

## George R. Merriman II, MD

### SURGERY, GASTRIC BALLOON & MEDICAL WEIGHT LOSS

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George R. Merriman II, MD, FACS, FASMBS is an independent physician working at Christus Highland and Willis-Knighton North. A rare breed of independent doctors left in this community, Dr. Merriman has prided himself on running an independent practice for over 25 years. As Dr. Merriman explains, "Having my own practice allows me the freedom to hire and train the employees that I need and run my business up to my standards and to never have to answer to a hospital administrator. The highest quality patient care is number one to me and that means making some decisions to support our patients in a way that does not always improve the 'bottom line' of the business." Dr. Merriman's well-rounded life experiences foster his commitment to treating his patients as more than their disease by following a simple philosophy — always treat people as an end unto themselves, and never as a means to an end.

Dr. Merriman was born in Louisiana but grew up all over the South, including Arkansas, Texas and Alabama. Dr. Merriman did his medical training in Birmingham, Ala. at the highly ranked UAB General Surgery residency program. After his medical training, Dr.

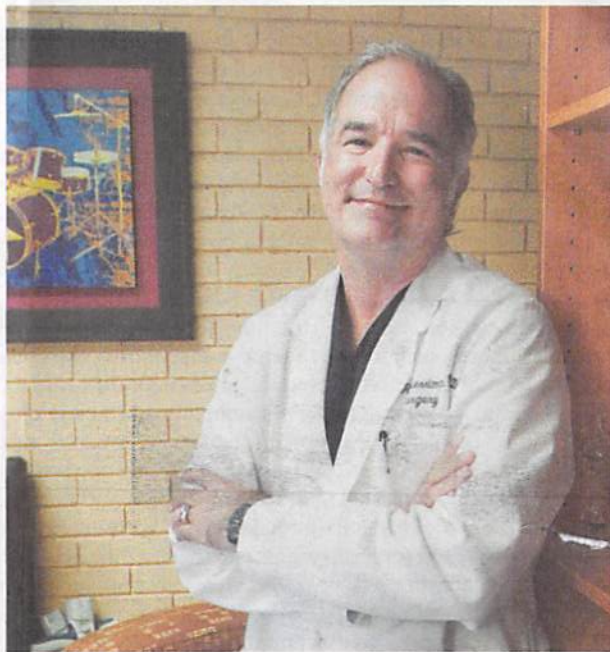
Merriman returned to his roots in Louisiana and joined The Mason-Itzig Clinic in 1992. "I was really blessed to have the opportunity to work with two fantastic surgeons and business partners, Dr. Keith Mason and Dr. Charles Itzig, who taught me, amongst other things, the timeless value of private practice medicine and surgery," says Merriman. He has always been interested in all things technological, fostering his early interest in laparoscopy as well as surgical robotics. He is dedicated to remaining on the "cutting edge" of knowledge and innovation in his area of surgery. Merriman has continued to push forward the trail blazed by Dr. Itzig and Dr. Mason, who led the movement to introduce Laparoscopic, minimally invasive surgery to the Ark-La-Tex region in the 1990's. Upon Dr. Itzig's retirement in 1996, the practice's name was changed to Surgical Specialists of Shreveport, LLC and remains the legal name of the clinic today.

Today Dr. Merriman specializes in bariatric weight loss surgery, which he began doing during his training at UAB. In the late 1990s, he continued to learn about this life transforming surgery in association with Dr. Kenneth "Buddy" Jones, one of the national founders of the

specialty of bariatric surgery. Under the registered trademark "Freedom From Obesity", Dr. Merriman transformed his general surgery practice into a safe place for those who suffer with obesity to both come and learn about the latest research in obesity and to have multiple options for treatment including surgery, non-surgical devices, such as intragastric balloons (OBALON, ReShape and Orbera) and medical weight loss. Dr. Merriman performs the Vertical Sleeve Gastrectomy, Roux-en-Y Gastric Bypass, Lab Band, Lap Band with Plication, SIPS, and revision surgery of failed prior bariatric surgeries. In addition, he still performs certain general surgeries which have an intrinsic association with bariatric surgery but may not be limited to those who suffer with obesity. These include anti-reflux or heartburn surgery such as the LINX device or Para Esophageal Hernia Repair, as well as gallbladder removals, and all nature of abdominal hernia repairs.

In 2017 Dr. Merriman also added non-invasive body sculpting to his service line, and started his additional brand, Body Sculpt Shreveport. Dr. Merriman explained, "I have resisted adding aesthetic procedures to my practice for many years, but when I found this non-surgical technology and saw how effective it is in terms of reducing limited sections of fat around the waist, hips and thighs, I knew this was a logical addition to my practice."

Dr. Merriman entertains himself with



his inborn love of music (he has been an accomplished drummer since the age of 12), movies (especially sci-fi and westerns), speaking (he was the national college debate champion of 1983) and the Green Bay Packers (having made several "pilgrimages" to the frozen tundra of Lambeau field), and travel. He and his wife of more than 30 years, Katy, now run the medical practice together keeping the highest standards of patient care and service as their top priority.



eyelid repair, brow lift, eyelid surgery and treatment of myopia and astigmatism. The health of the patient is always Vekovius' number one concern—and he hopes his patients will keep that as their number one priority as well. "I direct all patient care toward not only the cosmetic appearance of the eye and eyelid, but also on the health of the eye," said Vekovius.

