

# Poem: *Donor Anatomy – Learning Humanity*

By James R. Carey, PhD, PT

Such brilliant architecture  
Arches for protection  
Feather-fibered muscles for power  
Tendons tethered sharply to bone  
Slippery sheaths to reduce friction  
Pearly ligaments collaborating collaterally  
Fulcrums, levers, pulleys and tunnels  
All compactly contained behind veil now pale  
Biologic beauty – yes, but where is the humanness

Look deeper they silently beckon to me  
Past your science  
Past our machinery  
Seize our stories  
Uphold our soul

I hear you and struggle at first  
An impossible task, now, in your stillness  
But perhaps not  
I retreat from scientific training  
And with mind wide open  
I approach, I imagine and I see

Sturdy hips, hollow hips, metallic hips  
That balanced you, advanced you  
So many movements, so many miles, ever uphill  
Nearly a century of stability, mobility  
No wonder your weariness

Knees with thick cartilage, shallow cartilage, no cartilage  
That bore the weight  
Of playmates tussling in the backyard

Of crippled comrades carried from fury in '43  
Of postures bent and reverent, in supplication  
No wonder your joint mice

Thick fingers, calloused fingers, crooked fingers  
That tackled the shovel  
And the fruit of the earth, despite the pain

Delicate fingers, caring fingers, color-tipped fingers  
That tickled thimbles and threads  
and backs and heads, of sleepy grandchildren

Brains once heaving with rolling hills of magical cells  
That orchestrated fanciful dance, diction and dreams  
And countless other thoughts unique to you  
Now with narrowed hills and widened valleys  
As genetic forces and merciless decades  
Eroded your memories, appetite and pace  
Still, in stillness you retain your grace

Abdominal walls with staples and stitches  
Remind us of our many vulnerabilities  
But most poignant are structures repaired  
After the many lives you lovingly beared

And of course, your hearts  
Some healthy, some enlarged, some mended  
To extend the journey  
Of repetitive pumping  
Of unceasing pleasing, of others

And now, with all that done  
You yield one last gift of selfless virtue  
Your body to us  
In awe, we learn anatomy  
Higher, we learn humanity