

On Their Own Time

BY RENÉE GEARHART LEVY

Being a doctor commonly means long hours. But people focused and passionate enough to pursue medicine as a career often have the same drive toward outside interests that help them relieve stress and enjoy life to the fullest.

Here are seven physicians who have found unique ways to unwind.





DAVID DEXTER, MD '91

ROCK MUSICIAN

DAY JOB: General and trauma surgeon and medical director of Great Lakes Surgical Specialists in Erie, Pennsylvania

HOW HE GOT STARTED: Every year his hospital has an annual event with music provided by a DJ. Six years ago, Dr. Dexter thought it would be fun to have a band made up of hospital employees. He sings and recruited some physicians, a nurse practitioner, and the husband of another (the lone outlier) to play instruments and learn some songs. Later that summer, the band—Malpractice—was asked to play at an annual family picnic/fundraiser at a local yacht club. The yacht club happened to be next door to a busy night club. The owner heard the band and tracked them down. "He booked us for five nights, and then we took off," says Dexter.

ROUTINE: The band practices once or twice a month and plays local bars in Erie, performing an average of once a month and up to three times a month in the summer. The band plays rock and dance hits from the 1960s to present. "We have a following," says Dexter. "They've called the Band Aids."

THAT'S NOT ALL: Dexter drives a motorcycle, which helped the band break into the "biker scene." They play a Buffalo Wild Wings bike night annually and also play at the local Harley-Davidson dealer's annual Bikefest.

WHY DO IT? "It's a great release from the usual day-to-day world of healthcare. I enjoy what I do, but this just gives me something else to look forward to," he says. "It can be a lot of work and late hours—it's a four-hour show

with two hours to set up and an hour to tear down after, so it's a long night out. That's why we try to limit our gigs to keep it fun. Admittedly, my schedule wouldn't allow more time." He particularly enjoys playing for charities or fundraisers.

GREATEST THRILL: Playing a city block party in front of 10,000 people. "I get the most enjoyment

hearing the crowd sing the songs with me. They don't care that it's not the original band, they just want to share the moment."



JOANN SMITH, MD '74

COMPETITIVE SCULLER

DAY JOB: Psychiatrist in New Canaan and Fairfield, Connecticut

HOW SHE GOT STARTED: Dr. Smith's two sons rowed crew in high school and she and her husband enjoyed attending regattas down the East Coast. When the kids on the team went off to college, the parents decided to row crew themselves. "We just wanted to have some fun, but the coaches at the boathouse insisted on proper technique, strength, and cardio conditioning," she says. "Then they started entering us in races. Along the way, I lost 20 pounds and came to love starting the day on the water with wonderfully invigorating exercise."

ROUTINE: Smith lives four minutes from the boathouse, where she starts her day early about four times a week. After rowing, she grabs a shower then heads to the office, hospital, or to the Frank H. Netter School of Medicine at Quinnipiac University, where she also teaches.

WHY DO IT? "You're in a power boat in which you're the power," Smith explains. "When you get into a Zen-like rhythm and the endorphins get going, that feeling is what brings me back again and again. As a psychiatrist, I urge my patients to find something like this in their own lives. I ask them to reach beyond themselves every day so it seems right that I ask the same of myself." She says she loves the challenge of the single scull, although "rowing with a friend in a double or with four of us in a quadruple is another kind of fun."

GREATEST THRILL: Racing the Head of the Charles in Boston. She was also the U.S. Rowing single scull Lightweight Class G Masters National Champion for 2009 and 2010.



JEFFREY KAPLAN, MD '69, MS

CEDAR STRIP BOAT BUILDER

DAY JOB: Retired pediatrician. After three decades in administrative medicine, Dr. Kaplan spent the last 12 years of his career working in an ultraorthodox community health center in the Hudson Valley, where the median family size was 10. He now blogs about healthcare reform.

HOW HE GOT STARTED: In 1999, Dr. Kaplan bought his first construction kit from Newfound Woodworks, a company that sells kits to build canoes, kayaks, and rowing boats out of strips of northern white cedar, western red cedar, and Alaskan yellow cedar, using mostly just hand tools. He built the boat to use on the nearby Hudson River and found the process a labor of love.

ROUTINE: Over the years, Kaplan has built six boats—four "stitch and glue," and two "cedar strip." Each took 150 to 200 hours to complete.

WHAT INSPIRES HIM? Building kit boats "combines art, creativity, and affordability and you end up with something to brag about that you can leave to the grandkids," he says. Not to mention, a functional vessel. Kaplan regularly used the boats on the Hudson. Now that he and his wife have relocated to Baltimore to be closer to family, they'll be boating on the Chesapeake next summer.

MOST MEMORABLE EXPERIENCE: Having a handmade canoe or kayak on his car roof garners plenty of attention. "If I had a dollar for each comment folks made at rest stops..." he says.





