

Plastic Surgery

AMERICAN SOCIETY OF
PLASTIC SURGEONS

SURGEON SPOTLIGHT

September 2008

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 look at the lives of notable members who are making significant contributions to the specialty.



Ivan Ducic, MD

I couldn't operate without my... Surgical loupes. As a resident, I had to moonlight three nights to buy them, and I've brought them to work each day since my second year of residency. I use them every day for peripheral nerve surgery and microsurgery.

My single biggest contribution to plastic surgery is... Being able to pass my knowledge to future generations. It's our moral obligation to residents and students, since we wouldn't be where we are if those before us hadn't passed their knowledge and inspiration to us.

Younger surgeons today... Are fortunate to have so many opportunities and the luxury to choose what they want to do – and where. That's often not possible in Europe, simply due to the lack of open positions.

IN THIS ISSUE, we present to you **Ivan Ducic, MD**, Associate professor of plastic surgery and chief of peripheral nerve surgery at Georgetown University Hospital, Washington, D.C. Born in Sibenik, Croatia, Dr. Ducic earned his medical degree at the University of Zagreb (Croatia) School of Medicine in 1991 and arrived in the United States later that year to execute the experimental portion of his PhD thesis (involving GABA/benzodiazepin receptor subtypes). Rather than returning to Eastern Europe, Dr. Ducic worked as a research associate in the Georgetown surgery department before completing his general surgery residency in 1999 and his plastic surgery residency in 2002. He also completed a peripheral nerve fellowship in 2003 at the Institute for Peripheral Nerve Surgery, Baltimore. Dr. Ducic – a 2008 Pathways to Leadership program participant who lives in the nation's capital with his wife, Marijana, and sons Daniel, 10, and Tony, 8 – set aside a few minutes to answer the following questions:

If I had to start my career over, I would... Hope to be so lucky that I could do what I now do. My path was so unusual that I often wonder how things worked so well for me. My mentors in Croatia and Switzerland "suggested" that I spend time in the United States in order to work in academia in Europe. I went to Georgetown University in 1991, planning to do two years of research and then return to Europe. But two years turned into 17-plus years. I'm very fortunate to be here, doing what I do, and I'm very thankful to all my mentors and supporters.



Dr. Ducic dons his loupes to surgically correct occipital neuralgia inside an O.R. at Georgetown Medical Center, Washington, D.C.

The best thing about being a plastic surgeon is... Eliminating pain, restoring lost function and improving patients' appearances – often all very important for their self-image and quality of life.

The best part of next weekend will be... Visiting my family and friends in Croatia.

The worst thing about being a plastic surgeon is... Having to educate the public and other colleagues that plastic surgery is not for everyone and should not be done by those without appropriate plastic surgery training.

The single biggest influence on my decision to become a plastic surgeon... A Croatian television appearance by Marko Godina, MD, in the mid-1980s. He was with a patient whose amputated hand he had reattached.



Family and friends celebrate the completion of Dr. Ducic's peripheral nerve fellowship in 2003. With Dr. Ducic are (standing, left) his wife, Marijana; Lee Dellon, MD; Luiann Dellon; father-in-law Milivoj Cuk; and (seated) Dr. Ducic's father, Mate.

I thought that was the coolest thing I ever saw – and since then, the word "microsurgery" took on a whole different meaning. Also, my wife, Marijana, who told me that plastic surgery – rather than cardiac surgery – was where I could best express myself. She was (again) so right.

The last book I read was... *The Historian* by Elizabeth Kostova.

The best vacation I ever took was... A trip to Dalmatia on the Croatian coast – without a computer, pager or cell phone. I lost track of the days – and it was a great way to recharge my batteries.

The best thing a grateful patient gave me was... A U.S. Navy Veterans Medallion etched with the Navy Code of Honor: "Honor, Courage and Commitment." The patient's father gave it to me after I removed his son's rather large femoral nerve tumor. Through his military career, the father helped people in need in my country; now it was my turn and privilege to return the generosity, give back and say thanks through helping his child. [EN](#)

For more information
about Dr. Ducic, visit:

www.DrDucicPlasticSurgery.com