

1964 U-M Grad

Roger White Wheels and Heals In Rochester

Hobbies can be tricky. You can get so caught-up in them that you begin to neglect your "real world" job.

Roger Dean White ('64M) is lucky in that regard. As an ambulance buff, his hobby dovetails nicely with his role as physician. And this merger of vocation and avocation has helped save lives in the Rochester, Minn., area, where Dr. White is an assistant professor of anesthesiology, Mayo Medical School, and Consultant in Anesthesiology, Mayo Clinic.

Parked in a double garage beneath his southwest Rochester home is a gleaming white, fully equipped ambulance—a 1952 National Pontiac in mint condition.

Parked beside it is another ambulance—a 1972 Superior Pontiac, complete with sirens, lights and rooftop beacon.

Licensed by the Minnesota Health Department, both emergency vehicles carry all the basic equipment the law requires, including splints, oxygen, and spine boards. The Pontiacs are also officially registered for any Civil Defense emergencies or other disasters.

But the 1952 Pontiac also carries an array of sophisticated lifesaving gear and emergency medications well in excess of the minimum standards set by the Health Department, much of it donated by drug companies and manufacturers of medical equipment. Dr. White says the drug companies may have heard of him because he just might be the only physician-ambulance driver in the country.

"I can get to the scene of any accident or emergency if needed if I get a call on my radio from the police or anyone else," he says.

Dr. White and Dr. Edward Didier, a Mayo anesthesiologist at Methodist



Roger White with his vintage Pontiac ambulance.

Hospital, are firm believers in helping upgrade emergency medical technicians in handling emergency cases before they reach the hospital.

"It often means the difference between life and death," says Dr. White, who wants people to know that physicians care about what happens to patients before they arrive at the hospital.

Drs. White and Didier began advanced training of Gold Cross Ambulance technicians in 1971. Initial training was in intravenous fluid therapy principles, so that the attendants could begin administering life-saving intravenous fluids in some cases before a patient was transported by ambulance to the hospital.

Since that beginning the training has gradually been expanded to include the full complement of paramedic activity, including drug administration and defibrillation. Because acute cardiac events are a major part of the emergency volume of Gold Cross Ambulance activity, knowledge and skills in pre-hospital acute cardiac care are emphasized.

Dr. White is available to give advice to the ambulance technicians via a walkie talkie he carries with him at all times—at home, at the supermarket, at church.

He points out that advanced training for the technicians often means "the emergency ends when the ambulance arrives." For example, in an acute

coronary event, prompt on-the-scene treatment of an unstable heart rhythm and relief of pain may prevent deterioration of the patient's condition into an arrest of heartbeat and breathing.

Dr. White is a member, American Heart Association National Committee on Emergency Cardiac Care, and is on the Board of Directors of the National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians. He was one of 24 physicians profiled in Roger Rapoport's recent book, *The Superdoctors*, from which the following paragraph about Dr. White has been excerpted:

"Between operations and during off-duty hours, the young doctor devotes much of his time to his second specialty, emergency medicine. Thanks to his efforts, the clinic and Rochester's Gold Cross Ambulance Company have developed a sophisticated rescue system for heart attack victims miles from the nearest intensive care unit. Patients who once died or suffered irreversible brain damage before reaching the hospital can now be stabilized by the White-trained ambulance team."

'78 Reunion:
Oct. 6-7,
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