CHARLES "FESS" EDWARDS, MD '74

SKYDIVER

DAY JOB: Semi-retired obstetrician/gynecologist; he works half-time assisting with office gynecology and surgery at Scripps Clinic in Rancho Bernardo, California

HOW HE GOT STARTED: Dr. Edwards was at the hospital watching TV while waiting for a mother to deliver when a snippet on sport parachuting came on. He and the anesthesiologist made a pact to go skydiving together. "He did one jump and decided that was more than enough. I got hooked and went through the entire training series of 25 jumps to become a licensed skydiver in 1989," Edwards says.

ROUTINE: Since then, Edwards has made more than 3,000 skydives, including multiple large-formation world records, all over the United States, Canada, and Belize. "I almost went to Dubai for a 500-person jump in 2010 but the Arab Spring brought those plans to a frustrating end," says Edwards, who has also made jumps with all three of his sons.

WHY DO IT? "I think risk-takers' brains are wired differently than the rest," says Edwards. "We seek the thrill and excitement of the experience as its own reward. Contrary to some opinions, we are not crazy or suicidal. The camaraderie between skydivers is exceptional and unique, probably due to the shared risk." Edwards concedes he has lost several friends to the sport over the years and has had his own close calls.

GREATEST THRILL: Each and every jump. "There is nothing like flying through the sky unshackled with only your arms and legs as wings and rudder," Edwards says. "We can actually fly our body right, left, up, or down relative to our free-falling comrades. After the parachute is deployed, the environment shifts from a high-speed, high-adrenaline experience to one of gentle-floating serenity. The view of the earth below is unobstructed and spectacular. There is no other human experience like it."

MARK ROTHSCHILD, MD '82

TRAVEL PHOTOGRAPHER

DAY JOB: Cardiologist in The Villages, Florida

HOW HE GOT STARTED: Dr. Rothschild spent his three months between college and medical school backpacking through Western Europe and the British Isles. His interest in travel got waylaid by his medical career until 2000, when a friend convinced him to come along on a trip to Laos. That opened the floodgates. "I wanted to see the world and to photograph native people and the landscapes of their countries," he says.

ROUTINE: Rothschild began taking photography classes and working with professional photographers to develop his skills. And he began traveling: he's visited 39 countries on all seven continents. Most recently, he went scuba diving in the Great Barrier Reef, then flew to Uluru in the Australian Outback to photograph its unique rock formations. He has created a website of his work, markrothschildphoto.com, and has written about his experiences for regional publications, something he hopes to expand on after retiring from medicine.

WHAT INSPIRES HIM? Being exposed to different peoples and cultures. "It has been my good fortune to see the world and to photograph its native peoples, animals, and landscapes," Rothschild says. "Many of my human subjects had never had their images photographed by a camera before."

GREATEST THRILL: All destinations have been special in their own ways, says Rothschild. But his trip to Papua New Guinea (PNG) was particularly unique. "My friend Cliff and I went on four-seater planes, landed in fields, and took boats to get to individual tribes. There are 600 languages spoken in PNG as the tribes are so geographically isolated," he says. "I think that others appreciate this destination as well in that PNG always gets the most hits on my website every month."



BEVERLY KHNIE PHILIP, MD '73, AND JAMES PHILIP, MD '73

ADVENTURE SPORTS

DAY JOB: Both are professors of anesthesia at Harvard Medical School and highly active in their field. Beverly is founding member of the Society for Ambulatory Anesthesia, current president of the EU-based International Association for Ambulatory Surgery, and vice president for scientific and educational affairs of the American Society of Anesthesiologists. James is founding member of Society for Technology in Anesthesia and an inventor of medical devices.

HOW THEY GOT STARTED: The Philips started dating as Upstate medical students. James was passionate about skiing and Beverly loved scuba diving. They introduced those activities to each other. "We have been evolving our sports throughout our life together," says Beverly. "From time to time, we learn something new and interesting to do together."

ROUTINE: Their pursuits include telemark downhill skiing (the Philips are senior patrolers with the National Ski Patrol at Bromley Mountain in Vermont, where they have done ski rescue and emergency care for more



than 45 years); in-line skating (recreationally in Boston and when they travel, and as certified instructors); scuba diving (including live-fish gathering with the New England Aquarium in the Caribbean); ocean kayaking (weekly along the Boston Harbor Islands, as well as along the coast from New York City to Bar Harbor); hiking and camping internationally; and dancing (from swing to disco). They like to keep busy.

WHY DO IT? "Because it's fun and exercising in a gym is not fun," says James.

GREATEST THRILL: Hard to choose. Circumnavigating Manhattan Island by ocean kayak was a huge favorite, as were recent treks (all since 2011) to Annapurna Base Camp in Nepal, Macchu Picchu in Peru, and summiting Mt. Kilimanjaro in Tanzania, where they slept in Crater Camp among the summit glaciers at 20,000 feet.

