



*50+Living our best lives now and in the future!*

## From Woodstock to Neuroscience and Beyond



Shaun Morrison, Ph.D., Professor Emeritus, Department of Neurological Surgery, OHSU, published 125 peer-reviewed articles in scientific journals and wrote 15 book chapters

during his 40-year-career. He has been cited approximately 10,500 times. Of course, there is more to this story...

### Leatherwork and Woodstock

"I started doing leatherwork when I received a Tandy kit for my 14<sup>th</sup> birthday and continued working on small projects while I was at Wesleyan University (1966-1970). My college roommate and a long-time friend got interested in leatherwork as well. We would make various items (belts, handbags, pouches, etc.) in our spare time during the week, and then on Saturday mornings, we drove to Greenwich Village in New York City to sell them from the hood of my car."

"When we saw the advertisement for the Woodstock Festival, which was originally billed as a weekend of 'art and music,' we thought 'why not make some belts and go there to sell them with other artisans?' By the time we arrived, the crowds had already crashed the gates and fences and had overrun the area where craft booths were to be set up. The organizers had declared it an 'open concert'...needless to say, the vast majority of the attendees had no interest in art or craft. We shrugged, figured we'd sell our wares elsewhere, and joined the festivities! Not surprisingly, the music was front and center. Seeing folks whose records we had been listening to for a couple of years performing in this unfettered venue was the most memorable aspect of the experience—but then there was the sea of wet, muddy people..." Morrison recalls enjoying the performances of Joan Baez, Janis Joplin, Jefferson Airplane, Grateful Dead, and others.



### Side Trips

After graduating with a BA in Physics and Mathematics, Morrison worked on a holographic system in the aerospace field. After this job ended, he worked as an auto mechanic—something he had enjoyed as a hobby. Then he and his friend from college started a leather shop. "It was fun for a

year," until his partner decided to go to medical school.

Morrison entered a Ph.D. program in the Department of Physiology at the University of Vermont. "The lectures on neuroscience were fascinating." In 1980, he received his doctorate and has "been doing NIH-supported research in autonomic neuroscience ever since."

"Neuroscience is the study of the nervous system... My specialty has been autonomic neuroscience, which deals with the sensory nerves, brain pathways, and peripheral nerves that regulate the function of all of your internal 'organs.'

### **Researching 'Brown Fat' and Metabolism**

In the late 1990s, Dr. Morrison "began collaborating with a colleague interested in metabolism (the regulation of energy use in the body)" This work involved adipose tissue research. White adipose (white fat) "is an energy storage depot—the nerves that come to white fat cause the fat to break down into energy molecules that go into the blood and are distributed to cells so they can perform their normal functions." Unfortunately, we don't need nearly as much white fat as many people carry; as a result, we have an obesity "epidemic." However, brown adipose tissue (brown fat), "which adult humans have relatively little, does not store energy but rather acts like a small furnace to burn calories to keep us warm in a cold environment."

"People with higher amounts of brown fat have a healthier metabolic profile and almost never have diabetes! The best way to activate and increase the amount of brown fat is cold exposure—this is the evolved function of brown fat—to provide heat during cold exposure to maintain body temperature. Unfortunately, cold exposure is unpleasant; however, swimming in cold water, cold showering, and these sorts of things (even a little bit on a regular basis), although unpleasant, will increase brown fat and markedly improve metabolism."

### **Living His Best Life**

Morrison enjoys running, cooking, lapidary work, and travel. "I began running in my mid-twenties to help stop smoking cigarettes...it worked, and I've been running ever since. I ran my first marathon on a dare in 1983 and my last in Portland in 2004, and I have rarely missed a Shamrock 15k." Morrison likes to cook fish and spicy food. "Salmon with Caribbean salsa would be one of my favorites." Cooking pizza over a wood-fired pizza oven that he built is something else he enjoys. He still makes leather belts, but also does lapidary work "to make stone pieces (particularly jaspers from Oregon) that I can incorporate in belt buckles that I make from silver and bronze." He would also like to do more traveling, but just for pleasure (rather than attending and presenting at neuroscience conferences). "I'd like to return to Australia (I'm fascinated by boulder opals) and to Italy (great food, wine, and history) and to England and France (great gargoyles).



### **Advice for Living Your Best Life**

"My advice would be to keep active, both mentally and physically. Any activity increases blood flow to the parts of the brain that are being used to conduct the activity, and good brain blood flow helps keep neurons in good shape."



Morrison, his long-time friend from college (who had been at Woodstock with him), and his friend's wife completed a five-day backpacking trip at

Horseshoe Mesa in the Grand Canyon in 2019.

