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As Lewiston-native Patrick Dempsey launches into his final season on *Grey's Anatomy*, his finish line is nowhere in sight.

Breaking Away

INTERVIEW BY COLIN W. SARGENT

His fans love him for his curly black hair and soft blue eyes. When you catch up with Patrick Dempsey, 45—if you catch up with him—you sense a bottomless well of energy, too, and a sense of wheels within wheels. Not only is the Harpswell dynamo famous for playing Dr. Derek Shepherd on TV, he's busy acting in films, producing new films, cycling competitively, and by all accounts racing cars every bit as skillfully as Paul Newman or Steve McQueen ever did. Dempsey's third-place finish at Daytona this year, where he himself was driving in the lead for 21 laps, is by some accounts the top driving achievement ever for a movie star. Sure he can juggle. But did you know he was a Maine state champion ski racer in high school? Enjoying September in Maine with his wife, Jillian, daughter Tallulah Fyfe, and twin sons Sullivan Patrick and Darby Galen, he's excited about hosting the third annual Dempsey Challenge October 8-9, a world-class cycling event with 100 percent of the benefits going to the Patrick Dempsey Center for Cancer Hope and Healing at Central Maine Medical Center.

The Dempsey Challenge raised \$1.1 million last year. How about this year?

I hope we just stay consistent. I'd love to have the same people participate and hopefully have more join us. These are tough economic times, and we're truly grateful to our sponsors and everyone who takes the time and energy to take the challenge and make this ride.

INTERVIEW

As host, you stop and shake hands with wellwishers along the way, but you're a serious athlete. When you slow down to chat with someone, isn't the devil in you whispering, "I could be among the leaders in this race!"

It's not really a race. That's a misconception. For me, it's about challenging yourself to do as many miles as you can. Stopping and talking with people, thanking them for doing the event, and understanding their challenges is the part I get the most out of. The great thing about cycling is, you *can* stop. You can take the time to meet people and ride along with them. You're in contact with the scenery and yourself. I like to hear people thinking about challenging themselves.

What's the oddest sentiment anyone's ever hurled at you as you've flashed by?

Everybody's been quite positive! Nobody's been negative or too strange in their comments. What's fun is, people show up at surprise turns in the road, especially the further out we go. You see entire families, children, older people.

60 Minutes recently took Lance Armstrong down. Fair or unfair, with his tarnished image, if he were to show up at the Dempsey Challenge this year, what would you do?

You've asked a hard question. I've ridden in his events. He is a tremendous draw, a controversial figure. We've had an open invitation for him to come all three years—it's still open. The context for the *60 Minutes* segment is, there's a generation of cyclists who did the same thing. If that's true, where do you draw the line?

Is it accurate to say you're a foodie? Consider the evidence in Maine alone: You stop at Browne Trading on your way to Harpswell. You have a slate sink and an Aga stove. You like to eat healthy...

We've turned a lot of our property into organic gardens. There's nothing better than fresh food grown at home. I grew up gardening with my mother. This time of year we're getting all of our vegetables—tomatoes, lettuce, strawberries, blueberries, squash, corn, kale.

Waiting in the green room to appear on talk shows, have you run into others who share your enthusiasm? Before the *Today Show* recently, I got into a conversation with Martha Stewart. She was just about to go to her place in Seal Harbor, and was she full of plans for her gardens and what she wanted to do with them this year.

If Martha asks you for your opinion about veggies, you're a foodie! So on that basis, let's say you've invited everyone in the state of Maine to your 1834 farmhouse in Harpswell for an intimate dinner for 1.1 million people. A private affair. From cocktails to dessert coffee, what's on the menu?

Lobster. We do that at the end of the Challenge, on the other side of the finish line. It's great because lobster's the kind of dining that brings everyone together. It's a community experience.

Not to mention, it's valuable. If you tossed silver ingots across the finish line, you'd draw a crowd, too. But you've jumped the gun. What cocktail would you serve us?

