

Nehushtan

Matthew Wynn Hemmert

Impossible to tally,
 The time that a stethoscope
 Has draped about my father's neck.
 Years, I am sure.
 Just as impossible, to count
 The cadence of rhyming ventricles
 Or the number of times he entertained
 The sounds of Korotkoff,
 Indicating systole and diastole.

There is a Kodachrome photograph
 Of my father, younger, in 1974 India,
 Stethoscope replaced by a large constrictor.

*Make thee a fiery serpent,
 And set it upon a pole:
 . . . that every one that is bitten
 When he looketh upon it
 Shall live.*

My father, a living rod of Asclepius.

Triaging and treating this human condition,
 And understanding our Isaiah,

*. . . all flesh is grass . . . ,
 My father is certain that we know,
 As many as should look upon
 That serpent should live,
 Even so, as many as should
 Look upon the Son of God. . .
 . . . might live . . .*