

## Introduction to "Painting as a Muse"

From October 31 to November 4, 2016, I underwent CyberKnife radiation treatments for prostate cancer. I was out that week as well as the following two weeks while I dealt with the expected side effects of the treatment. When I returned to work, I was more than pleasantly surprised to see, hanging on a wall near my work place a nice-sized reproduction of my favorite painting, Vincent Van Gogh's "Starry Night" together with a student-made welcoming card featuring an original rendition of part of that painting.

I was deeply touched at the thoughtfulness that this gift represented. I had been missed and people had gone through the trouble of pleasing me. I realized that my wife must have played an important role in all this. After all, she was the one who knew that "Starry Night" was my favorite painting. I even forgave her that it wasn't the original but a copy. (One hundred million dollars is hard to come by for a teacher.)

I've always loved Van Gogh's style. There's so much life to it. There's so much emotion present. I am always saddened by his difficulties and can certainly relate, although my mind is not as turbulent as his must have been. I can appreciate his struggles and his dedication to his craft, as well as his devotion to overcoming great odds. I would like to think that somewhere from his starry night, Vincent can peer down on us and feel the satisfaction that his talent has finally been recognized and valued.

By the way, I am free of the cancer. It's more than a year. But every day that I go in to work, I have a triple reason for smiling: the people I work with, the students I work for, and the painting that greets my sight.