



## Proust questionnaire: Harvey Thommasen, MD

**What profession might you have pursued, if not medicine?**

Conservation officer.

**Which talent would you most like to have?**

I wish I could sculpt wildlife.

**What do you consider your greatest achievement?**

I recently received a Nuxalk Indian name: Ni-niits-m-layc, which means “He who restores life,” from the Bella Coola hereditary chief’s family.

**Who are your heroes?**

My grandfather, Victor Goresky, who was a solo family physician working in Castlegar.

**What is your idea of perfect happiness?**

I am living it now. I just quit medicine because there are no jobs for rural physicians who do not want to do call, and I now just wander the woods, drift the river, raise honeybees and ducks, bird watch, and enjoy my wife’s company.

**On what occasion do you lie?**

When I don’t want the person I am with to get in trouble if they were to know about something I probably should not have done.

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Dr Thommasen is a recently retired rural family physician and has been a frequent contributor to the *BCMJ*.

**What is your greatest fear?**

I have no fears; every day I live is a bonus.

**What is the trait you most deplore in yourself?**

I do not suffer fools gladly.

**What characteristic do your favorite patients share?**

My favorite patients remind me of my parents—both were disabled (deaf mute), poorly educated, but kind-hearted, hardworking, and keen to understand the world.

**Which living physician do you most admire?**

Dr Charles Helm of Tumbler Ridge.

**What is your favorite activity?**

Floating down the Bella Coola River on a warm September day watching for surfacing northern coho.

**Which words or phrases do you most overuse?**

“Hey man.”

**Where would you most like to practise?**

I have worked in all the places I most wanted to practise—Masset (Chinook salmon and halibut), Dease Lake (pike, grayling, and large rainbow trout), Houston (steelhead), Tumbler Ridge (fossil fish), and Bella Coola (sea-run trout, salmon, and char).

**What medical advance do you most anticipate?**

Targeted immunotherapy therapy for cancer.

**What is your most marked characteristic?**

I have the ability to focus on completing tasks/projects without getting too distracted by the small stuff.

**What do you most value in your colleagues?**

Hard work and commitment to improving community health.

**Who are your favorite writers?**

Roderick L. Haig-Brown (e.g., *A River Never Sleeps*).

**What is your greatest regret?**

That I did not have more time for my wife and family when I was a young doctor.

**What is your motto?**

A Henry David Thoreau quote: “If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears, however measured or far away.”

**How would you like to die?**

In my sleep or on a glacier like Otzi the Iceman—someone I am genetically related to according to 23andMe.