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Retired cardiologist John C. Wood of Newtown writes from the heart

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By Petra Chesner Schlatter; BucksLocalNews.com

Writer John C. Wood, a retired cardiologist, recalls when he was the first doctor in the area to give a pacemaker to a patient.

Very accomplished in his field of medicine, he prefers not using the "M.D." at the end of his name.

Rather he prefers focusing on his writing.

Wood, who lives at Pennswood Village near George School in Newtown, has written illustrated poetry books. The artwork depicts delicate wildflowers, which he had collected while riding his bike over the years along the Delaware Canal.

Wood is sharp, articulate and well educated. He is comfortable while seated in his neatly kept apartment. His place is on the second floor of one of the quiet retirement residences. Down the hall, neighbors board the elevator, heading to the dining room.

At age 84, Wood is widowed and spends a good deal of his time thinking and writing. Inspired by nature, writing helped him get through the death of his wife, Ruth. He had earlier experienced the loss of their son.

John Jr., was killed when returning for the night shift at the Columbia University Presbyterian Medical Center. He had finished his pediatric residency and was a certified pediatrician. He was in residency of pediatric surgery.

He was shot to death by a robber, who got away with a mere \$5.

While he tells these stories, his words convey how these experiences weigh heavily on his mind.

His other grown children - Robert, Pete, Ellen and John Jr. graduated from Pennsbury High School. They are all accomplished in their fields.

Wood's recent self-published book, only available at Pennswood, will soon be given to local libraries.

Entitled "Conversations by the Chinese Scholar Tree," the book tells the story of a Hispanic woman who sits alone, talking to herself.

Wood writes, "You could tell she was angry and admonishing. But, then, a plaintive note crept in. Back and forth it went, as your path circled, then led away from this very private exchange. As you walked on, you noted that she was alone and had hardly touched her sandwich,"

He said the title of the book might be "rather obtuse." It came about when he was at Columbia University as a medical student. He took an elective during his junior year in research medicine that took him to Blackwell's Island in the middle of the East River.

To get to it, you used an elevator from the bridge. "It had a very big storehouse for chronic exotic and less exotic diseases," Wood said. "A big part of it was under the director of Columbia University. It was a public hospital.

"These people had chronic diseases and could not afford to pay for themselves -- if single, disabled by disease -- at public expense -- were cared for." It was called Goldwater Memorial Hospital. Various

academic medical institutions would play a major role in running those hospitals.

There was a Chinese scholar tree on Blackwell's Island. "This is subtle but important," Wood said. He said the actual name of that tree is *Sophora japonica*. When he researched the matter, he discovered that it was first recognized in China. "That tree was important," he said.

Wood noted that Socrates killed himself with hemlock. He taught by taking students on walking tours. "We had a revered professor, who was well-known in the western medical world who sat under that tree with students and we would discuss important literature," Wood recalled. "That's many years ago - 1948."

The book has about 75 poems and is 154 pages long.

Wood and his wife, who helped illustrate his books, lived along the Delaware River in Lower Makefield Township. "That's where the family grew up,"

Their house, circa 1834 circa with additions, was part of the old Moon estate.

"That was the earliest nursery in the northeastern United States," Wood said. "It had a certain Pennsylvania charm which anybody that I know of would agree to. It meant a lot of work to the owner. It was physical work. It gave me an outlet."

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