

That holiday season!

By a POHA member

Recently, I chanced upon pictures of a breakfast and Christmas dinner in 2015. They were not what I had anticipated! A diagnostic test on 22 December revealed blocked arteries. I became an immediate guest of Royal Columbian Hospital. Eight years later I reflect on the stay, the aftermath and some lessons learned.

Be prepared. Although experiencing discomfort for several years, the sudden transition to hospital patient took some processing. A lot fell on family members whose routine was disrupted.

Type 2 Diabetes. The disease has an impact on treatment and healing. A low sugar diet was implemented and food from outside sources was frowned upon.

Food. It was adequate for purpose. My appetite was diminished. I emerged much leaner after an extended stay.

Prescription medication. Mine was at home... it didn't matter, since the prescriptions were totally changed.

Jargon. I heard "cabbage." It meant CABG... coronary artery bypass surgery. Also Syncope. Have Google handy.

Tests. Although ambulatory, I was sent for tests by wheelchair and parked. Each test was followed by more parking. Patience was essential.

Heart monitor. I was wired-up with electrodes and a monitor that hung from my neck in a cloth bag. Bathroom visits were challenging. The monitor proved worthwhile, as staff were able to find me prior to an angina attack.

Holiday season. Operations are reduced in number. For patients it is a waiting game. Emergency admissions continue, which adds to delays in treatment.

POHA and a poinsettia: A visitor full of encouragement and an example of what the future would hold.

Scheduling and "bumping." I needed bypass surgery. So did others. So, even when scheduled, do not be surprised to be pushed back by a patient in greater need.



Breakfast and Christmas dinner at the Royal Columbian Hospital, 2015.

Be careful what you wish for. A patient who was "bumped" by me, remarked that they "wished they had what I had." A nurse said, in no uncertain terms, that they certainly didn't. It was then that I realized the seriousness of the situation.

The surgeon talk. It was reassuringly candid. The chances were good for a full recovery. I was able to say "no heroics please." That was accepted.

A varicose vein... was not suitable for grafting. I had to try!

Surgery. After eight days my operation went ahead. I was relieved that a "fix" was at hand. A senior surgical nurse greeted me by saying... "Don't worry, we do this all the time, and we're good at it!"

Recovery in ICU. Drips, wires and tubes. Tubes everywhere—most removed by the next morning.

Recovery on the ward. A testing time. Wards are busy places. Staff and visitors coming and going at all hours. Sleep is often disturbed. My wife commented on my irritability. Sleep deprivation will do that.

Coughing. Patients were encouraged to cough up mucus. With a chest wired and stapled together that was, assuredly, the last thing I wanted to do.

Cell phones. While the staff controlled visitors, they were reluctant to police the use of phones. A neighbouring patient was on the phone for hours. A curtain divider was not soundproof. Rest was impossible. It was hard to cope with.

Stairs. 48 hours after the operation, I was escorted along a corridor to a fire escape. There I walked up a flight of stairs arm-in-arm with a nurse who was monitoring an oxygen meter. I managed a second flight. It felt like Everest.

The four wheel walker. Have oxygen bottle... will travel. As strength returned, I explored the corridors of the heart wards, particularly at night when traffic was light.

Your best friend. A large, firm cushion to clasp to the chest while enduring fits of extended coughing.

The staff. So dedicated and helpful. One couldn't ask for better.

Going home. Four days after surgery. Sleep. Sleep. Sleep.

Pain. My aching chest was manageable. The desire to avoid disturbed dreams was a great motivation to get off pain killers.

The leg. A 12-inch long incision from knee to ankle, for harvesting veins, gave me more pain than the chest incision. It is the only visible vestige—the chest scar is not apparent.

The wobbles. Trying to stand on one leg during regular trips to a gym while undergoing rehabilitation.

Full recovery. I think of an old car with an engine rebuild. Performance is vastly improved—but it is still an old car!

Gratitude. For treatment by medical professionals whose skill extended my quality of life. For family care and support through the most trying of times.

