

WALL

BEAVER CREEK

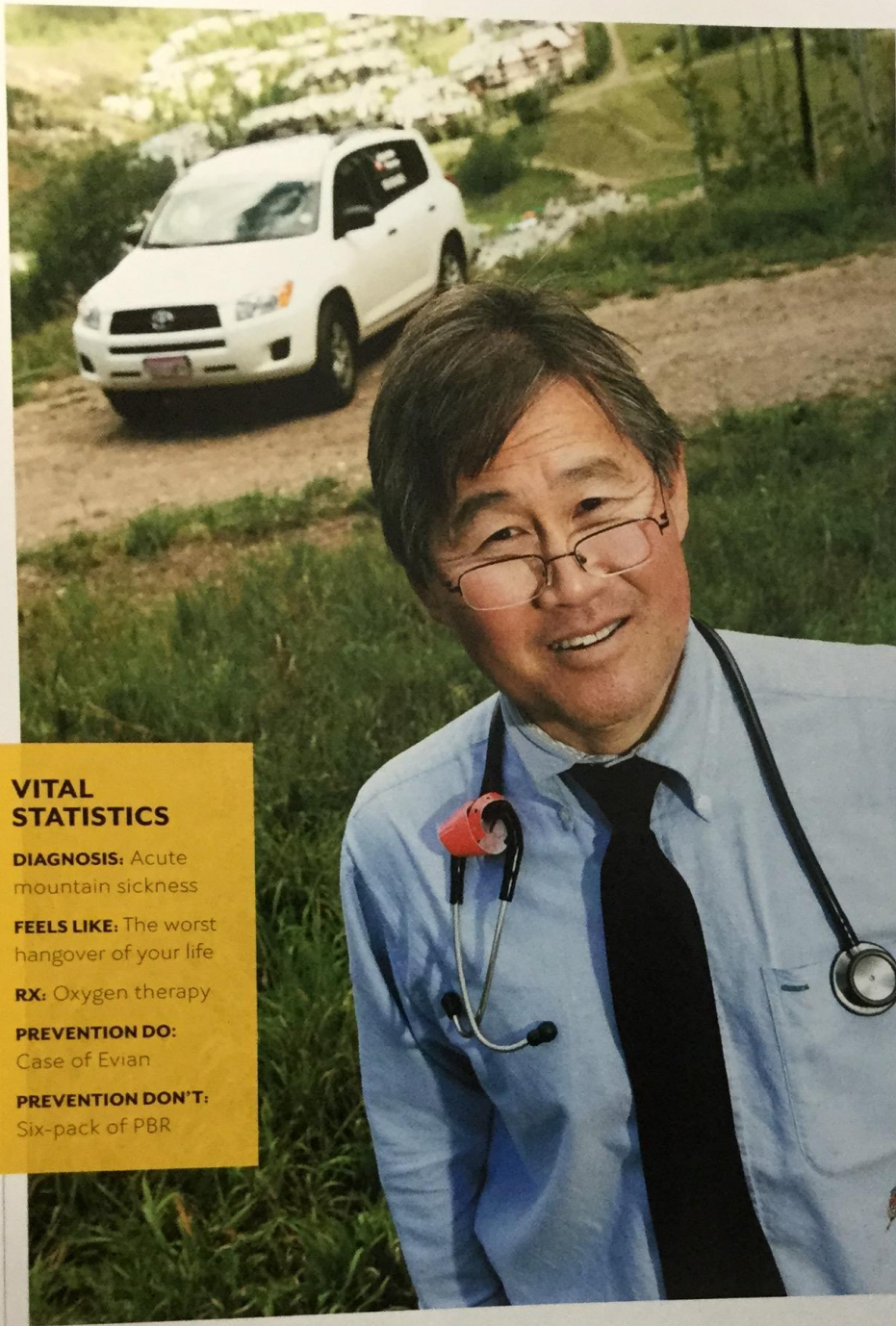
HOLIDAY 2012/2013

50 YEARS
IN WORDS
& PICTURES

{ 1962-2012 }

SPECIAL
COLLECTORS'
ISSUE





THE BELIEF THAT FIT PEOPLE DON'T SUCCUMB TO ALTITUDE SICKNESS

is one of the ongoing myths regarding the condition. According to doctors at Alpine Mobile Physicians in Vail, altitude illness, also known as acute mountain sickness, affects 20 to 30 percent of visitors from lower elevations. They refer to it as “an equal opportunity illness,” striking both young and old, fit and unfit.

Also, certain elevations serve as trigger points for different people: a local living comfortably in Gypsum (at 6,540 feet) might experience altitude sickness in Breckenridge after a hard day of skiing above 9,600 feet. The good news is that if it strikes, it can be treated very quickly, and there are also ways to help prevent it and curtail its severity.

“For so many people who come here, being outdoors is the most important part of their vacation,” says Alpine Mobile Physicians’ Dr. Douglas Mayeda, a.k.a. “Dr. Doug” (pictured at left). “They’re healthy, then they’re sick. They lose half that time—even their whole vacation—feeling bad. But they can be right back on their skis having a great time if they are treated.”

It’s important to recognize that a racing heartbeat and shortness of breath are symptoms that nearly all flatlanders experience when doing something active at high elevation—and ditto locals venturing into even higher elevations. The symptoms of altitude illness, or acute mountain sickness (AMS), resemble those of a hangover: headache, nausea, dizziness, and inability to sleep.

To help avoid altitude sickness or recover from it if it strikes, doctors recommend drinking more water and fluids, cutting back on salt, moderating physical activity, eating a high-carb, low-fat diet, and reducing alcohol and caffeine consumption. If not treated, about 10 percent of AMS patients go on to develop a more severe condition, high-altitude pulmonary edema, characterized by a wet cough, serious shortness of breath, and fluid in the lungs. If this happens to you, see a doctor right away.

The good news is, once you get help—services like Alpine Mobile Physicians make house calls, wheeling a steel tank of O₂ into your home or hotel room—it’s amazing how quickly things can turn around with as little as 10 minutes of oxygen treatment.

“You literally see a rosiness return to someone’s cheeks and fingertips,” Dr. Doug says. “This healthy appearance, the patient’s response, and the overall sense of well-being are very gratifying.”

VITAL STATISTICS

DIAGNOSIS: Acute mountain sickness

FEELS LIKE: The worst hangover of your life

RX: Oxygen therapy

PREVENTION DO: Case of Evian

PREVENTION DON'T: Six-pack of PBR

Clearing the Air

MYTHS AND TRUTHS OF ALTITUDE ILLNESS, AND HOW TO AVOID IT **BY SHAUNA FARNELL**