



# Physician Profile: Dr. Jon Kolkin

JON KOLKIN...HAND SURGEON/FINE ART PHOTOGRAPHER

Jon Kolkin has had one foot in the arts and the other in the sciences since his early childhood. These dual passions were fueled by his parents. Jon's father, Marvin Kolkin, is a retired Thoracic and Cardiovascular Surgeon who built a dark-room in their basement and introduced Jon to photography. Meanwhile, Jon's mother, Caryl Kolkin, a concert level pianist, filled their home with classical music.

It is therefore not surprising that Jon went on to expand his artistic horizons. He became a nationally recognized clarinetist and toured Europe with the National Youth Symphony. He then went on to combine his various interests by pursuing a major in Chemistry at Emory University with a minor in the Arts. After college he received a degree in Medicine from Emory. However, he never abandoned his love for the arts, taking photography courses at night while simultaneously completing his Orthopedic residency at the Bowman Gray School of Medicine.

Many physicians in Wake County may already be familiar with Jon's reputation as a Hand Surgeon. However, it is now time to share with you Jon's other career passion... photography.

Here are comments and excerpts from a recent interview Jon did with Lindsay Street, a reporter with the News-Times newspaper. In this article, he discusses one of his most recent bodies of work entitled Tide Pool. This series first gained national attention when featured in Camera Arts Magazine and then had its US debut at the David Weinberg Gallery in Chicago. It had its NC premiere

as a solo exhibition this year at Raleigh's Lee Hansley Gallery.

... The initial inspiration for the Tide Pool project was Claude Monet's Water Lily series. Monet studied his subject matter over many years becoming aware of the subtle influence that changes in season, light, weather and angle of view had on his beloved water lilies. "I noticed that tidal pools on the Outer Banks would shift and change from moment to moment, let alone day to day". Like Monet, Dr. Kolkin studied and captured the energy and Zen-like quality of the tide pools by shooting from different angles, while taking advantage of the constantly changing light, time of day and weather. "By getting to know these tide pools over the last 3 years, I feel my level of observation & sense of awareness has increased

exponentially."

Both artists have demonstrated an ability to focus on a project and to become intimately connected to their environment. But that is where the similarities to the great French artist end. Instead of intensely focusing on context, Dr. Kolkin deliberately took photographs that could be interpreted from a myriad of perspectives. "If one looks at the images, it's very difficult to figure out if you are very close to what I am shooting or whether you're hovering in a plane." The underlying message here is that "We need to respect every person's point of view. Who's to say which one is correct?"

Jon is frequently asked how he balances his medical and artistic passions. "It's just a matter of figuring out what my priorities are (in life) and on any particular day so I don't waste time. I look at each day as a blessing and just try to make the most of it."

The concept of juggling two careers has resulted in a weeklong seminar for busy professionals at the Maine Media Workshops ("A Mecca for photographers") taught by Jon. The course focuses on creative ways in which people can balance different aspects of their lives "in a productive way so that each priority (family, hobby, profession, etc.) compliments the other".

As we go through life, "people tend to lose track of part of who they are and they end up with a sense of incompleteness which manifests itself as irritability, frustration and confusion. By recognizing then nurturing these other interests that are intrinsic to our being, we can be happier people and more effective in our personal, professional and spiritual lives. By acknowledging the artistic part of my brain and satisfying that thirst, it makes me feel more whole. I can then look at other aspects of my life and do the same thing, acknowledge them and get the most out of them"



Left to right: Cee, Melanie, Laira and Jon Kolkin



Left to right: Marvin, Laira, Melanie, Caryl Kolkin

## FAST FACTS:

**DOB:** May 12, 1951, New York, New York

**EDUCATION:** Northwood High School, Silver Spring, MD 1969  
Emory University, BA Chemistry, Atlanta, GA 1973  
Emory University School of Medicine, M.D. 1977

### **CAREER HISTORY:**

General Surgery Internship, Bowman Gray School of Medicine 1978 Orthopedic Residency, Bowman Gray School of Medicine 1978-81  
Hand Surgery Fellowship, University of Edinburgh,

Edinburgh, Scotland 1981  
Cofounder Sweeney & Kolkin Orthopedics, Lexington, KY. 1981-1990  
Cofounder Raleigh Hand Center, Raleigh, NC 1990-present

**VOLUNTEER:** Health Volunteers Overseas: Moldova (director), Vietnam, Peru, Nepal, Malawi 1996-present  
Jewish Family Services  
Mental Health Initiative, Temple Beth Or  
Interfaith Food Shuttle

**FAMILY:** Wife- Cecilia Hyman Kolkin  
Daughters- Melanie & Laura Kolkin

### **FAVORITE LEASURE ACTIVITIES:**

A one-on-one walk on the beach with a member of my family; run, swim & bike

**LAST MOVIE SEEN:** The Soloist

### **ADVICE TO YOUNG (AND OLDER) PHYSICIANS:**

Place yourself in an environment where you do your best thinking and have numerous soul-searching discussions with yourself. Ask yourself these questions... What is truly important to me in regards to my profession, relationship with others, physical/mental health, hobbies, etc? What would make me excited about getting out of bed in the morning? Once you have a clearer picture in your mind concerning these points, brainstorm with yourself and others to put together a 5-year plan that will move you toward more effectively integrating these priorities into your life. Set a realistic timetable. Otherwise, you will tend to feel anxious and frustrated. It is imperative to strive for a healthy balance between your passions & obligations. Monitor your progress and make adjustments as needed. Remember, no one



*Wind Etching*



*Stiletto*

is going to write on your tombstone... "He/She worked 60 hours a week".

The measure of one's self worth has nothing to do with the accumulation of wealth. Some of the happiest people I know have very few material assets. Be the master of your possessions, not a slave to them. You have no control over the past. Learn from it then move forward. Every day you wake up is a new gift, a new opportunity to do something worthwhile.

Don't take yourself too seriously. We are all expendable. Laugh a little!

The balancing act between art and science, image and perspective, and career and family are a part of Jon's overall interconnected view on life. "One of the things I do, for instance, is teach Hand Surgery in underserved countries. It provides an opportunity for me to help others while

also providing some uninterrupted time when I can hone my skills as an artist. As an added bonus, "I often take a family member with me and even have time for a weekend trekking adventure".

Despite his worldly view, man of many faces – photographer, surgeon and family

man – there is one title he does not relate to: philosopher.

"I never tried that one," Dr. Kolkin said... ☺

For more information, please visit *Jon Kolkin Fine Art Photography* at [www.kolkinphotography.com](http://www.kolkinphotography.com).