

# Robert J. Demarest: A Retrospective

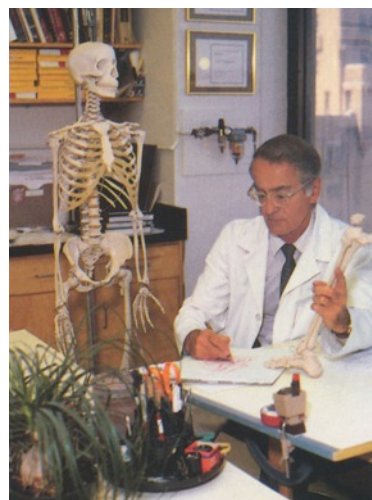
Presented by Neil O. Hardy, M.A. - Dallas, Texas 1989

## Editor's Note

*At the 1989 annual meeting of the Association of Medical Illustrators in Dallas, Texas, Robert Demarest received the AMI's Lifetime Achievement Award. This Award is the highest honor bestowed by the Association of Medical Illustrators, and is awarded to an individual who has dedicated his or her professional life as a medical illustrator. In doing so, this individual has engaged with fellow illustrators, not only to support the ideals of the profession, but also to ensure that it thrives, progresses, and advances the Association.*

*Neil Hardy presented "Robert J. Demarest: A Retrospective" during the meeting's Awards Ceremony. The following year Neil's presentation was published in its entirety in the Journal of Biocommunication, Volume 17, Number 4.*

*As a tribute to Bob, we proudly republish Neil's 1990 JBC article here.*



*Robert Demarest  
Preparing a Sketch*

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and Surgeons of  
Columbia University.

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## The Demarest Ancestral Roots

If you open the 1990 edition of the Rand McNally Road Atlas to the map of New Jersey and plot the coordinates for G-10, you will find the town of Demarest with a population of 4,963. Settled in 1670, the town still features the Demarest home, the oldest red sandstone house in New Jersey. Medical illustrator Bob Demarest's ancestral roots trace back

to this house. He was born in 1928, ten miles away in Paterson, a city founded in 1791 as America's first industrial city.

## The Early Years

When Bob was about 12 years old, his family moved to Glen Rock, just three doors away from a very attractive young lady. Glen Rock is an upper middle class "bedroom community" for commuters to New York City, and its residents are typically business-oriented. It seemed logical for Bob to follow his father, a successful Ford dealer, into business after he completed his education. However, Bob developed interests in art and science. He remembers being 16 years old, standing in the kitchen, when his mother handed him a magazine and said, "There's an article in here about a field called medical illustration. You might be interested in reading it." The article contained information about Muriel McLatchie's School of Medical Illustration at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston. Bob immediately began preparing to enter this field.

That young lady down the street was named Alice. In 1950, Bob married her and they moved to Boston, where Alice worked and Bob studied to successfully complete the three-year illustration program.

Following graduation, Bob was awarded a prestigious fellowship offered by the W.B. Saunders Publishing Company for one year of study at the University of Pennsylvania Medical School in Philadelphia, where Bob worked with Edna Hill. Every day he went early to the hospital and sketched in the operating room. By the end of the year, he had accumulated for future reference, a large collection of notes and sketches of various surgical procedures. He also was able to dissect with and study with such well-known physicians as

Drs. Ravdin, Pillsbury, Rhodes, and Batson.

In addition to working at the university, Bob worked at the W.B. Saunders Publishing Company with William C. Shepard. "Shep" felt that many of the illustrations which were being submitted with manuscripts in those days were not suitable for publication. Bob's job was to redraw them to bring them up to standard. When an illustration was completed, Shep would carry it from Bob's desk around the corner to the production department. He never quite made it all the way around the corner without returning to Bob's desk to request some small addition or correction. Bob soon set the goal for himself of producing a drawing so accurate and so complete that Shep's return trip would be unnecessary – a goal Shep's discerning eye kept beyond Bob's reach.

***"Bob approaches each assignment in a systematic way, believing that extensive research and preparation enable him to understand the client's objective, so that he can offer imaginatively conceived and fiercely accurate illustrations."***

## Career in New York

One of Mr. Shepard's friends was the head of the anatomy department at the College of Physicians and Surgeons (P&S) of Columbia University in New York. He was looking for someone to illustrate Bailey's Textbook of Histology. He visited Bob, and after viewing his portfolio, offered him the job. In 1954, Bob and Alice returned to Glen Rock and Bob started work as a part-time medical illustrator for the Department of Anatomy at P&S. He had permission to solicit work from other departments in the medical center besides the medical school. In addition, Bob completed work for pharmaceutical advertising agencies and publishing companies in New York. The medical school was a perfect place for a young illustrator: the libraries, dissecting room, and operating room were at his disposal, and experts in all branches of medicine were available

for consultation.

