

Heart to heart » Learning from survivors



» BY JASON HENDREN

After noticing worrisome symptoms of distress like sustained crying in April 1973 when I was 8 months old, my parents took me to Texas Children's Hospital in Houston. A pediatric cardiologist examined me for suspected severe congenital heart disease. It was later found to be a very tight coarctation (narrowing) of the aorta with associated severe mitral valve regurgitation.

THE HEART JOURNEY

A cardiac catheterization was performed one month later, and as a result, world-famous surgeon Denton Cooley, M.D., performed surgical repair of my aorta with a synthetic Dacron® patch.

Although the procedure was successful, the coarctation repair didn't resolve the mitral regurgitation. A repeat cardiac catheterization when I was 2 ½ years old showed a congenitally deformed mitral valve with an unusual abnormality. Dr. Cooley performed surgery again, sewing over one of the valve's openings and cinching up the other opening. This improved the function of the valve significantly but didn't cure it. The result was a slow heart rate.

As I grew older, I developed narrowing of the coarctation because the Dacron patch didn't grow along with my aorta. This caused upper-extremity hypertension. And in 1985, I underwent cardiac catheterization with balloon dilation to relieve the new obstruction. My heart rate remained slow and I was fatigued, so in 1986 I underwent the first of several pacemaker implantations. I had pacemaker replacement surgeries in Houston in 1990 and 1998, and each time the generator batteries expired. December 2006 was my last medical checkup in Houston.

EXPERT CARE, CLOSE TO HOME

In 2009, my wife, daughters and I moved from Little Rock to Bentonville, where I grew up. When it came time to have the pacemaker generator replaced again, I chose to have the procedure done not in Houston, but at **Northwest Medical Center–Bentonville**.

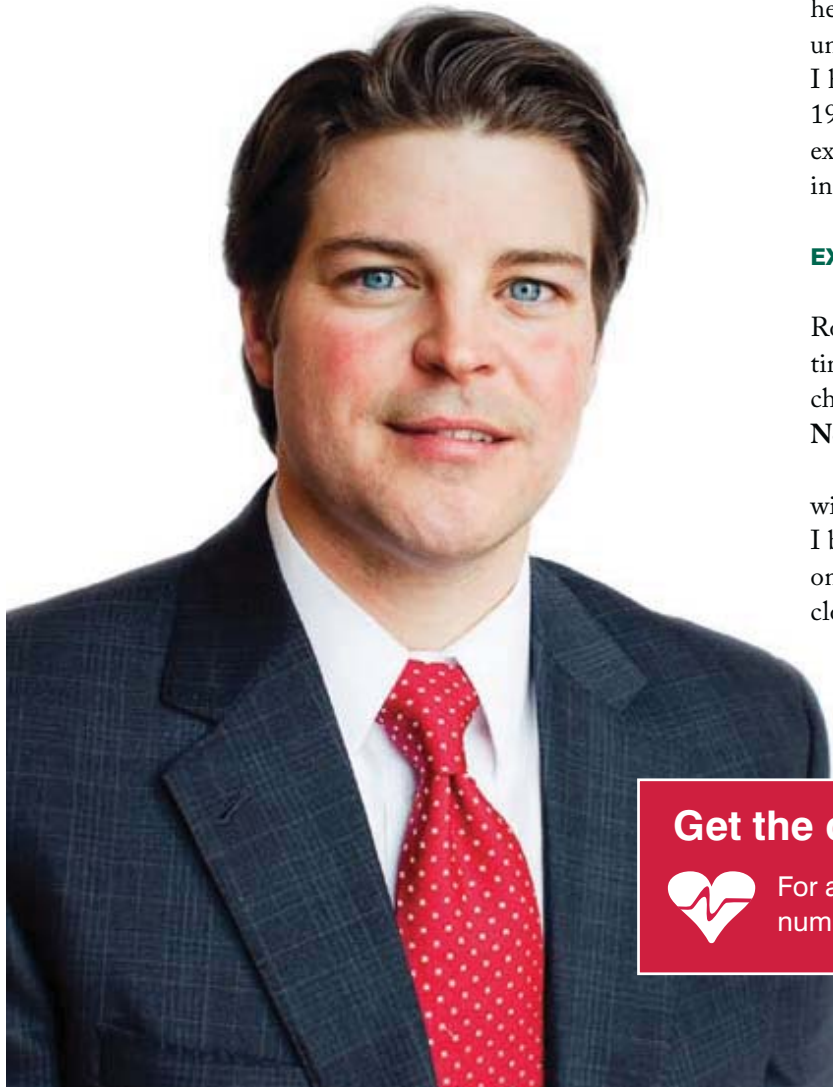
I had a very successful procedure and was impressed with the quality of care I received. My parents and I both marveled at the fact that such medical care—once only a dream in this area—could be found so close to home.

« Jason Hendren, NMC–Bentonville cardiac patient

Get the care you need!



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