We'd probably be outside. I'd shake up a tequila, a special blend with lime juice, grapefruit juice, and serve that. If you don't want to try the tequila, we'll have Laurent Perrier Rose. If I have a specialty, it's making hand-sliced homemade french fries. I sprinkle over a little truffle oil. The greatest thing is cooking them in a pizza oven. I love cooking tuna in a pizza oven. You can sear it on an iron pan, with a sesame seed crust. You can do a really nice mashed potato course in a pizza oven, too. I got the idea from a [Fore Street entry] in *Fresh from Maine: Recipes and Stories from the State's Best Chefs*.

Appetizers?

I love oysters, steamers. Caviar's a great way to start. That's why we go to Browne Trading after we fly in sometimes.

If you don't mind, we'd like to see you all preparing this feast for us. What does Jillian like to make? Would your mom and her husband Howard help out, too?

Jillian would probably do the salad. My mother would do some elk meat or moose meat. She and Howard love to hunt. They pretty much live off what they hunt. I don't hunt. It's not something I'd do. But if you taste their dishes, they're delicious. My sister Mary would probably make the dessert. She makes really good brownies or choco-

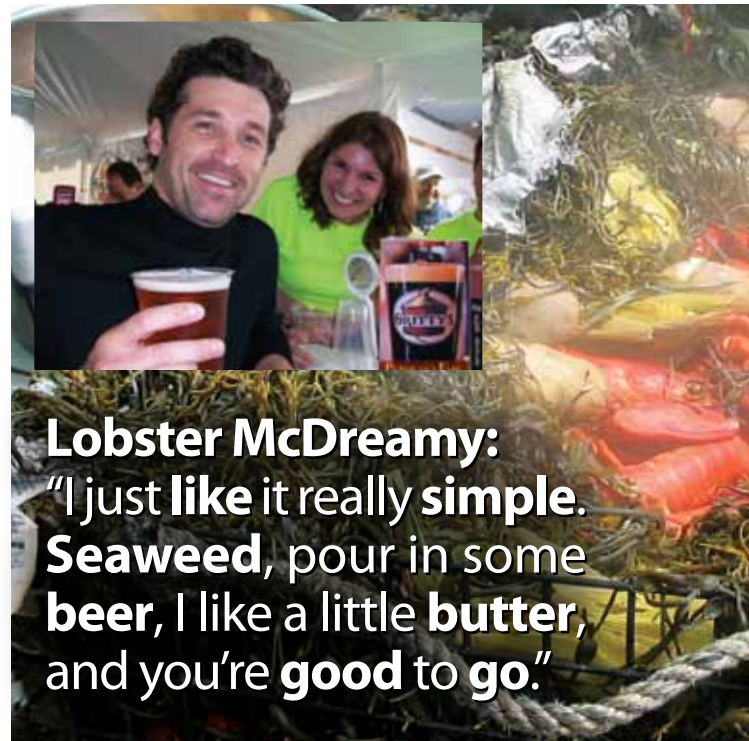
late chip cookies.

Does anybody get to smoke? Assuming the twins don't mind? No one'll be smoking.

Back to Lobster McDreamy.

I just like it really simple. Seaweed, pour in some beer, I like a little butter, and you're good to go.

What do you look for in a lobster, beyond wet eyes and sincerity? The big ones don't have the flavor, I don't know, and you just feel...



Lobster McDreamy:
"I just like it really simple. Seaweed, pour in some beer, I like a little butter, and you're good to go."

Guilty! Exactly! You're eating a breeder.

You look at it and say, 'If you've made it that far...' You want to let 'em go.

Naturally, you get your lobsters from your Harpswell neighbor, Adam LeClair, a.k.a. "Lobster Boy." Mainers cheered when he landed a production job on the set of *Grey's Anatomy*. Some 'bicoastals' don't let their separate worlds mix, as though it's breaking a first-order imperative.

Adam LeClair is doing really well. He's had a baby, he's fishing. He's at least a third generation fisherman, and when we get lobsters from him, it means more because you're getting the tradition, too. I know his father and grandfather were fishermen. Maybe it goes further back.

[Considering our cover,] tell use about the after-dinner coffee.