An early client was Emmanuel Kaplan, an orthopedic surgeon. One of their projects was a book, *Surgical Approaches to Back, Neck, and Upper Extremity*. Dr. Kaplan believed in the necessity of dissection to maintain one's skills and to prepare the surgeon for surgery. Each surgical approach was practiced first on a cadaver in the basement of the college, and many of Bob's Saturdays were spent dissecting with Dr. Kaplan. Collaborations such as this one have resulted in lifelong friendships. Working with an author on a book is, according to Bob, like entering into a marriage: "It either goes forever, or it ends acrimoniously."

At the beginning of his career, Bob's illustrations were done either in black and white wash, pen and ink, or watercolor. The airbrush that he knew he "should buy" was not in fact purchased until the late 1960s. He bought his first Paasche AB after a client said that he would like to see fewer strokes in one of Bob's watercolors. The year Bob first used the airbrush his income doubled. Now the airbrush is ubiquitous around Bob's studio with at least two of his eight (or ten) airbrushes always in good repair.

Throughout his long career, Bob's clients have been advertising, publishing, and pharmaceutical companies, as well as the academicians at P&S and other teaching hospitals. The diversity has been fun and rewarding, but book projects have been most satisfying for him. He has illustrated books on neurology, orthopedics, histology, and many other specialties. In recognition of his outstanding contributions, several authors have insisted that he be listed as co-author. In 1969, Bob was the senior author and illustrator of *Conception, Birth, and Contraception*, published by McGraw-Hill. It went into a second edition in 1976 and has been translated into six languages. "This is the book that put all of my kids through college," says Bob.

Bob approaches each assignment in a systematic way, believing that extensive research and preparation enable him to understand the client's

objective, so that he can offer imaginatively conceived and fiercely accurate illustrations. When the renderings are complete, he delivers them, on time, making sure that each is immaculately presented.

This concern with on-time performance led Bob to an important insight concerning the art of communication through illustration. Many years ago a pharmaceutical company approached him to do a series of seven illustrations on various pathologies of the lung and bronchi. Fully rendering the entire sketch in color would have been impossible in the time allotted, so he circled the important area of each sketch, rendered those in full color, and then completed the surrounding area in a simple pen and ink line. The result was that the viewer's eye was immediately drawn to the color pathology. He finished on time and had actually produced better, more-focused illustrations. With that series, he won his first Best of Show in the Association of Medical Illustrators (AMI) annual Salon.

Working as a freelance artist frequently demands unusual work schedules. One such demand came as a result of a rush job for Life magazine. The art director, having first talked with Bob on a Tuesday about the project, surprised him with a Friday morning deadline. Bob protested that he would have only three days to do the work. "That's 72 hours," said the art director, "the equivalent of almost two weeks of regular work."

Bob worked around the clock to complete that job. Another illustrator, who also had been working nonstop for a couple of days, met Bob in the art director's office. When Bob asked him about his fresh bright-eyed appearance, the illustrator said that he was exhausted, but had showered and shaved and put on fresh clothes before arriving. "When I leave here, I'll go home and crash, but the art director will never know the agony of the past couple of days."

The lesson was not lost on Bob, who has never been intimidated by the clock since that time. He contends to this day that the client is not concerned

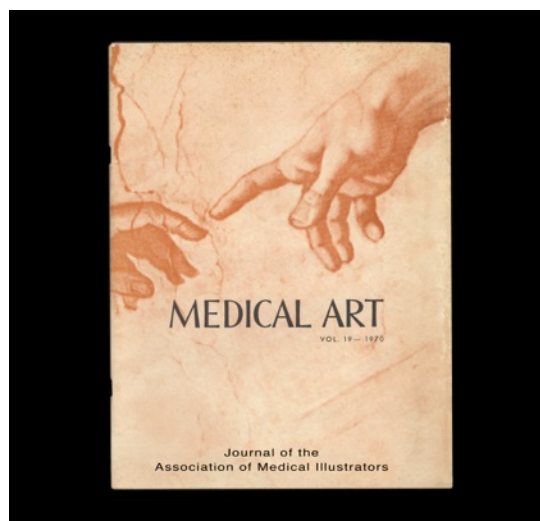
with the artist's personal life or problems, but concerned only with a successful illustration that's finished on time.

