

GREENWICH SURGEON'S WORK LANDS HIM IN THE SMITHSONIAN

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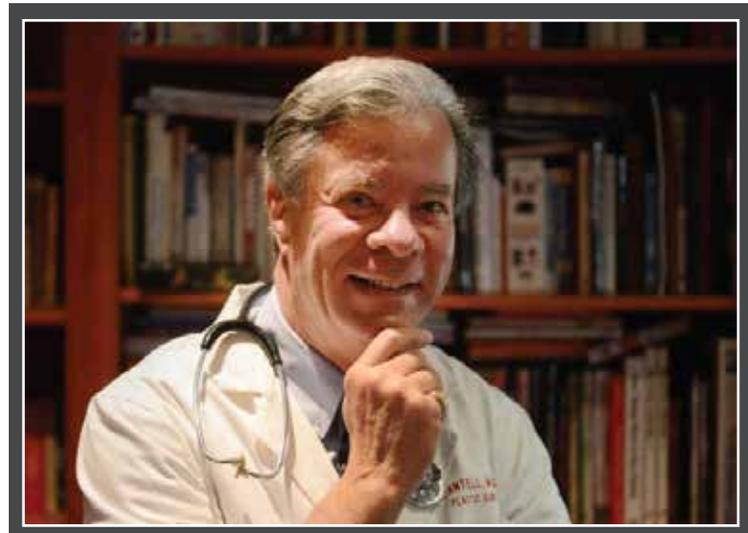
Dr. Darrick Antell had an interesting idea as a physician and researcher in the field of plastic surgery: take pictures of identical twins and find out how and why they looked differently as they aged.

He took a picture of one woman -- a sun-lover and nudist now living in Hawaii -- and her identical twin, who lived a more modest lifestyle in Baltimore. They looked quite different as they entered their 30s.

Those pictures, and others like them that he took at a festival for identical twins held every year in Twinsburg, Ohio, have landed Antell in that great temple of science and technology, the Natural History Museum of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C.

"It was thrilling when I got the call, that my work had been selected," said Antell, a married father of five who lives in midcountry Greenwich.

"Research often takes years before it's recognized.



Plastic Surgeon Darrick Antell, M.D., poses inside his home in Greenwich, Conn. Saturday, Sept. 27, 2014. Dr. Antell's nature versus nurture study of identical twins was recently featured at the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History in Washington and will go on the road to be shown at several other cities throughout the country. Photo: Tyler Sizemore

And I don't think there's been another plastic surgeon in the Smithsonian before."

Antell took a tour this summer of the Smithsonian exhibit featuring his work, "Genome: Unlocking Life's Code." He visited the museum with family members, posing for goofy photos and chatting with staff.

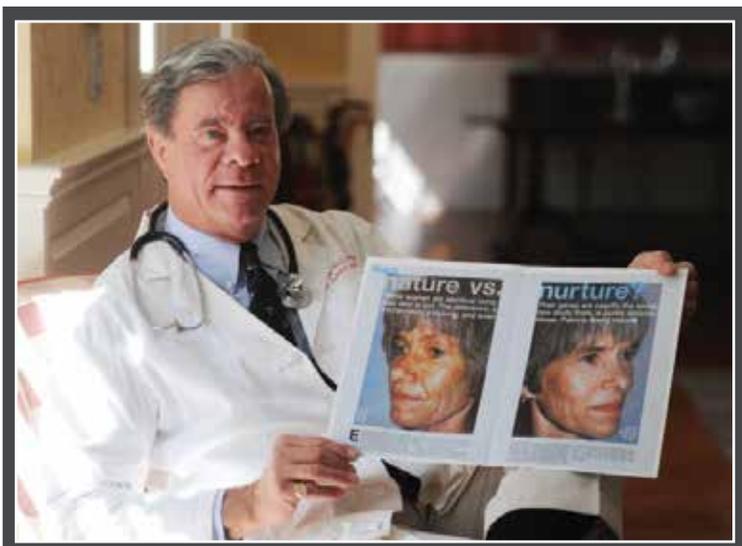
"It was a blast," he recalled.

