

Doug Roach MD CCFP FCFP

He was a skier as a child, had developed that skill; his own children grew up in the snowboard era, and the family made at least one vacation a winter somewhere on the hills. Blue Mountain. Quebec. And, now that the kids are older, Banff. His wife in the chateau, making him promise: don't take them up to the top. Promise me. Father and sons go out, progressively make greater climbs, and having done all the lesser routes available to them, there is only the biggest challenge left. The boys beg to go, knowing that they're not the ones to get in trouble, but his thinking is that they've traveled all this way, and the kids are skilled enough, that they've proven themselves; they've listened so far; and then they're up there looking at one another. A moment that boys think cool, fathers think: if it goes wrong, it will go wrong now. (Trauma, ski patrol, airlifts, promise me.) He's 45 years old and should be free from death. He first came to Fergus 15 years ago, and met a patient who would die shortly before the trip to Banff. A multimedia artist, whose work adorns the better hallways in the better houses in town, she was someone who maintained composure in his office despite the devastation of a grand lie: years earlier she was left by a philanderer, and she spent time with her art until she found a caring partner in time enough to fall ill with breast cancer. He remembers her partner coming to the office with a nude portrait of himself painted by her. Two images, each with exact locations and details of the skin lesions she wanted the doctor to check on her beloved. (Art imitating life.) This is what the doctor does, with each visit: checks the roster of complaints, checks the anxieties, checks the red flags; and then he checks a life. He might be on the crest of an interview, or coming down, or following his sons as they plummet, checking their descent. ❁

Cover photo: Andy Hamilton, Moose Jaw, Sask

Story: Shane Neilson MD CCFP, Erin, Ont

Additional photos and the French translation of the story appear on page 1350.

D'autres photos et la traduction en français du récit se trouvent à la page 1350.

THE COVER PROJECT Canadian Family Physician has embarked on a project to assemble the portrait of family medicine in Canada. Each cover of the journal will feature a family physician chosen at random from our membership list, along with a short essay—a brief glimpse of the person and the practice. Over time, the randomness will become representative and the differences, taken together, will define what it is that all family physicians have in common.

Inside half-cover (IHC)