### For Inquiring Minds: More on Brown Adipose Tissue

If interested in learning more about 'brown fat,' check out one of Dr. Morrison's articles available through open access. Here's a [link](#) for a 2014 article, "Central neural regulation of brown adipose tissue thermogenesis and energy expenditure," which was published in *Cell Metabolism*, 19(5). If you choose not to read the entire article, even the conclusion is enlightening.

### "Keep it Moving!"



World-renowned choreographer Tyla Tharp encourages all of us to keep moving. Her 2019 book, *Keep it Moving: Lessons for the Rest of Your Life*, is an inspiring read. The book also offers practical suggestions for staying active at any age.

Nearing 80, Tharp has continued to work with dancers worldwide. As [reported](#) in a March 18th, 2021 *Washington Post* article, Tharp worked online with a "new ballet for a troupe in Germany" during the pandemic.

Tharp has created dances for the Joffrey Ballet, the Paris Opera Ballet, London's Royal Ballet, Denmark's Royal Danish Ballet, and American Ballet Theatre. She has also choreographed five Hollywood films and holds 19 honorary degrees, including one from Harvard University.

To learn more about Tharp's life and work, watch the PBS American Masters, "[Twyla Moves](#)," on March 26<sup>th</sup>. By clicking on the link, you can also watch a preview of this special.

### Support Ukrainians By Purchasing Art



Southern Oregon Artist Susan Rochester will be painting original watercolors you can purchase to help support Ukrainians. Pictures will be similar to the one above, and most will be 8 x 10 inches, though some might be 11 x 14 inches. Rochester may also sell some limited prints. Proceeds (less a small amount for materials, packing, and mailing) will go to two groups:

World Central Kitchen, providing nourishing meals to Ukrainian refugees. This organization has served over 1,000,000 meals in the past two weeks.

Mercy Corps is a Portland, Oregon-based NGO on the ground in Ukraine, Poland, and Romania. This organization provides humanitarian assistance, and they have a particular focus on elders and people with disabilities who are more likely to remain in the country.

To learn more, you can find Susan on Instagram: @susanrochester. Or, you can email her: [susanrochesterart@gmail.com](mailto:susanrochesterart@gmail.com)

### Financial Knowledge is Empowering

Elevate Wealth Advisors provided free quarterly webinars on topics related to financial planning. Using a proprietary process called The Playbook, webinar participants learned about the fundamentals of financial planning. Last quarter,



Ben James, CFA, CFP, founder of Elevate Wealth



Advisors, and author of *The Playbook: 7 Fundamentals of Financial Planning*, offered information on The Playbook Process and discussed Social Security (including myths and information about the past,

present, and possible future). If you missed this informative session, you can still access the webinar video on The Elevate Wealth Advisor's website.

Future learning opportunities will be recorded and available at your convenience. For additional learning opportunities, check out [Elevate Wealth Advisor's YouTube Channel](#). In the latest short video (6:20 minutes), Ben explains four things to address in your financial Playbook in the first quarter.

### Emotional Contagion

Emotions are often contagious. If we surround ourselves with pessimistic people, we are more likely to develop this disposition. However, if we surround ourselves with positive people, we are more likely to feel positive. Though we may not be aware of it, we tend to mirror other people's emotions at a neurological level.

### To Live a Longer, Happier Life, Cultivate an Optimistic Outlook

Researchers at Boston University report that optimists may live 11-15% longer than pessimists. One explanation is that optimists tend to have lower stress levels.



Suggestions for encouraging a more optimistic outlook include avoiding too much news/mass media that focuses on negative events. Practice "intentional" optimism, and choose to look at the positives in a situation.

### If You Live to Be 100, How Will You Celebrate?

Increasingly, living to 100 is becoming more common. If you live to be 100, how will you celebrate that milestone?

Greta Weberg of St. Joseph, Michigan, celebrated her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday by getting a new tattoo on her left arm. This time, she added her birthplace and birthdate: "NY, NY 1922."

When she turned 100, Julia "hurricane" Hawkins ran the 100-meter dash in less than 100 seconds. At 105, she set a new world record for the 100-meter dash at the 2021 Louisiana Senior Games. Recently, Hawkins turned 106. (I suspect Hawkins' active lifestyle has contributed to her longevity.)

I somewhat jokingly tell people that if I live to be 100, I plan to get a tattoo that reads, "My Name Is Not Sweetie!" On my 100<sup>th</sup> birthday, I hope to enjoy a morning workout (including a slow jog or a walk). If I go for a walk, I'll hug a kindred spirit, an ancient tree. I'd also like to write about the many things for which I am grateful and write letters of gratitude to special people in my life.



What about you? If you live to be 100, how do you envision marking that milestone?

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