



## FACE TIME

# Back on top

**DAVID ROTHBART** OVERCOMES CHILDHOOD ODDS TO HELP OTHERS

**D**r. David Rothbart, 46, is a shining example of determination. As a child, he faced and overcame extraordinary hardship, coping with an alcoholic and delinquent father, a drug-addicted brother with frequent legal trouble, and a mother who committed suicide when he was 14 years old. After moving away from home at the age of 16, Rothbart applied himself in school and earned top marks, finally attending the University of Illinois and Yale Medical School on his own dime. He is now a back surgeon and, in 2004, he founded Southlake-based Spine Team Texas. Rothbart was interviewed by staff writer Stephen C. Webster.

**DESCRIBE YOUR FAMILY.** I have a lovely wife named Laura who I've been married to for 14 years. We have two boys, ages 7 and 10.

**DESCRIBE YOUR CHILDHOOD.** I lost my entire family as a teenager and was on my own at the age of 16. My closest friend's family ultimately took me in and somewhat adopted me. That's who I refer to as my family today.

**HOW WAS IT GROWING UP IN THAT EXTENDED FAMILY?** Well, before I had that extended family, it was a very rough, challenging life. Once my closest friend's family took me in, it was still very challenging, but being surrounded by a support network like that really helped me.

**WHAT IS YOUR DEGREE?** I have a BA in biology. I was in Phi Beta Kappa.

**AS A CHILD, WHAT DID YOU WANT TO BE WHEN YOU GREW UP?** A surgeon. When I was younger, having that carrot dangling in front of me kept me going through difficult times.

**WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST JOB?** My first job actually began my entrepreneurial life. My friend and I started a car-washing business when we were about 12 years old.

**DID YOU LEARN FROM IT?** I learned that if you want to get paid, you'd better do the job right. It's a very simple lesson, but one that has rang true for the rest of my life.

**WHO ARE YOUR ROLE MODELS?** My adopted brother and best friend. Also, my adopted parents and uncle.

**DESCRIBE A DIFFICULT PERSONAL EXPERIENCE YOU'VE FACED AND WHAT YOU LEARNED FROM IT.** The death of my mother, one week before my sophomore year of high school. That taught me it was sink or swim, and I was at a point in life where I had to make a decision that I was going to overcome that and be successful in life.

**WHEN ARE YOU HAPPIEST?** Spending time with my wife and children.

**WHAT DO YOU DEFINE AS SUCCESS?** Being happy in my personal and professional life.

**OF WHAT ACCOMPLISHMENT ARE YOU MOST PROUD AND WHY?** Being a father, because after growing up in the family environment that I had, being able to provide a good life for my children and

raising them to be happy, honest, respectful people. That's my greatest accomplishment.

**WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR BEST BUSINESS DECISION?** The concept of Spine Team Texas. Not only from the success it has had on a business level, but the number of people we've been able to provide care to in a compassionate environment. It has been very fulfilling.

**WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR WORST BUSINESS DECISION?** That falls into a general category, common to many businesses: the human resources front, being emotionally attached to individuals and realizing that isn't the best thing for your business.

**WHAT DO YOU TELL YOUR EMPLOYEES TO LEAD AND INSPIRE THEM?** I tell them we all share the same job, no matter what our title is in the organization. Everybody does one thing: Provide service to our patients.

**OTHER THAN THE PEOPLE YOU WORK WITH AND YOUR PATIENTS, WHAT IS THE BEST PART OF YOUR JOB?** It's the feeling of going to bed at night with the notion that we're doing something very special here.

**WHAT DO YOU WISH YOU WERE BETTER AT?** I wish I were better at being able to separate the emotional involvement with some of our patients. We tend to focus more on the people that we weren't able to help than the ones we did.

**WHAT DO YOU WISH YOU COULD LEARN TO DO?** Fly a jet. Actually, back up. I want to learn to play the guitar or piano.

**WHAT IS YOUR BIGGEST PET PEEVE?** Insensitivity or rudeness.

**WHERE DO YOU LIKE TO VACATION?** I like to go anywhere warm, sunny and with a beach.

**WHAT IS YOUR TOP CHOICE FOR A NEW CAREER?** It would be a philanthropic field. Something that would benefit needy children.

