



AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

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May 13, 1981

C. Everett Koop, MD
Deputy Assistant Secretary for Health
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health
Public Health Service
Washington DC 20201

Dear Dr. Koop:

Thank you so much for sending me the two prints of paintings done by Joni Eareckson for consideration as cover art for the Journal of the American Medical Association. Unfortunately, I erred when I informed your office that Theresa Southgate, MD, had selected "New Life" and that we would need a transparency of the work in order to prepare the cover. I was informed on May 6 that a final decision was made not to use Ms. Eareckson's work.

It is unfortunate that we are missing the opportunity, pointed out in your letter, to remind physicians of the potential of persons with disabling conditions. I feel that it is even more unfortunate that physicians will not be provided with an opportunity to be exposed to Ms. Eareckson's work on its own merits, thereby missing the aesthetic experience of participating in the organic relationship that exists between a fine work of art and the viewer/participant.

Physicians and other JAMA readers have many opportunities to see the works of the "masters," but unfortunately, works by persons with disabling conditions are not currently adequately "mainstreamed." That time is undoubtedly coming, and I am sure there will be future opportunities to submit candidates for JAMA covers. In the meantime, Ms. Eareckson's works will continue to make a significant aesthetic and social contribution by enlarging the artistic and humanistic sensitivities of those who see her work.

A delightful result of this temporary setback is that it caused me to rethink objectives and alternate means of accomplishing them. I am currently involved in assisting allied health organizations and medical specialty societies responding to Newsletter materials in utilizing existing resources to promote the International Year of Disabled Persons, but I had completely overlooked recommending that these groups feature works of art by persons with disabling conditions. The cover of JAMA seemed like such an ideal "window" that it didn't occur to me that lots of little windows can let in as much light as one large window . . .