Antell was the first in his field to document the way faces can be affected by environmental factors like sun and stress in a 1999 article, "How Environment and Lifestyle Choices Influence the Aging Process" in a medical journal, *Annals of Plastic Surgery*.

"It exposed how you can express your genes, by interacting with your environment," he said.

"It gets at the core of the nature versus nurture debate."

The twins festival was the perfect place to do the research -- and it also gave him a chance to visit with family and friends from the town where he grew up, Independence, Ohio.



Plastic Surgeon Darrick Antell, M.D. holds an article showing his work published in *Elle* magazine inside his home in Greenwich, Conn. Saturday, Sept. 27, 2014. Dr. Antell's nature versus nurture study of identical twins was recently featured at the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History in Washington and will go on the road to be shown at several other cities throughout the country. Photo: Tyler Sizemore

"I was taking pictures as fast as I could, and of course, back then, it was on Kodachrome film," he recalled.

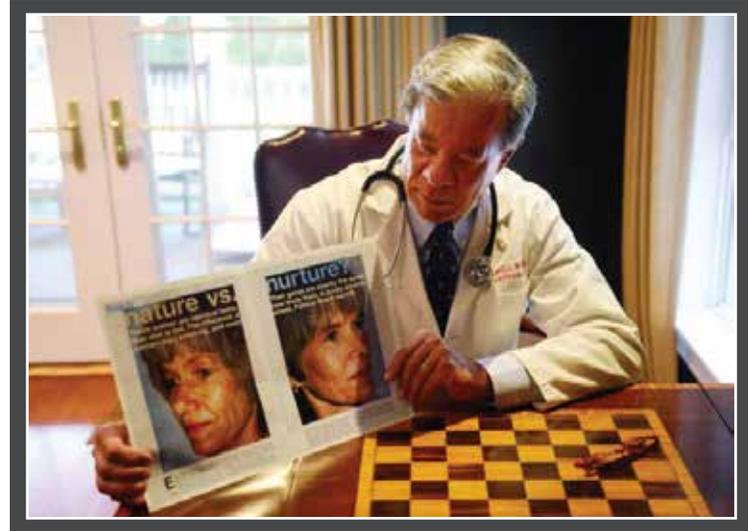
"There were also interviews and questionnaires with study participants.

Antell and his assistant found that siblings taking part in the Ohio twin festival often looked quite different due to their exposure to what Antell calls the three S's: sun, stress and smoking.

"Some of them were like before and after photos," he said.

The work fit in well with the exhibit, said Smithsonian museum developer Meg Rivers.

"The 'Identical Twins, Different Fates' story is part of a larger theme about genomes, environment and risk," she said.



"It's a fascinating field. When we operate, we're improving the quality of people's lives," he said.

Antell was planning on becoming a dentist, like his father, but was steered into the field of facial reconstruction by a mentor.

Many of the earlier practitioners of the field began by studying dentistry, he noted, like his mentor.

The doctor hopes that the public learns from the exhibit as it travels across the country.

The takeaway from the exhibit is easy to explain, he said: If you want to look young, don't overdo the three S's.

"Prevention is what you can do -- stay out of the sun, get some sleep, eat well. All the things your mom told you."



A study showing the work of Plastic Surgeon Darrick Antell, M.D., was published in Elle magazine, shown here inside his home in Greenwich, Conn. Saturday, Sept. 27, 2014. Dr. Antell's nature versus nurture study of identical twins was recently featured at the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History in Washington and will go on the road to be shown at several other cities throughout the country. Photo: Tyler Sizemore

"The interactives and stories are designed to engage visitors to think about how their own genes interact with one another and the environment.

"Ideally, visitors walk away considering a new perspective on their own health and genomes."

After finishing its run in Washington, the exhibit will travel to San Diego, San Jose, St. Louis, Portland, Ore., and Milwaukee.

While it was a professional high point for Antell, the doctor said the work he does is rewarding on its own.