Bob's part-time association with the College of Physicians and Surgeon continued until 1975, when he was asked to become the head of the art section of their new Department of Audiovisual Services. In 1978 he was appointed director of the whole department, and changed the name to the Center for Biomedical Communication to better reflect its services. Today the Center's sections of art, photography, and video employ 27 people. The huge deficit that Bob inherited when he became Director was gradually eliminated, and the Center now operates in the black on a full cost-recovery basis. In 1989 Bob resigned as Director of the Center, but stays on as Chief Medical Illustrator.

### **The Larger Community**

The New York medical illustration community is a close-knit group. There have been many lunches, dinners, parties, hikes, and weekends spent together. The group's largest undertaking was the "Biocommunications East" meeting in 1976, which Bob co-chaired. AMI members still talk of the success of that meeting.

Bob's contributions to the AMI itself are countless. He is an AMI Fellow and served as a member of the Board of Governors from 1963-1969, and as its Chair of the Board in 1967. He was AMI President for two terms, the first in 1968-1969 and the second in 1988-1989. His suggestion that the annual meeting host committee need not be responsible for the program, was heartily enforced by the Board, and Bob became the Program Chair for the 1972 meeting in St. Louis. This broader sharing of responsibility has resulted in more meaningful meetings and has made site selection easier. Bob was on the management Board for the Journal of Biocommunication for eight years, and also was Business Manager for Medical Art, the precursor of the JBC. Also, because of Bob's direct efforts, the AMI has gained two sustaining members, Lea & Febriger and Edgell Communications.

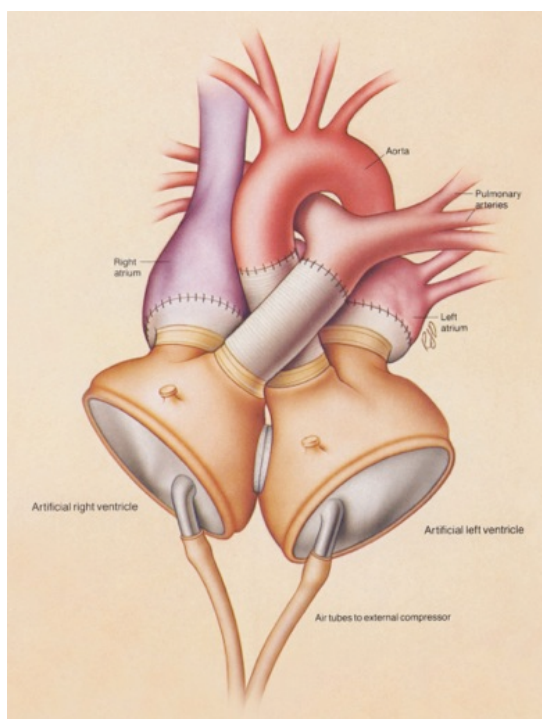
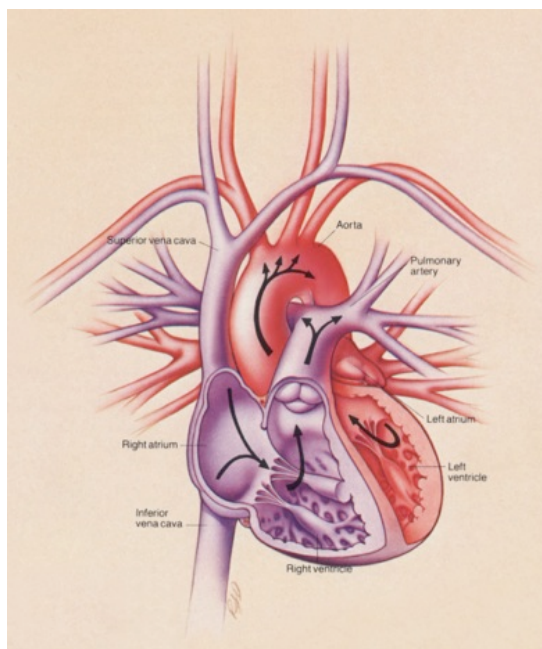


*Medical Art* was the official journal of the AMI prior to the inaugural issue of the *Journal of Biocommunication* in 1974. Bob was a member of the *Medical Art* Editorial Board and was also Business Manager for the *Journal*.