I'll have coffee in the morning, but I like tea in the afternoon. I don't really drink a lot of after-dinner coffee.

So in the swag bags there'll be a bottle of "Unscripted" and "Patrick Dempsey 2" fragrances?

I was completely shocked I was asked to do a cologne. Then I thought about it, and I said this is a great opportunity to learn. I learned about appreciating the top notes, middle notes, and the drydown in the experience.

You make it sound like acting theory.

The whole process was fascinating, and it's



always interested me that smells are the quickest paths to a memory. That magic time each spring in Maine when you can smell the lilacs in waves...

You've told us you've visited the Olson House at the top of the hill in *Christina's World*, that it reminds you of striking images around own house. Can you take us to two places on your property where there's the sense of *there it is, there's that moment*?

I think it's the silhouette of the barn. When the fog rolls in and you see from the back the silhouette of a cape, there is nothing more melancholy. You think of the sea captains' homes in the fog on the coast and the sense that the sea captains were gone so far away most of the time. That's like me. I'm gone a lot.

(Continued on page 74)

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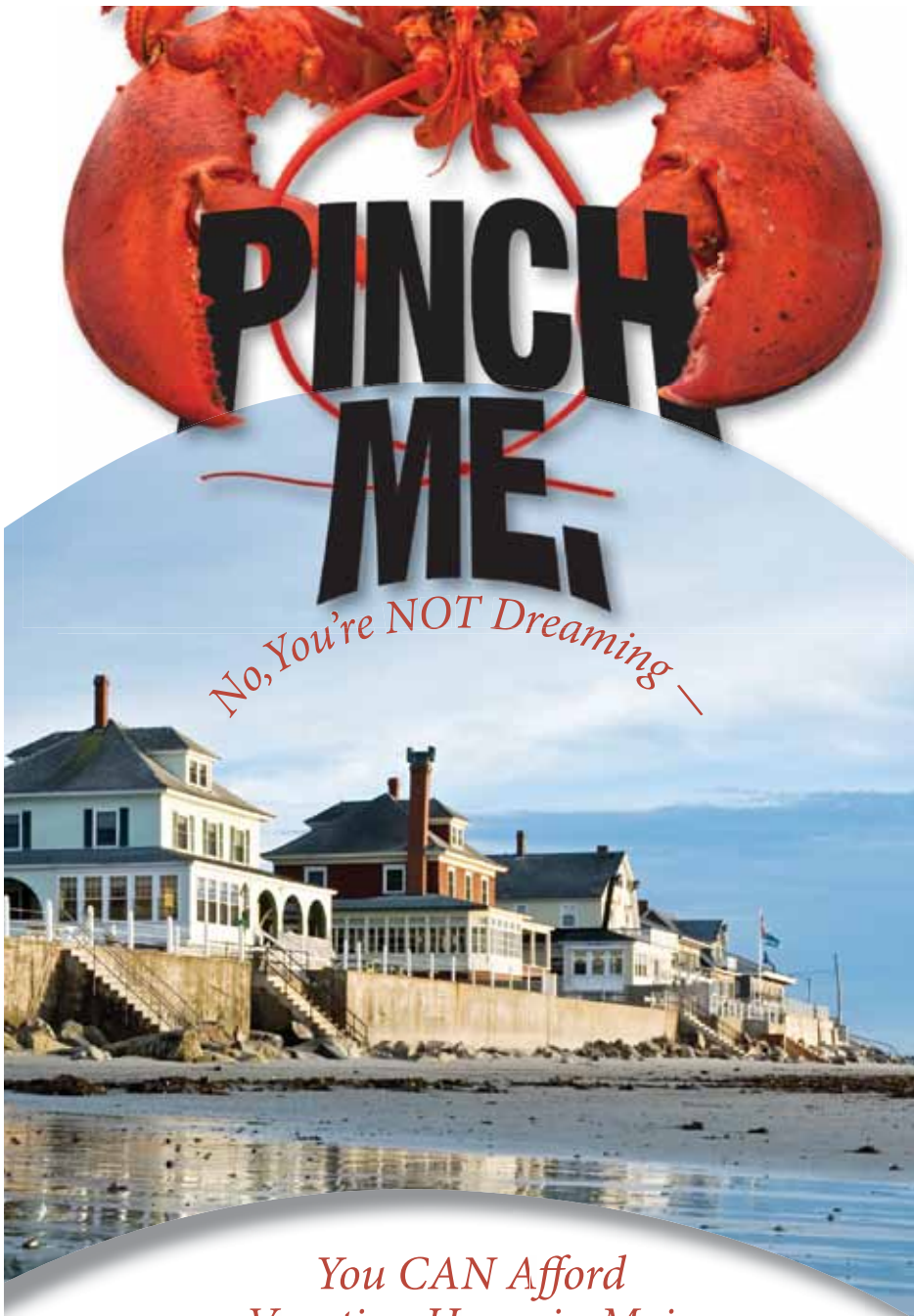
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INTERVIEW

