

Living With CHD: The Patient's Perspective

John MacEachern, 82, Nictaux, NS
Tetralogy of Fallot



a chance to save me, but there were no guarantees and as there were no blood banks they would have to collect copious amounts of blood from willing donors. Dr. Murray was like an uncle to me and his only advice to me was to never play sports (his advice would likely be different now). At the age of 50, Dr. Bill Williams, head of cardiovascular surgery at Toronto's Sick Kids Hospital, did my "Major Repair". Between Dr. Murray and Dr. Williams I couldn't have found two more incredible surgeons, both with the most empathy one could ever expect from a doctor.

A desperate search for a surgeon

I was born in 1941 with tetralogy of Fallot and my prognosis was that I would probably live until I was eight. My desperate parents met Dr. Gordon Murray who travelled to Boston to talk to Drs. Blalock and Taussig. He arrived back in Toronto and said there was



Writing and art have been a wonderful lifeline for me

I have spent my life in the hospitality industry owning and operating two five-star restaurants. I have been told I'm a great "armchair quarterback". But there's more to life than sports. To me there has been art and writing and for many others I'm sure there is music too. Throughout my life I have learned two things concerning my health: listen to your doctors and listen to your body, and those two things have helped me reach the age of 82.



A very happy, lucky man indeed!

Years ago, I joined the Canadian Congenital Heart Alliance (CCHA), an association of congenital heart patients, and I even held the title of President for a few years. Their mission is to raise awareness of CHD to help improve the lives of the one out of every 100 people born with CHD – more than all the childhood cancers combined! Members of CCHA know what it's like to live with CHD, and it's been a great way to connect with others who share similar health experiences. I feel especially lucky because I have an extraordinary support system – I've been happily married for 52 years and have four children and five grandchildren.

Giving hope to children and their parents is a joy

The health care providers involved in CHD are not your run-of-the-mill cardiologists. They are specifically trained in our various CHD conditions and are unbelievably caring individuals. The one joy I personally get out of being the first Canadian and third in the world to successfully survive CHD surgery is to give hope to children with CHD and their parents that they can live a full and productive life.