© Association of Medical Illustrators

The AMI has recognized Bob's talents with five Ralph Sweet Awards (Best of Show), the Outstanding Medical Book Award, the Federation of Biocommunication Societies Award, a first place award in medical exhibit design, and many first place awards in categories of medical color and graphic design.

Bob's work has appeared in *Life*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, *Readers Digest*, *Modern Medicine*, *Geriatrics*, *World Book Encyclopedia*, *National Geographic* books and countless other magazines, books, and journals. He coedited the first edition of the *Medical Illustration Sourcebook*. His career and illustrations were the subject of a special feature in *Science* '83 and in the *World Book Health Annual* in 1987. The Harvard-Countway Library of Medicine includes his work in their permanent archives.



Demarest's heart illustrations created for the 1987 *World Book Health & Medical Annual*. Courtesy of World Book, Inc.

TOP: Circulation of Blood Through the Normal Heart; © World Book, Inc.

BOTTOM: Jarvik-7 Artificial Heart, developed by Robert Jarvik at the University of Utah; © World Book, Inc.

Not only has Bob won awards for his exhibits, but he has twice been a living part of an exhibit presented at a medical meeting. Ciba-Geigy invited him to set up his airbrush in a specially designed display and to create a painting in the presence of the attendees. He did this at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Family Practice in San Francisco in 1988 and at the American College of Cardiology meeting in 1990. The paintings were later produced as limited edition posters. Perhaps you also have recognized Bob's hand rendering a heart on a television public service announcement for the America Heart Association.

### Outside Interests

Alice and Bob have raised three children: Rob, who is head of the Colliers County Library System in Florida; Steven, who is in mortgage refinancing in Miami, and Nancy, who manages a psychoanalytical clinic in New Jersey. Each of their three children has presented them with a grandchild.

In 1980, Bob fulfilled a dream. He designed his own house in Hawthorne, New Jersey. Located high on a hill, the house provides views of both Paterson, the place of Bob's birth, and the skyline of Manhattan. He can even see the medical center where he spent so many hours (so much of his life) as a medical illustrator.

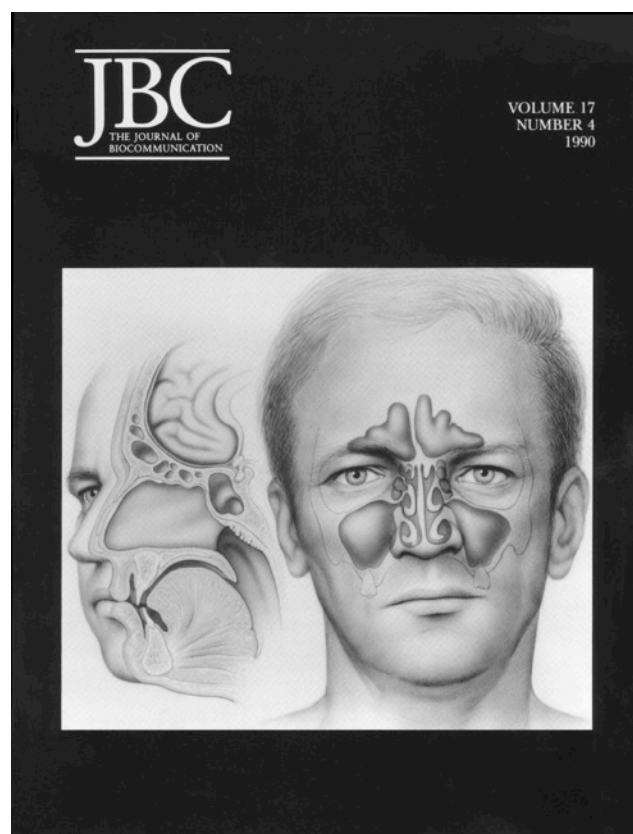
When away from the drawing board, Bob enjoys hiking the many trails of New York and New Jersey, scuba diving, and fishing throughout the northern hemisphere. He and Alice both enjoy adventure and travel. They have camped in Africa, lived in grass huts with the Garifuna people in Belize, river rafted in Costa Rica, and slogged through the jungles of Guatemala.

