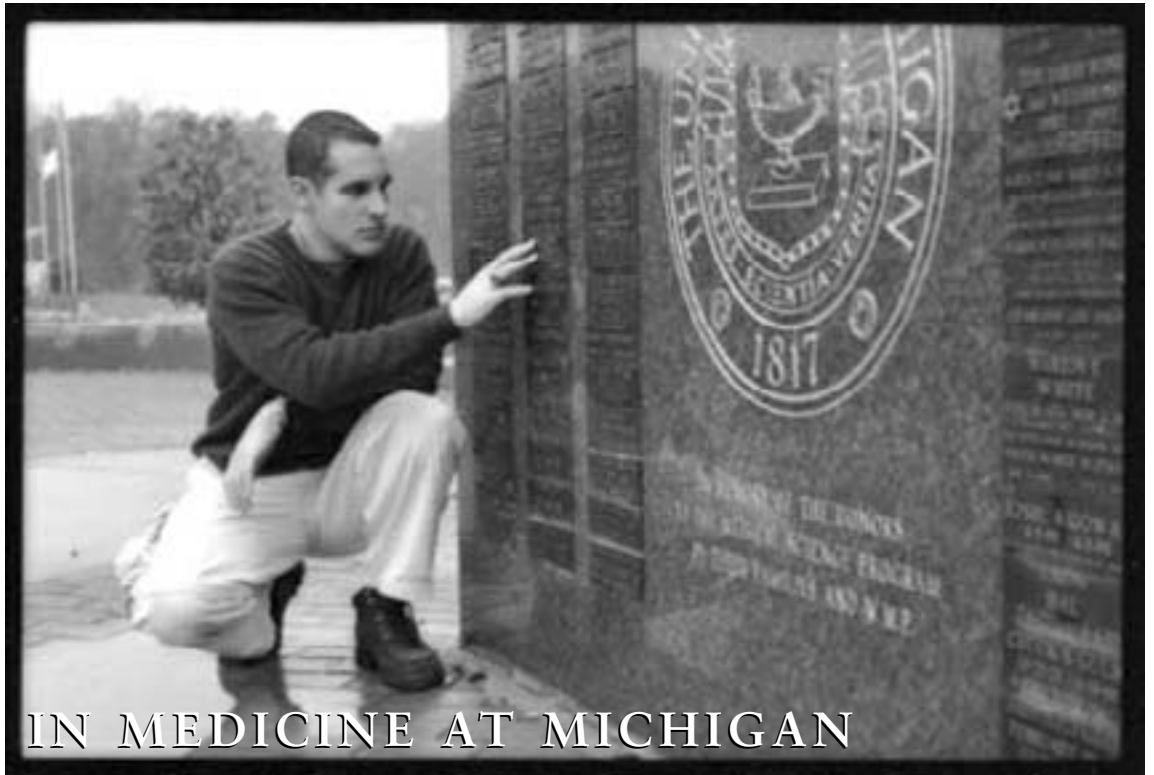


Photo: J. Adrian Wylie

Michael Ginsberg, from Bloomfield Hills, is a member of the Class of 2005 who spoke at the U-M's annual memorial service for the Anatomical Donations Program in September. Approximately 150 medical students and 700 family members and friends of anatomical donors attended the service.



MOMENTS IN MEDICINE AT MICHIGAN

"I remember my first cadaver when I was a first-year medical student. I knew a little about her — cause of death, occupation, basic surgical history. I wondered: How many children did she have? What would they say about her? What was she like? I was going to know this individual in a way that nobody else ever did, but I was not going to know her the way everyone else knew her.

"It was very moving, and I was taken by the generosity she had shown. I decided then to be an anatomical donor myself. I talked with my parents and asked if they would become donors. We sat down as a family and signed each other's donation forms for U-M. In the spring of my first year of medical school, my parents were in a bad car accident. Dad had a very complicated medical course and, after a year and a half of fighting, and steps forward and back, he was admitted to Beaumont Hospital last June.

"He wouldn't let me visit until I was done taking my boards, and when I got there, he was on a ventilator. Speaking with his doctors about his neurological exam, I learned that his brain was likely no longer functioning, and I realized Dad was gone. We'd had a number of talks about what to do in a situation like this. He had a living will. We decided it was time to pull the tube and let nature do what it would do. He died the next morning.

"Since I'm a student here, we sent him to Wayne State instead of U-M. I wrote a letter to the students there to tell them that I was a medical student and that my father was one of their cadavers. I sent it to the director of Wayne State's anatomy department and she posted it in the labs. Several students wrote back thanking me and assuring me that he'd be treated with all respect.

"I miss him, but I feel confident in the decision we made. He had originally wanted to be cremated and have his ashes sprinkled in the Pacific Ocean — he was a Navy man — and he can still have that, but he's making a little detour on the way, doing something really good. Agreeing to help a stranger is the ultimate gift." [m](#)

Interview by Whitley Hill