President's Report



Jay Chambers

I am pleased to be able to report that our visitation program is fully operational at our hospitals that have open heart surgery patients.

It was particularly gratifying to be enthusiastically welcomed back by hospital staff. We were missed during the COVID pandemic.

I would like to acknowledge the time and energy that Alfred Buchi is putting into the pillow program to meet our needs. The start-up has experienced some supply chain challenges and Alfred's patience and follow up has been appreciated.

In April, our ageing web technology was successfully updated. Our new technology supports a flexible and fast user experience in all current browsers and will be more easily adaptable for future needs.

In addition to the structural updates, functional enhancements were made to improve searching and filtering and a new email reminder feature for payment of annual dues. Thanks to past POHA Board Members Pat Hagan and Roland Clifford for their valuable input on the updates.

I would like to thank and acknowledge Roger Kocheff and his Golf Committee for their efforts in organizing this year's very successful Pacific Open Heart Association Golf Tournament at the Delta Golf and Country Club.

As in previous years, we experienced good weather, golf and food. We were fortunate to have enough players to support a shotgun start which was a very popular change from previous years.

Our 2023 Pacific Open Heart Association Annual General Meeting will be held on Saturday, October 21st at 1:30 pm at The Unitarian Church of Vancouver located at 949 West 49th Avenue. All POHA members and friends are invited to attend. Please mark it on your calendars.

All the best to you and yours for this summer season.

Jay Chambers, *President*



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37th Annual "POHA Moe Pitcher Golf Tournament"



The winning team—Gord Carter, Bob Lauro, Len Mueller and Don Mueller—received the trophy from JoAnn Pitcher and Roger Kocheff.

15th June 2023 This year 76 golfers registered to play at Delta Golf and Country Club—(last year 64). It was a chance to renew old friendships, to remember those who were not with us and to make new acquaintances.

Each year our golf committee endeavours to provide an affordable and enjoyable experience for every golfer. We had great weather and everyone had a good time.

A successful tournament is only possible with the support of our generous sponsors. They allow us to donate excess funds to local hospitals for the benefit of cardiac patients. Please take note of the following sponsors and try to use their businesses.

This year's Hole sponsors were: DMCL Chartered Accountants; Home Restaurants; John Timms and Associates; Austin Metal Fabricators; RCH Hospital Foundation; Ridge Meadows Hospital Foundation; Pro-Mix Concrete; Kodiaks Hockey Club; Canadian Tire Surrey; Patrick Yearwood Lawyers; Perler Financial; West Coast Golf Group. A special thanks to those donating extra prizes.

Special thanks to the Khalsa Credit Union for their generous support of \$2,000.

The tournament cannot run smoothly without the help of our volunteers. This year proved more challenging as several of our stalwart volunteers were unable to attend—putting more stress on a few new workers. They performed admirably. Thanks to Alfred Buchi, Ellen Cozzuol, Angi Chicorelli, Cory Barkley, and the golf committee—Rick Cozzuol, Bob Axford, Amelia Moloci and Jay Chambers.

Tournament Results:

- The tournament winners were Len Mueller, Gord Carter, Bob Lauro and Don Mueller. They were ten under par.
- Bruce McLaren was the only one to sink a putt during the putting contest. He donated the \$70 prize back to POHA. Thanks Bruce.
- On-course competitions were won by Monique Mueller, Jim Heintz, Bart Findlay, Harbans Kandola, Adele Cutri, Tony Zanatta and John Marconato.
- Patrick Chan won the early bird draw for a free entry to the 2024 tournament.

If you are interested in adding your name to our list of golfers, please contact me at: rkocheff@telus.net or 604-467-2904. See you next year.

Roger Kocheff

YES! I WISH TO JOIN THE PACIFIC OPEN HEART ASSOCIATION

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Please mail cheque to:

Pacific Open Heart Association, PO Box 45001, Ocean Park PO, Surrey, B.C., V4A 9L1.

Payment via e-Transfer can be sent to etransfer@pacificopenheart.org.

In the message area please specify "membership."