Looking forward to more time away from the drawing board does not mean forsaking art. Bob is a trustee of the Museum of Art and Science in Bergen County, New Jersey. And not long ago, Bob picked up his long-unused watercolor brushes and headed for Portugal, Mexico, and other scenic places to paint. Always wanting to improve, he notes, "That's

the joy of being an artist. You're never 'there'.... There's always more to reach for."

A lawyer friend perhaps summed up Bob Demarest's long career the best. After Bob had described to him his work and his feelings toward it, the lawyer commented, "You don't have a job, you have a blessing."

### Demarest Illustrations from the *Journal of Biocommunication* Gallery - Volume 17, No. 4, 1990 (as well as more recent illustrations)



#### *Bacterial Sinusitis*

This illustration originally created for Abbott Laboratories was featured as the cover illustration for the *Journal of Biocommunication*, Vol. 17, No. 4, 1990.

The illustration describes the anatomy of the frontal and maxillary sinuses.

© Abbott Laboratories.

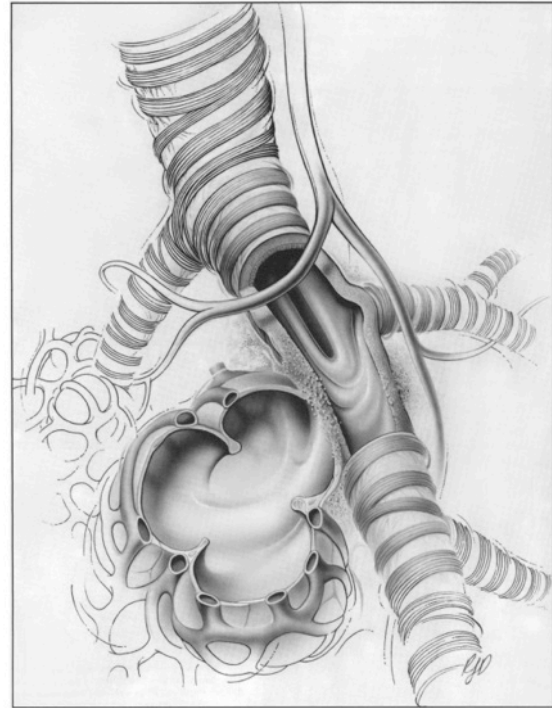




#### *Bob seated in his driveway*

Bob's page in the First Edition of AMI's Medical Illustration Sourcebook (1983). Bob was co-editor of this new venture, and while anxious to cooperate by buying the Sourcebook page, he wanted to do something a little different.

His neighbors saw this strange assortment of goods (including a skeleton) assembled in his driveway, and asked him if this was "some sort of garage sale."



#### *Bronchitis and Pneumonia*

An example of Bob's mixed media approach illustrated for a brochure on various pathologies of the lung and bronchi. This illustration was awarded Best of Show in the AMI Salon.



#### *Display of medical posters*

Similar to the driveway concept, this studio set-up was Bob's page in the Fifth Edition of AMI's Medical Illustration Sourcebook (1992 ).



#### *Inversion Sprain of Ankle*

An example of Bob's traditional color pencil technique. One of a series of patient education figures for a booklet describing various orthopedic injuries. Illustrated for Eli Lilly and Co., 1969

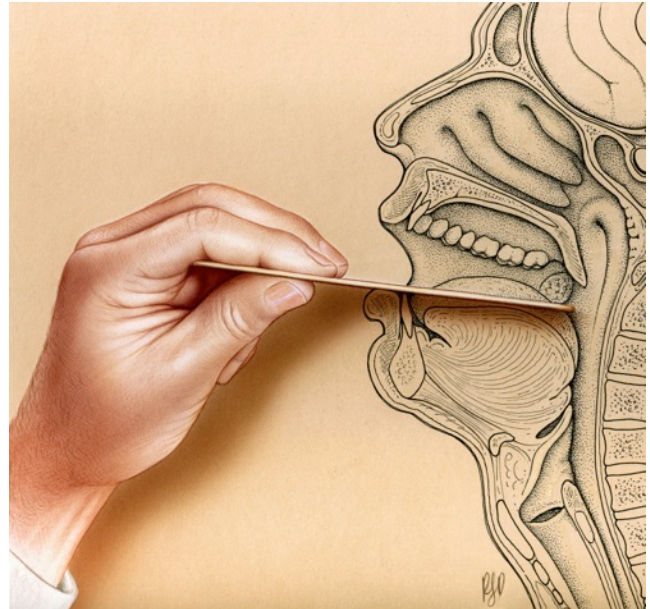
© Eli Lilly and Co.



