



## Speaking from Experience *Heart Surgery in Later Years*

### Transcript for chapter 1 of 7: Pre-surgery

**Larry (63 years old. 4 years since angioplasty, 2 years since bypass surgery) and**

**Beryl** - My initial heart problems started while I was working. I had an exercise test to see if I was under any stress at work because we were going through a lot of structural change. It transpired that I had an angiogram and, from that, an angioplasty.

**Shirley (59 years old. 2 years since bypass and corrective surgery for a defective heartbeat) and Brian** - I had a very fast heart beat which I'd had for about 10 years. I'd seen

lots of different specialists and no one could find what out what was causing the problem. They tried different medications and shock treatment and I also had electrolysis, but nothing they did could slow the heartbeat down. However, I did start getting chest pains. So I went to the hospital and they did tests. In the nuclear part of the hospital, they discovered I had two blocked arteries, which would mean that I had to have a bypass. They kept me in hospital and they decided that they would try and do something to stop the heartbeat going fast. They found out that the heartbeat was going from the wrong side of the heart. Instead of it going from the right, it went from the left. They were trying to get it back to the right place so that they could get a normal, or close to normal, beat. This had never been done before, it was a trial thing. But it was a chance we had to take for a better life.

**Brian (70 years old, 18 and 7 years since bypass surgery)** - My first bypass was in 1980 and after that, I was fine and I started walking a lot and was even jogging a little bit. As the years went by, heading towards 1990, they said I had a good ten years, that's all they knew at that stage that bypasses lasted. In 1990, I started to feel that something was a bit wrong and the coronary arteries were blocking up again.

**Raymond (75 years old, 15 years since heart attack, 1 year since bypass surgery)** -

They found I'd had a heart attack, so I was admitted to hospital for treatment. After 13 years, more tests were done and it was found that there were subsequent blockages.

**Joan (78 years old, heart condition at birth, 49 years since surgery to aorta, 1 year since bypass)** - I was born with a heart problem, although it wasn't know until I had affects

in my teenage years, blackouts, etc. But they still didn't know what the problem was. Not until I was 29, with tests, they found that I had a blocked aorta. That was eventually operated on. Thereafter, I lived a normal life until 2 years ago, when I started having troubles and they said I had angina. They didn't speak of operations until I started having more troubles and they decided to do an angiogram and found that I had 90% blockage in the heart.

**John (61 years old, diagnosed with angina and had bypass 5 years ago) and**

**Margaret** - After having had angina for five years, I underwent bypass surgery.

Approximately four years later, I suffered a heart attack, which necessitated having stents placed in the affected arteries.

**Shirley and Brian** - I didn't suffer a lot of pain but I was out of breath all the time, with the heart going fast. It really is like if you'd been running all the time. That's how I felt just doing normal things.

**Raymond** - 1991, I had my second bypass. At that time they used, as well as an artery out of my leg, they used my mammary artery, which was a new development. It's supposed to last 20 years.

**Larry and Beryl** - My arteries were too small to perform and angioplasty and he wanted me to consider having bypass surgery.

**Raymond** - The surgery prescribed was bypass surgery, in which the artery is taken from the arm and the necessary repairs done. There were four that needed to be done.

**Shirley and Brian** - I hadn't realised the enormity of it all, at first. Until I came to realise, talking to them time and time again, what a very big thing it was that I was going to undergo.

**Larry and Beryl** - My mother had had open-heart surgery, so I did know a little bit about it.

**Raymond** - I had a little knowledge of it. I didn't know the full technicalities required for this major operation.

**Brian** - I was told what would happen in the surgery. That I would be split up the middle of my chest with a circular saw, and the ribs would be opened up and the heart would be beating and they would then be hooked up to a heart and lung machine.

**John and Margaret** - I spoke to John's cardiologist and I asked questions, I bombarded him with questions actually. He answered them for me and drew me little diagrams and pointed out different things. I found that very helpful, I'm sure John found it very helpful too, because we knew then what had happened and what they were going to do to fix the problem. How they were going to go about it and what we could expect down the track. That took the fright away from the actual problem.

**Larry and Beryl** - I think I was more shocked than anything else, because I wasn't expecting it. I suspected that a further angioplasty would fix the problem.

**Raymond** - First reaction was shock, disbelief partially, and concern.

**John and Margaret** - I was one of the lucky ones, initially. Because when I had to have bypass surgery, I was actually 5 years down the track to when I first suffered from angina. I was pretty well prepared for it.

**Larry and Beryl** - I was thinking to myself that he'd only been retired 6 months, why was this happening to us? I thought it was just going to be something simple. To be told that he'd have a big operation, it certainly just shocked the both of us.

**Joan** - I was shocked, but I wasn't alarmed because I felt I was in good hands.

**Larry and Beryl** - I was fearful, there's no escaping it, that I may not come out of the procedure. So, that was a real fear.

**Raymond** - What was going to happen? How long it was going to take. Would I recover or would there be subsequent disabilities?

**John and Margaret** - Survival is the greatest instinct that we all have and I think that was the greatest thing that I had in mind. But I didn't really have any fears about it.

**Raymond** - Plus the affect that it had on friends and relatives. Whether I would be subservient to them, after being so independent for so many years.

**Shirley and Brian** - I was apprehensive, because it hadn't been done before, this operation. The specialists had made it quite clear that they couldn't guarantee any success or anything. I just felt it was a chance I had to take, if I wanted a better quality of life.

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