

# What I did on my summer vacation...

BY ANNE GORMAN

As the colder winds remind us that winter is upon us, we thought we'd take a look at the ways plastic surgeons found excitement and fun during the fairer days of summer and autumn.

## Bill McClure MD: Surfing with the sharks

Bill McClure, MD, of Napa, Calif., is not a plastic surgeon who surfs. He's a surfer who is also a plastic surgeon.

"Once you get involved in surfing and find out that it's so much fun, it becomes more than a hobby or a sport. It became a way of life," he says.

The roar of the surf called to Dr. McClure at a fairly young age.

"As a kid, I lived in Hawaii. When I was in elementary school, we moved to Southern California. I started surfing in high school and continued on through college. I went to UCLA and UCSD, and I think surfing is what kept me sane through med school," he says.

Now that he lives and practices in the Napa Valley, he drives the one-hour commute to a Marin County beach two or three times every week. The surfing is more difficult in Northern California, where it's necessary to paddle out some distance to get to the better waves. However, Dr. McClure has found his favorite surfing spot: a place known as "Shark Pit." Living up to its name, Dr. McClure once witnessed a shark attack on another surfer.

"I was out on the waves with my son, who sometimes surfs with me. It happened very quickly. The surfer who was attacked was a friend of mine. The shark had sandwiched the surfer's ankle, knee and surfboard in one bite. The surfer got out of the water and I put pressure on the bleeding, and I started an I.V. until a helicopter arrived to take him to the hospital. He had a lot of deep lacerations and one of the shark's teeth was embedded in his knee joint, but his leg was saved. He had to stay out of the water for six months," he recalls.

However, the risk of shark attack isn't enough to keep Dr. McClure away from the water – even when no one else considers it to be good beach weather.

"When the weather is poor, in addition to the wet suit I'll put on rubber gloves and booties and a rubber hood. The weather has to be pretty bad to prevent us from surfing."

There is a regular gang of surfers that Dr. McClure meets on the beach, but one of his favorite surfing buddies is his 17-year-old son, Patrick.

"It gives us a lot of time together. And, for young people his age, surfing has become pretty hip. Even kids who don't surf like to wear surfing fashions. He probably thinks, 'My dad is a total geek, but at least he surfs.'"

His 12-year-old son is learning to surf, too. His two daughters, ages 15 and 8, enjoy surfing on family vacations. He knows at least seven California members of ASPS who surf, including Larry Nichter, MD, of Huntington Beach; Steve Schendel, MD, DDS, of Stanford; Cindy Russell, MD, of Sunnyvale; Tina Smith, MD, of Walnut Creek; Kyle Bickel, MD, of San Francisco; Ross Rudolph, MD, of La Jolla, and Brett Snyder, MD, his new associate in Napa.

"The problem is, we never have a chance to get together for surfing. Larry Nichter and I both do overseas work for Interplast, and we keep hoping that we'll get the chance to surf together," he says. At press time, Dr. McClure was preparing for a mission to Ecuador.

When the weather is too inhospitable for surfing, chances are Dr. McClure will use the time to make his own surfboards. At the time of this interview, Dr. McClure was making a surfboard for Dr. Russell as a belated wedding gift.

"I tried in high school to make a surfboard, but I wasn't that happy with the results. Then, one day about five years ago, I was carving a nasal implant and it looked like a little surfboard. I thought, 'I shape people all the time, why not try to shape a surfboard?' Now, I make surfboards for friends and family all the time. Shaping a board is somewhat high-tech. It's like designing an airplane wing – it won't work correctly unless it's shaped just right."

Some of Dr. McClure's patients have asked about his tanned face and learned about his passion for riding the waves. The surfboard on his car is also a bit of a giveaway.

He's happy to talk about surfing with his patients – and with any other plastic surgeon who may be interested in learning more. Who knows? Maybe the first-ever surfing symposium is just around the corner.



Bill McClure, MD