*Front View of Uninjured Knee*

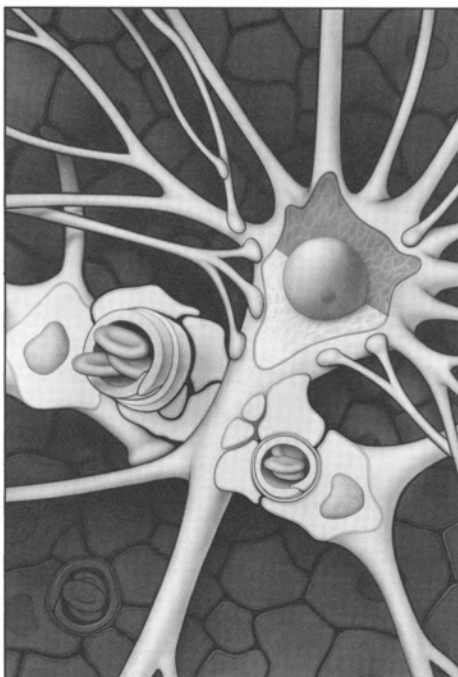
Patient education figure describing orthopedic anatomy.  
Illustrated for Eli Lilly and Co., 1969

© Eli Lilly and Co.



*Mouth Sores - How to Tell If They Are Malignant*

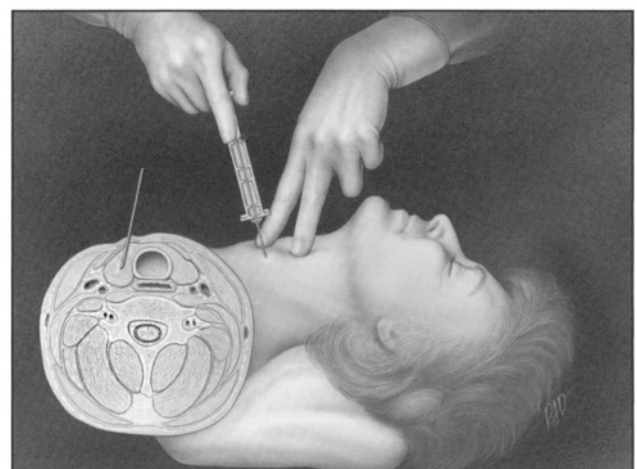
Cover illustration using a combination of line work and watercolor.



*Blood Brain Barrier*

A full color conceptual illustration prepared for National Geographic Society's *The Incredible Machine*, 1986.  
Reprinted with permission from *National Geographic*.

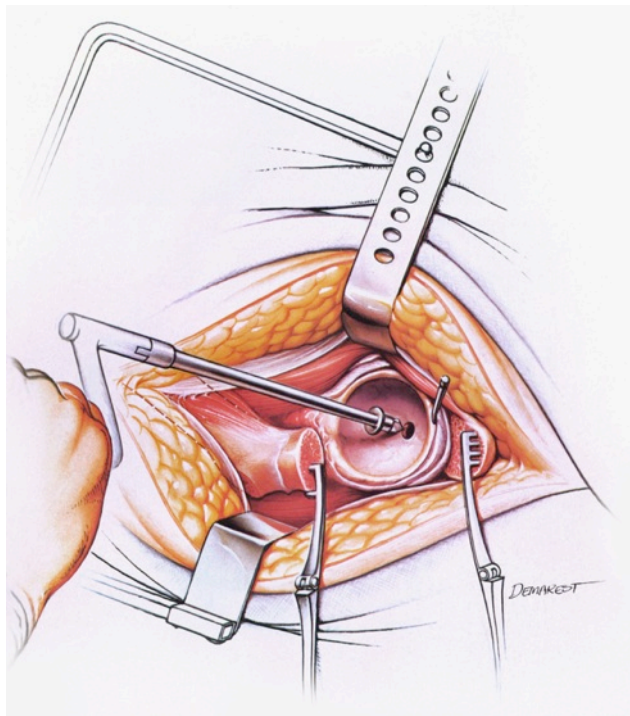
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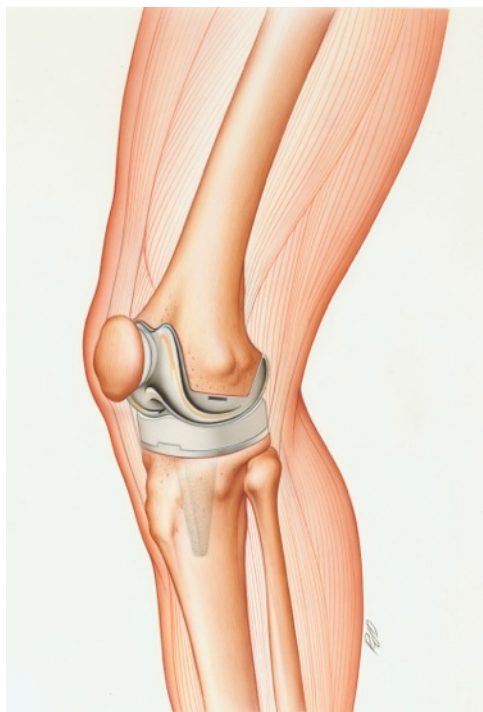
*Thyroid Nodules: An Initial Approach to Clinical Evaluation*

