Playing the bagpipes has been a great paradoxical presence in my life, and a metaphor of who I am. The bagpipes have taught me humility and provided sublime moments. My father, a teacher, always wanted to play the bagpipes. He never did. So I achieved a generational fulfilment.

This notion of how influence expresses itself is interesting. Our oldest and youngest daughters are teachers. I have been a teacher at heart in my physician role. Our second daughter is a food writer. My wife is an exquisite cook and I am a writer. Our third daughter is an architect. I've always wanted to build something; she has.

But perhaps I have built an awareness. My mother and older brother instilled in me a love of literature and history, and taught me that a good story should “teach, please, and move you”. To promote the art of medicine, I have given many seminars and workshops on the use of literature to teach aspects of family medicine, most challengingly during the Mont Sainte Anne’s Ateliers. Years later Roger Ladouceur (CFPs Associate Scientific Editor) gave me a nod for tweaking his awareness of the art of medicine.

My own writing grew as a result of these teaching sessions. But it was Derek Cassels, the former editor of the Medical Post, who encouraged me to further develop my writing skills. One of my favourite articles from those years is “The Anatomical Aspects of Belly Dancing”.

My focused writing about teaching began with a series of articles written under the guidance of Tony Dixon, former editor of the CFP. One of these articles, which I have used many times—"Egon Schiele’s Portrait of Karl Zakovsek: Medical and Artistic Observations“—was co-written with my wife. There followed, in the Canadian Medical Association Journal (CMAJ), a number of reflective articles that were practiced-based. The first, “Freud’s Request”, was about euthanasia. Another, “The Incredible Thinness of Air”, which was about risk taking, became a voyage of discovery for me.

My favourite CFP article is “Lysander”. The patient who inspired the article wrote a letter, which was published with the article, saying, “Your touching article has impressed me with your ability to use your powers of description, imagination, knowledge of history, and wisdom to inspire the next generation of family medicine practitioners to relate to mature, elderly patients and, especially ‘relics’ like me.”

How do you know where you are going if you don’t know where you have been? CFP’s Scientific Editor, Nick Pimlott, has been a great support. He has allowed me to explore the history of medicine in the CFP
section Historicals. I am currently writing about Canada’s iconic physician, William Osler and his use of Wonderment.

The thrill is not gone.