

David O. Warner, M.D., Editor

Pentothal Postcards. By David C. Lai, M.D. West New York, New Jersey, Mark Batty Publisher, 2005. Pages: 190. Price: \$24.95.

This engaging little book is full of 87 postcards sent out by Abbott (Abbott Park, IL) as part of a long-running advertising campaign. The marketing strategy was very successful because the majority of those now practicing anesthesia have never used thiamylal sodium (Surital) or methitural sodium (Neraval). The campaign was held from 1954 to 1968 using a variety of languages, destinations, handwriting styles, messages, and recipients, making this a very intriguing book.

As you move through the book, you cannot help but wonder whether the recipients of these cards ever visited any of these destinations. Did they wonder for a moment about these delightful getaways? Was Abbott also successful in promoting the burgeoning travel industry? This is certainly something to consider as you linger on the countless beautiful pictures.

Pentothal Postcards is both a nostalgic look at the more simple 1950s and '60s and a retrospective of this most successful strategy. David C. Lai, M.D. (Tacoma, Washington), has painstakingly collected an impressive variety of postcards mailed both to those who delivered anesthesia as well as patients, pharmacists, and those who ordered the drug for their hospitals. The simple photographs depict far away places, when people were just beginning to travel as a result of cheaper, more convenient modes of transportation. One can only imagine the feeling of sophistication upon receiving an item that beckons the seasoned traveler, the belief that these exotic destinations were right at your fingertips and only hours away. This must have been very appealing during a more carefree era when mass production had not yet consumed everyone and everything. The written messages were not photocopied in mass quantity; the variety of handwriting, plus the mailing of the card from the location with the franking of that city, makes for an impressive uniqueness that each recipient had to have felt. The addresses without zip codes further mark an uncluttered time. This book is easy to peruse because the originally chosen pictures, still beautiful and exotic, continue to beckon us to a simpler time and place.

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A View from the Head End. By Steve M. Yentis, B.Sc., M.B.B.S., M.D., F.R.C.A. Harley, United Kingdom, TFM Publishing, 2005. Pages: 128. Price: £14.95 GBP, \$29.95 US, \$39.95 CAN, €23 EUR.

A View from the Head End is a collection of humorous drawings the author completed in the course of some 20 yr as a British anesthetist. Most were spontaneous, drawn between cases and at odd moments in the day-to-day life of the author. They are presented in their original state and represent thoughts and notions from life in the operating room, wards, and clinic. The collection is organized into 12 specific chapters, including Theatricals, Mothers and Babies, Painful Clinics, and Passing the Exam.

This reviewer was generally moved to a smile or laughter by the thought-provoking presentations. Although the humor was somewhat dry at times, I was able to relate to most of these comical drawings. However, while some drawings are from an earlier time, unfortunately, in this day and age, the author comes across at times as not only politically incorrect, but condescending and intolerant of patients. There is always a fine line between humor and offense, and in my opinion, the line is sometimes crossed here—although not all may agree.

Should the reader find this material pleasing, they should make a purchase. However, it is not something that I would necessarily pass around the office or leave unattended in the call room.

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