

LAST THE STITCH

BODYBUILDING DOC DROPS INHIBITIONS, DONS BIKINI

Call it guts, derring-do, pluck or chutzpah, ASPS member Ellen Mahony, MD, Westport, Conn., has got it. What other adjectives could describe a full-time plastic surgeon who in June struggled to open the door of a car parked on an incline, yet in September registered for a bodybuilding competition – only two months prior to the event and at age 57?

Dr. Mahony competed in the 2014 National Physique Committee (NPC) East Coast Championships held in Wayne, N.J., an event sanctioned by an amateur body-builders organization that holds competition in seven categories, including “Bikini.” Dr. Mahony says three factors drove her “way out of my comfort zone” to participate in this activity: The fact that it was so far removed from anything she’s ever done before; the quest (paraphrasing the U.S. Army slogan) to be all she can be; and her desire to have her patients do as she does, not merely do as she says.

As part of an overall approach to health and wellness, Dr. Mahony encourages her patients to embrace her self-styled “Fitness Challenge,” a long-term effort for women to incorporate exercise and a healthy diet (not *dieting*, but something sensible and specific to each patient) into lifestyle changes that would include plastic surgery. Her competition preparation “was a great way to communicate information on health and wellness,” she says. “I was not going to win that category, no question,” says Dr. Mahony, self-described introvert, but she felt compelled to give it her best shot. “I was amazed at how confident and self-assured I ultimately felt,” she tells *PSN*. “I was doing this activity that was so unusual for me – I’m a very private person; I can hardly talk about myself. Nonetheless, I wanted to overcome the middle-aged insecurity and stereotype that burdens so many women. I worked out a lot – and prayed a lot!”

“I had to walk out on that stage, always with a smile on my face, and do these crazy poses, sashay my hips around, execute precision turns, and stand in revealing poses while facing the judges and audience – in a bikini. This may be hard for some to understand, but I felt as if I was truly maximizing my own potential,” she says. “And there’s nothing more satisfying than that.”



Dr. Mahony crosses the stage during the competition.

But that didn’t come easy. For more than two months, Dr. Mahony devoted an average of four hours each day, six days a week, to weight training, stretching, posing. She also practiced walking, as competitors generally favor exceedingly “high” heels for bodybuilding contests. “I bought mine online for \$9.99 from ‘Sinful Tastes’ in Las Vegas,” she says. “I wore those everywhere, from the Stop & Shop to the car wash and the office, including during consults. The calluses early-on nearly crippled me... but they made for great conversation!” *PSN*



Ellen Mahony, MD, poses during the 2014 National Physique Committee's Bikini Masters Over 35 competition in November.

Photos by Spencer Jung

SURGEON SPOTLIGHT

Editor's note: The bulk of *PSN*'s pages are devoted to specific elements of our mission statement – to keep members informed of the social, political and economic trends and educational opportunities that affect the specialty of plastic surgery.

PSN is pleased to take liberties with the “social” aspect of its mission statement by presenting a good-natured look at the lives of notable members who we believe are making significant contributions to the specialty.



Avron Lipschitz, MD

The best part about being a plastic surgeon is... The broad scope of practice; creatively applying principles of plastic surgery to individualized patient needs; problem-solving care; and continuously learning evolving techniques and technology.

The worst part about being a plastic surgeon is... Search Engine Optimization.

The single-greatest contribution to Plastic Surgery was... The skin graft, microsurgery, the VAC, neuromodulators and fillers, tissue engineering, fat grafting... Was that a single contribution?

I couldn't operate without... My friend and colleague Matthew Goodwin, MD. We perform DIEPs together in Palm Beach, Fla., and we built our system from scratch, using training learned in residency in Baltimore.

An operation I no longer perform is... Mandible fractures. Hard and technically challenging – I admire any surgeon who does it.

I seriously collect... Bonsai trees. Florida is a great place to cultivate tropical trees. I like designing, shaping and exhibiting them. The principles of bonsai have many similarities to plastic surgery – shaping living things to look their best but not overdoing it, and then keeping them alive.



Dr. Lipschitz with his family (pet kitten not pictured)

IN THIS ISSUE, we present to you **Avron Lipschitz, MD, MBChB**, Stuart, Fla. Dr. Lipschitz completed his general surgery residency at the University of Cape Town (South Africa) Medical School's Groote Schuur Hospital – and his plastic surgery residency at the University of Texas Southwestern in Dallas. Dr. Lipschitz has also completed a plastic surgery fellowship at Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore and medical training in London. Between serving on the ASPS Membership Committee, growing bonsai trees and accepting “gift kittens” for his daughter, Dr. Lipschitz answered the following questions for *PSN*:

The greatest influence on my decision to become a Plastic Surgeon was... Due to the fact that I come from a family of doctors and artists. I was strong at math and science, and I enjoy art and design.

The best vacation I ever took was... To Peru and Bolivia with my girlfriend. A great adventure vacation to Machu Pichu, the Inca trail, Cuzco, Lima, La Paz, Lake Titikaka. We spent a week living in the Amazon jungle canopy – and that girlfriend later became my wife, Joanne.

My all-time favorite movie is... *The Empire Strikes Back (Star Wars Part III)*. Is there even another serious contender aside from this great movie?

The last book I read was... *Contagious: Why Things Catch On* by Jonah Burger.



Dr. Lipschitz in the O.R. in Stuart, Fla.

An operation I no longer perform is... Mandible fractures. Hard and technically challenging – I admire any surgeon who does it.

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The best thing a grateful patient gave to me was... A kitten. This patient knew I had a baby girl who needed a pet. He bought it for her, and at a post-op visit handed it over with one bag of cat food and kitty litter. That was eight years ago in Dallas. The cat has traveled with the family from residency in Dallas to Baltimore for my fellowship and now lives in Florida. My daughter still loves that cat.

The best dish I prepare is... Sauté ostrich in cream mushroom and red wine sauce.

The most surprising person I follow on Twitter is... My daughter. She set up both accounts.

My words to live by are... “Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts.” – Sir Winston Churchill. *PSN*

15 YEARS AGO IN PSN...

The explosive growth of the Internet led to websites for virtually every business – and attracted those plastic surgeons who wanted to use the technology as a marketing vehicle for their practices. The ethical considerations of the then-revolutionary idea of launching a website to educate and attract potential patients came under fire from some ASPS members, while others defended the premise in the March 2000 *PSN* article “Plastic surgeons look at the ethics behind online sites promoting low-cost cosmetic services to consumers.”

“If I was starving, I’d look at every way possible to get patients into my practice. It’s easy to say you’re above this when you’re thriving, but on a practical basis, where are young surgeons going to get patients?”

– Jane Weston, MD
ASPS Ethics Committee past chair *PSN*

