

In all my years as an entertainer, nothing has prepared me to stand before a quorum of the American College of Cardiology and deliver a Convocation Address. I feel very much like the college football player who majored in public speaking and who, inevitably, in the middle of his senior year, was finally called upon to deliver a five-minute speech. He was terrified. But not all that dumb. He spoke for one minute -- and then asked the class to join him in four minutes of silent prayer.

I do know a little something about medicine. I know that an avuncular protrusion, for example, is nothing more than a wart on my uncle's nose and that you treat it with half a Dr. Scholl's corn plaster. In Brooklyn, where I almost grew up, we called that "street medicine." I'll tell you one thing -- it was a lot cheaper than your medicine.

I know a little something about the heart, too, most of which I learned on a long and painful succession of Valentine's Days. Angina, believe me, is nothing compared to the pain that can be inflicted by a 12-year-old blonde with curls in whose eyes you simply don't exist. That, my friends, is pain, against which your puny nitroglycerin is absolutely helpless.

You can do triple bypasses, replace valves, instal pacemakers and even do transplants -- but you still have no idea what makes the human heart leap six feet into the air when confronted with a perfect spring day leading into a three-day weekend to be shared with the only girl in the world.