Breaking Away (continued from page 49)

What do you miss when you're not here?

The silence of snow in the woods. There's nothing more lonely, in a stirring kind of way, than the following day after a snow, when you have to shovel things up. The emptiness of deep winter. I am always amazed when I come back to Maine by how much emotion comes up, good and bad, especially in winter.

If the fog clears up, unveiling everything, what do you see?

You want to go down to the Point and look out and see Halfway Rock. You can see the lighthouses on a clear night.

Just to the right of those shadows are the sparkles of Portland. Tell us about a restaurant you like there.

My mom was being treated at Maine Medical, and my sister and I ate at 555. Beautiful. They have another restaurant, too [Petite Jacqueline]. When I go through Portland, I'm just really impressed with the scene—a lot of artists, energy, and there's the simplicity of it, too, really. It's a nice contrast.

You tested for Ducky in *Pretty in Pink*. Have you ever joked with Jon Cryer about that?

Johnny and I both did *Torch Song Trilogy* and *Brighton Beach Memoirs* [on Broadway]. We started out at the same time, so when we see each other, we just laugh. 'Can you believe how fast everything goes?' It seems like yesterday.

Which brings me to Cryer's co-star, Charlie Sheen. You and Sheen are within two months of being exactly the same age. In your first life, you must have known him.

He was in the West Coast. I was in the East Coast. That was not a group I ran with. I was in New York at that point with Jon, doing theater.

What if both Charlie Sheen and Lance Armstrong showed up at the Dempsey Challenge? (Just kidding.) You've worked with Carrie Fischer. She has that same black sense of humor Mainers have. What was it like working with her in *Loverboy*?

She was really very lovely, very smart, and yes, that great dark sense of humor.

Are any of the cars featured in the new *Transformers* movie... yours? Your character was into high-end performance cars, and you own Dempsey Racing.

The Delahayes and Bugattis were Peter Mullins's. I knew him prior to doing the movie, so I knew the individual cars.

Did your skiing achievements in Maine drive you to this need for speed in race cars? And why is it that you have to have blue eyes to be a star who races cars? There's Paul Newman, Steve McQueen...

I hadn't thought about that. But the love for skiing did set me up for loving racing.

It was a skier who inspired you to ride the unicycle, wasn't it? Ingemar Stenmark, the Giant Slalom legend. I watched him using it on TV before the 1980 Olympics. I went right out and ordered one. It took me a year to ride it well.

Do you still ski race?

No, but we ski. We're definitely going to do a ski vacation this winter. My daughter skis, and the boys do well.

We have a story about great food and wine pairings in this issue. You and Maine are a great pairing. If you were to invite two fellow cast members, each from a different show or movie you've been in, to visit you here, who among them would like it the most?

Jesse Williams, his father's from Maine. He has a connection to Maine, so he is the first one. Justin Chambers would like Maine. Ashley Judd spent a lot of time in Maine when she was going to Harvard. As a matter of fact, when I first called her to talk with her about her role in *Flypaper*, she was on the coast of Maine, staying at a friend's house.

How did *Flypaper* come to be?

