

Death Haiku

Lynn Nauman, MD

Observations from the aid-in-dying deathbed

These are a gift to me; an opportunity to succinctly and concretely remember my patients. The haiku often begins to form as the patient is dying—inspired by something the patient says or does. Sometimes, as we wait for the heart to stop, a family member, friend or caregiver shares details that slip into the haiku. Or something occurs at the last breath.



Navy SEAL superb
insisted, “ice cream for all!”
three ex-wives present

no hesitation
kind blue eyes remained open
orange cat between legs

“smile all the while”
her last words
laughter and tears

final request:
“don’t let me die like a dog
with my mouth open”

well-orchestrated
rabbi recites prayers
husband weeps throughout

palpable love
between two men
crow swoops to window



doting sons
gently roll, dress and cover—
her kindness lives on

105 years old
three generations cried, not
a tear from patient

final words to wife:
“as always, I’m leaving you
with all the work



head to head
he stays in bed
until wife's last breath

reaches to embrace her
he dies in her arms
a blessed way

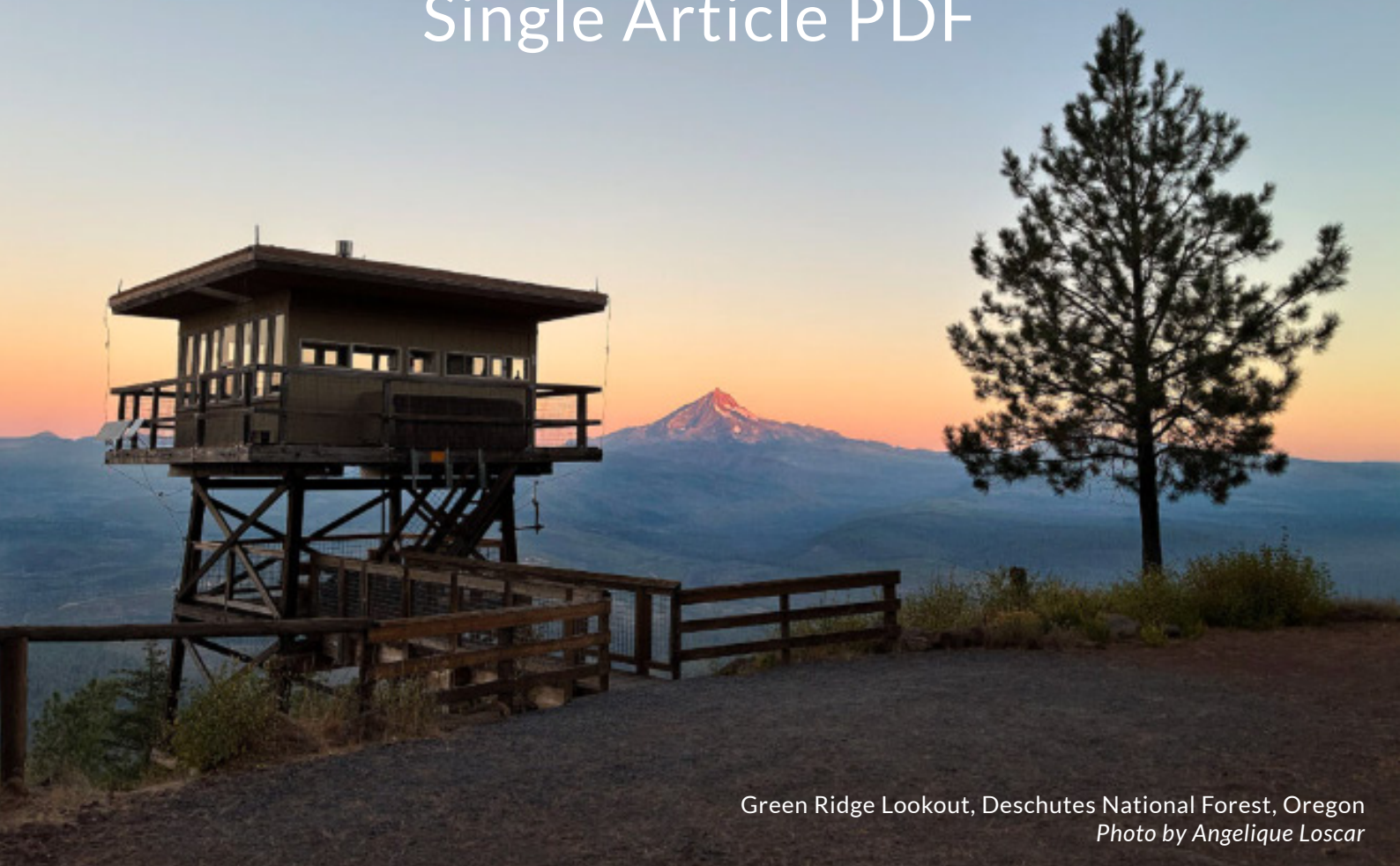
grateful 98
she knows her life was charmed
her three boys surround



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Green Ridge Lookout, Deschutes National Forest, Oregon
Photo by Angelique Loscar

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