Trained by Thomas C. Spoor, M.D., Vekovius also was taught the art of laser skin resurfacing and treatment of facial veins and blemishes, as well as the use of Botox and fillers. He then sought further training in Neuro-Ophthalmology, which is the subspecialty of Ophthalmology and encompasses the optic nerve, the nerves which control eye movement and the connections with the brain. In addition, Vekovius is an expert in skin cancer excision and reconstruction. Today, he continues to perform multiple surgeries each month to remove cancer from the eyelids and face and rebuild the defect to produce an aesthetically pleasing result.

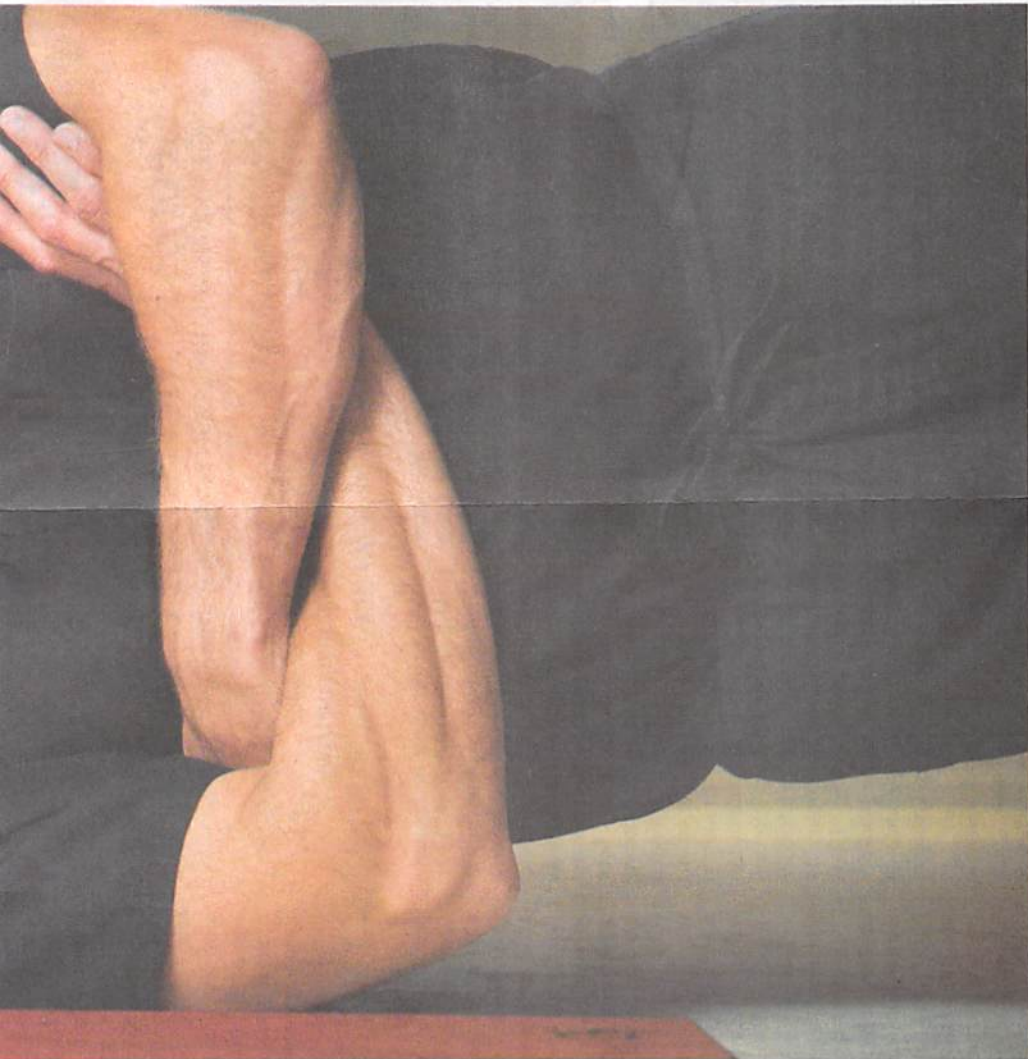
Some think of cosmetic surgery as something for movie stars and the very wealthy. That's not the case. "This isn't a glamorous profession—it's for everyone," said Vekovius. "What I do in my practice is really service-oriented. I'm truly dedicated to my patients' vision and overall health."

Despite the lack of glamour, for Vekovius, his chosen career is akin to a dream job—he gets to help others and make a difference. "I'm really here to help people in need," said Vekovius. "My staff and I are wholly committed to providing quality, compassionate care, while using the most current and up-to-date techniques."

"You want to see better and look more rested and attractive, while still maintaining a natural look. No one wants to appear to have had cosmetic surgery," Vekovius adds. "Look Better, See Better!"

Not all issues are cosmetic. There are many common eye diseases that can cause pain or vision problems, as well. Dr. Vekovius is a specialist of treatment of tearing, watering eyes, dry eye syndrome and ophthalmic manifestations of neurologic disease such as Multiple Sclerosis and Parkinson's disease. Other conditions which Vekovius treats on a daily basis are eyelids which turn out (ectropion), eyelids that turn in (entropion) and misdirected eyelashes (trichiasis).

Dr. Vekovius' Shreveport office is located in Ashley Ridge Business Park at 450 Ashley Ridge Boulevard. To learn more, call 318-675-3733 or visit [www.drveko.com](http://www.drveko.com).



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