Flypaper was a real exercise in my taking on a serious career path as a producer. I learned a whole lot. We lost our first director. So our next director, Rob Minkoff, came onboard, and he's known for directing *The Lion King* and *Stuart Little*. Rob came in and said, "I'm known for these light comedies." The script is darkly comic. But it worked with the money guys. We were all trying to recreate ourselves and take some risks. There's a lot I love about it. I would like to do the beginning act over again. I really liked working with the ensemble and really liked the acting again. It was like a summer workshop. Tim Blake Nelson's performance is strong. We ended up getting into Sundance.

There are so many nexts for you, but what's next?

The Art of Racing in the Rain, based on *The New York Times* bestselling novel by Garth Stein, has been two years in development at Universal, and I'll produce and star in that. I've really taken control as producer there.

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INTERVIEW

Coming from Lewiston, how many times do you get asked about the Ali-Liston fight? Has it made the city famous or infamous?

The older generation always brings it up. It's always a positive moment where people know where Lewiston is. I'm amazed at how many people have never been to Maine. They'll say, 'Oh, you're from Maine! What's it like?'

Their 'Maine' is from Stephen King's perspective. A little further inland, maybe they filter us through *The Beans of Egypt, Maine*. But there are so many more dimensions here. When you look at the history of Acadia in the Gilded Age, you get a sense of that generation daring to put all that land away, preserving the rawness of Maine.

During the shooting of *Transformers: Dark of the Moon* I overheard one of the producers in Michael Bay's company, Digital Domain, say, "I'm going to Maine. I'm taking my son to camp there. I can't remember the name of the lake. It's an animal name. It's a pond."

"You mean Bear Pond, in Turner," I said. Instantly the world was smaller.

I have from an unreliable source that you were paid "just" \$750,000 for *Enchanted*. Shades of Tom Brady playing quarterback for the Patriots for his former contract amount the year after winning MVP at the Super Bowl. So I figure Disney owes you big-time for *Enchanted II*. "That's right!"

So when does the movie come out?

It's definitely under development. It would almost have to be *Disenchanted*. Giselle's not happy with being old. You don't want to deal with reality! So she tries to find her way back to Andalasia. That would be my pitch.

You've said you don't like to repeat beats. What little wrinkles do you put into your performance as Derek to keep it new for you?

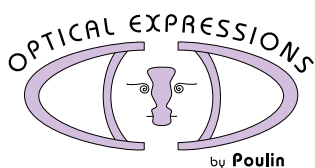
Both Ellen Pompeo and I had a dinner together with Tony Phelan recently to discuss how our characters might evolve—because we didn't want them to slip into being one-noted, where they were always breaking up and getting back together. Fans want new conflicts to overcome. We spent two hours on one scene, three issues into the season, where we were really adamant to fight for what we believed the characters should do. You have to stay in the process.

Has your playing Derek Shepherd on *Grey's Anatomy* changed your diet and your personal lifestyle?

No, not so much. I would say the racing



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has. It's been a very, very good season. It's a really big breakthrough for me personally as a driver.

Your auto racing team finished third at the prestigious Rolex 24-hour marathon at Daytona this year. This had to have been a high point.

We were in the lead for a long time. We'd held the lead all through the night. I had taken the lead first. I was in the lead for 21 laps throughout the night, then Joe, Charles. At one time we had a lap on the cars. We had electrical issues, Tom spun the car, and we fell back to fifth, then [fought our way] back to third. I was really proud for the groups and how hard it really it was to come back the way we did. There's a handful of the 'gentleman' drivers, so to me that was the greatest thing. Just getting the respect in the racing community was personally very satisfying. So much excitement. I'd just flown to Sundance for the premiere of *Flypaper*.

Isn't it funny how everything converges like that? Tell us, Dr. Shepherd, why won't the high-adrenaline moments ever spread themselves out evenly?

There are certain things you can control and certain things you have no control over: the A factors in racing, and the B factors. Sometimes the B factor works in your favor. Someone else breaks down, and you've inherited the lead! ■

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