On art

For writer and painter Robert Fisch, art is essential.

At age 88, Robert Fisch, M.D., is brimming with ideas, and in conversation they overflow. A pediatrician who started life in Hungary, nearly died in a Nazi concentration camp and then resisted the communists in Hungary before immigrating to Minnesota, Fisch knows he has a unique vantage from which to observe the human condition. In recent years, he’s felt compelled to share his observations through both painting and writing. Here is an illustration and excerpt from the section on art in his forthcoming book The Sky Is Not the Limit.

The first time I saw a painting of olive trees by Vincent van Gogh, I sat and shivered—overcome by the artist’s genius. When I finished my training in pediatrics, I studied drawing and painting at night school for 10 years, painting for fun. My daughter, at about the age of five, sat in my lap and together we painted huge flowers.

Art always has been a way for me to express feelings, to connect with my inner world and to escape reality. Initially, I covered canvases with bright colors. More recently, I’ve realized my thoughts are better conveyed in black and white, with the simplest lines and forms. In this book and others I’ve written, I found myself author and illustrator. Art is communication; and for me, it is heartfelt, necessary and joyful.