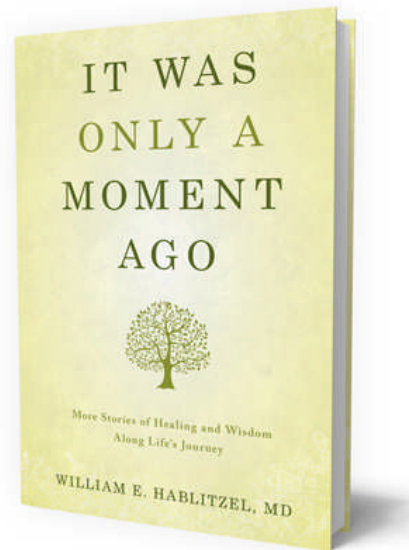


A Review of
**It Was Only a Moment Ago: More Stories of Healing and Wisdom
Along Life's Journey (2011)**

Author: William E. Hablitzel, MD

In his first book, *Dying Was the Best Thing That Ever Happened to Me: Stories of Healing and Wisdom Along Life's Journey*, Dr. Hablitzel shared many lessons in living that he had gleaned from his twenty plus years of medical practice as taught by his patients as together they faced medical challenges of all types. I left that wonderful reading disappointed that it couldn't have gone on for many more stories. He must have felt that reaction himself for in his new book, to be released January 2011, this amazing story teller picks up where he left off, this sequel adding another 14 engaging chapters, each an integration of personal medical career with "his many teachers" i.e., his patients, and life lessons that came from shared encounters with that patient and their family. In their telling, we are drawn into lives touched by death and survival, pain and healing, frustration and "silent miracles" as seen from behind the screens of the emergency department, the confidence of the doctor's examining room or private office where patients share as they do in no other relationship.



There are two overriding themes in Dr. Hablitzel's message. One is that the most critical skill doctors (or any medical professional for that matter) can offer is that of openly listening to their patient, and in so doing practice what he refers to as "patient centered medicine" vs. the all too common "academic medicine" which keeps the patient from being a key member of the team. Too often that team is too focused on finding a "cure" which may satisfy the needs of the doctor but which may not include "healing" that patient, two very different outcomes of the medical process practiced in Western medicine as we know it today. A second thread throughout these chapters is the result of that open listening to the patient (and their family), where often the patient can serve as the source of great wisdom, being a teacher in the sense of that ancient phrase: "when the student is ready, the teacher will come." And that is what comes out in each and every chapter of Hablitzel's narrative, a sharing of the wisdom he found in being an open listener to his patients in walking alongside in their life's journey. These lessons take place in diverse environments from his early EMT days riding the ambulance, to a large VA and teaching hospital's ED (i.e., he makes a clear case for using "Emergency Department" vs. "ER") and later his local clinical practice and even a free clinic serving remote Appalachian families without benefit of medical insurance. From such a diverse patient population come many insights of wisdom if one is open to those "teachers" as Dr. Hablitzel learns over the years of his distinguished career as both a teacher of medical students and a busy physician with an overcommitted schedule.

We are welcomed into to the author's discovery of inner peace found in the silence of deep woods and its beautiful surrounding of nature, a stark contrast to the chaos of hospital life and his local practice. It is here that many of these lessons of wisdom bear their fruit in reflections shared with his readers. His integration of colorful student and patient stories is seamless with that personal life of insights and lessons highlighted in each chapter that draw the reader into the emotions of the doctor/patient moment. Be prepared, for in being drawn into that moment, I found myself often laughing out loud or moved to tears as I am sure any reader will also experience, that's how good his story telling really is. So, whether medical student, medical professional, patient or caregiving family, I highly recommend this powerful and delightful reading. As much as I tried to stretch out the pleasure of this reading, it was over much too soon, which in my judgment is the mark of an excellent writer and William Hablitzel is such an author. While this book is yet to be released, already I look forward to his writing yet another in what I hope will be an ongoing series for this very gifted physician and author (and speaker). Through such work, fast becoming his "mission in life," it is possible he may touch many more lives of both young doctors and patients than in his private practice.

Thank you, Dr. Hablitzel, for another beautiful sharing of your life experiences. Would that we all had such a doctor to turn to for our own life challenges.

Note: The author is offering his first three chapters free for the asking in electronic format even before the book comes out in hard cover January of 2011. To sign up for those free chapters or to purchase the full electronic version with hard copy to follow when available, go to his web site at <http://www.itwasonlyamomentago.com>

Reviewer bio: Jim Gleason, receiving his own heart transplant Oct. '94, retired after 37 years with Unisys Corporation in 2005, is a volunteer with NKF, UNOS, TRIO and the Gift of Life Donor Program in Philadelphia, as well as a nationally recognized speaker and author. His own book, **A Gift from the Heart**, is offered in thanks to his donor family and can be obtained on a CD without cost by contacting him at GleasonJim@aol.com