



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.

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.