**WHAT DO YOU WISH YOU'D INVENTED?** Probably Xbox. No, let me think about it ... I would say, what's Apple's new thing? The iPhone? Yeah.

swebster@bizjournals.com | 214-706-7156

## DBJ CONFIDENTIAL

Christine Perez



Some people celebrate the big 5-0 with an exotic trip or by splurging on a new sports car. But Dallas plastic surgeon **Chuck Wallace**, Dallas Honda owner **Al Lamb** and **Mike Culwell**, owner of the **Culwell & Sons** men's clothing chain, took a more adventurous approach: They were part of a five-man team that recently participated in the 2007 **Baja 1000**. The race, which runs 1,300 miles through the Mexican desert, is a five-person relay; the "baton" is the team's motorcycle. The men, who all hit the half-century milestone in 2007, decided to do the race after realizing they'd qualify for the "over-50" category. Unfortunately, the first rider on their relay crashed 188 miles into the race, and had to be airlifted to a hospital. The rest of the team members found the motorcycle — stripped of most of its parts — six hours later. Undaunted, the group plans to give it another go in 2008. "It's extremely challenging," Wallace says. "The course is very grueling, the weather is unpredictable and you've even got some of the locals setting booby traps. There is no end to the challenges."

With only a few shopping days left before Christmas, the chances of finding that must-have Wii, Guitar Hero or Ripstik are looking bleak. But **Stonebriar Centre** in Frisco, **Town East Mall** in Mesquite and **Vista Ridge Mall** in Lewisville are doing what they can to help. The three shopping centers have teamed up with **NearbyNow Inc.** to provide a service that lets shoppers check store inventories online or with their mobile phones. Customers also can reserve products to pick up and get special discounts and coupons. "Shoppers call our service 'Google for malls' because they can search every brand, product and sale at the mall," says **Scott Dunlap**, CEO of Los Altos, Calif.-based **NearbyNow Inc.** For details, visit the malls' Web sites or [www.nearbynow.com](http://www.nearbynow.com). ... Looking for a unique stocking-stuffer? **Passport Panties**, a premium line of "portable undergarments," has been picked up for the holiday season by swanky retailer **Neiman Marcus**. Designed by Houston-based **MMK Brands**, the line features a pair of panties inside a cover the size of a passport case for today's gal on the go. In keeping with the jet-set theme, the panties come in Window (small), Middle (medium) and Aisle (large) sizes. This month, Dallas-based **Neimans** is exclusively selling a **Passport Panties** gift package with two pair tucked inside a faux crocodile or metallic passport case for \$44. Individual "refill" panties are available for \$18.

Or, if there's someone on your gift-list whom you're really looking to impress, consider a package from **DFW Elite Auto Rental.com**. The company has brought back its popular "couples tour" package for the holidays, running through Valentine's Day. Priced at \$649 per person, the tour follows a 200-mile pre-planned scenic route in five cars designed for sheer driving pleasure — including the **Rolls-Royce Phantom VI** and the **Mercedes SL500**. Drivers will get at least 30 minutes behind the wheel of each luxury car. The tour also includes lunch at an upscale restaurant and photos to commemorate the day. **Ron Sturgeon**, owner of **DFW Elite Auto**, says he personally selected the cars on the couples tour for their luxury and comfort. ... Speaking of top-of-the-line rides, a Dec. 11 story in **USA Today** finds vehicles can "say a lot about the person in the corner of office." The newspaper's survey of 90 CEOs found 13% drove BMWs, 12% drove a Mercedes and 10% a Toyota. Thirteen percent drove hybrids. **Gary Kelly**, CEO of **Southwest Airlines**, drives a used 2005 **Porsche 911 Carrera**. "You have to drive; it might as well be fun," he said in the story. **Herb Vest**, CEO of the Dallas-based dating site **True.com**, drives a Mercedes convertible and said pricey cars, clothes and homes owned by top execs motivate workers. (Yeah, right. You keep telling yourself that, Herb.)



ROLLS-ROYCE PHANTOM VI

Allison Wollam of the Houston Business Journal, an affiliated publication, contributed to this report.

[cperez@bizjournals.com](mailto:cperez@bizjournals.com) | 214-706-7120