to be turning to alternative therapies even more than the general population, even while they stick to mainstream drugs, too," says Eva Kline-Rogers, the U-M nurse practitioner who coordinated the study. "But they may not know that some of these substances could pose a hazard when taken with certain heart medications, and if they don't tell their doctors, the risk may go unde-

tected."

The study involved 145 patients who had been hospitalized for heart attack or angina within six months before being surveyed by phone last year. It was designed by members of the U-M Cardiovascular Center and the U-M Complementary and Alternative Medicine Research Center, one of the first centers of its kind in the nation funded by the National Institutes of Health.

The study started after U-M cardiologists and nurses noticed that some patients came to their appointments with lists of all the prescription drugs, over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, minerals and food supplements they were taking - wondering which they could cut out to save money or reduce

hazards. The physicians would explain that the prescription medications had years of research evidence behind them to show that they worked, while many alternative treatments, even vitamins, had little or no scientific proof to back them up, and could cause side effects.

The researchers knew that previous studies by other teams had shown that nearly half of all Americans use alternative techniques - everything from multivitamins to "energy healing" - and that the annual cost totaled an estimated \$21 billion. Research has also suggested that patients could face a risk of bleeding problems, including gastrointestinal bleeding or surgical complications, if they take certain mainstream medications along with certain alternative substances.

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