Bob's wife Alice was the model for this illustration depicting a thyroid nodule biopsy.

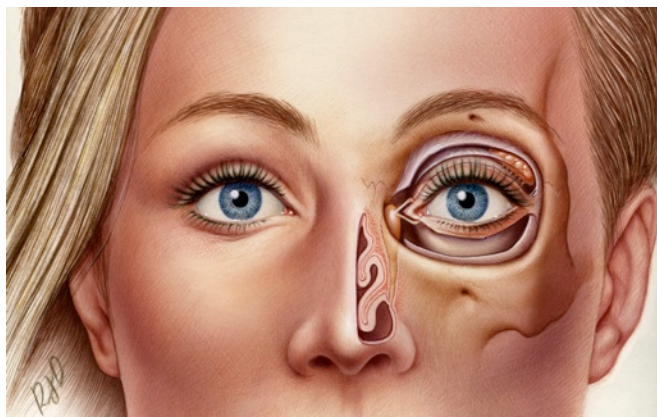




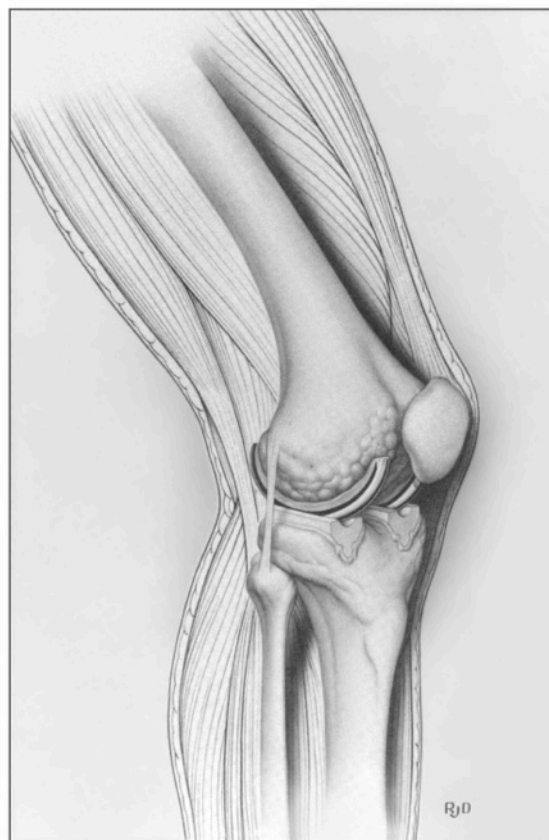
*One Step in a Total Hip Arthroplasty Procedure*



*Total Knee Arthroplasty*  
From the Collection of the Lloyd Library and Museum;  
© Lloyd Library; used with permission



*Anatomy of the Lacrimal Duct*  
Illustration was donated to the Vassals Trust's Live Auction



*Unicompartamental Knee Replacement*  
Another example of Bob's mixed media technique.





*Waterfront, Sao Jacinto, Portugal*

Bob painted this on site in Portugal in the blistering summer sun. The crew of the *Imaculada Conceicao* (seen in the background) were amused by his artistry.



*Falls*

Watercolor of a New Jersey waterfall.



*Falls*

Another view of the same waterfall (as seen in left column) completed in Bob's vignetting color style.



*Cartoon heart illustration donated for the Vesalius Trust Silent Auction.*

AMI-Boston Meeting, 2006

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