

Life's Second Chances

By Ron Paley

I won't forget this date, October 26th, 2018 (age 64 years). I had a heart attack and was treated at Ridge Meadows Hospital (RMH). The emergency staff took care of me with compassion and professionalism.

I spent eight days in the RMH emergency ward, before being transferred to Royal Columbian Hospital (RCH). I saw first hand how dedicated the doctors and nurses are.

During my stay at RMH emergency, I was transported to and from RCH for an angiogram. It was determined that I required quintuple bypass surgery. On November 5th, I had surgery at RCH. I wish to acknowledge my surgeon, Doctor Derek Gunning and his medical team. They were outstanding and supportive. I thank them from the bottom of my heart.

Prior to my heart attack, I was engaged in outdoor activities. Unfortunately, cholesterol was not my friend. After surgery, I was eager to get back to hiking, biking and kayaking. I am the type of person to push the limits. My wife and family would make me behave and not overdo it. That is wise advice.

During recovery, I walked slowly every day. Over time I was able to sustain longer street walks and after a few months I was back to hiking and biking. By summer I was kayaking on lakes and oceans.

I feel at peace, in the backcountry, hiking or biking and especially on the water—kayaking. Every day is a bonus and I will never take life for granted. My wife, family and friends have been so supportive. I love to take pictures of my adventures and share them. It allows people the opportunity to follow my journey and see the beauty life offers.

In the past, I had hiked the Grand Canyon



Ron Paley at Pitt Lake, British Columbia

rim to rim, Zion National Park, Sedona and Bryce Canyon. I spend a lot of time in Golden Ears Park, as well as many hiking areas in the lower mainland, the Fraser Valley and other areas in British Columbia. I have visited several lakes and the Pacific Ocean doing multi-day trips in my 18.5' ocean kayak. I love the ocean; viewing sea animals and eagles is breathtakingly beautiful. It doesn't get any better than that! Stress can be hard on all of us and the road ahead is never straight. My outdoor activities are a great way to release stress.

After my surgery, I met a POHA volunteer who had experienced open heart surgery. He was supportive and helpful. I thought a lot about volunteering and, in 2021, I met Rolf Gullmes, our past-president— a dedicated visitor.

Mike Martin also provided support and his experience to help me.

They mentored me. It's so rewarding to be able to give back. I share my experiences with patients in their recovery. I listen to patients, pre- and post-op, and help them on their journeys.

In closing, I thank all those involved in making my life better. The doctors, nurses and the administration staff, thank you, thank you, thank you.

A special shout out to all nurses...

Save a life you're a hero

Save 100 lives

You're a Nurse

—ANONYMOUS

Please consider volunteering with POHA. It is an experience that keeps giving and giving. ♥

Volunteer Visitors are needed at three surgery hospitals. These visits take one to two hours every other week. Training is provided and you will be supported by a team leader and hospital staff. If you are interested, please contact one of the POHA team leaders for more information: **Nancy Farrell** • 604-442-7565 • St. Paul's Hospital. **Alfred Buchi** • 604-581-5508 • Vancouver General Hospital. **Mike Martin** • 604-535-3195 • Royal Columbian Hospital. ♥

FEEDER HOSPITAL VISITOR
POHA needs a replacement volunteer visitor for Chilliwack General Hospital. Please contact Ron Paley at 604-220-8425 for details.

Vice President's Report Presentations and Donations



Nancy Farrell

Happy New Year. I hope that you are all doing well and staying healthy. This past year, we worked hard to create improvements and streamline many of our processes within the organization. The most notable change was the restructuring of our accounting program under the guidance of our treasurer, Meryl de Leon.

Our past-president, Jay Chambers stepped down from his role after two terms. Jay worked hard to develop efficiencies and improvements to our practices during his term. The POHA is grateful to Jay for his invaluable contributions. He continues to serve as a board member and as a volunteer visitor at VGH.

We recently welcomed a new member to the POHA board, Ron Paley. Ron is a long-term visitor at RCH and has taken on the role of Captain for our feeder hospital visitor program. We are pleased to welcome Ron to the board.

In June, we held the 38th Annual POHA Golf Tournament. Thanks to the golf committee led by Roger Kocheff, for a successful tournament. Our next tournament will be held on Wednesday, June 4th, 2025 at the Delta Golf and Country Club. We encourage all of our members and friends to attend.

Each year, POHA presents the Don Topp Memorial Award to a person who has contributed in a meaningful way to POHA. The 2024 award was presented to Rolf Gullmes in recognition of the dedication and support that he provides to the POHA community. Rolf has been a volunteer visitor for more than ten years and has been a dedicated board member, serving two years as president.

Our Annual General Meeting was held on November 2nd. Thank you to those of you who attended and, as always, provided valuable input and feedback. Our next AGM will be held on Saturday, October 18th, 2025.

I'd like to take this opportunity to extend a heartfelt thank you to our amazing group of volunteer visitors. We continuously receive positive feedback and appreciation from patients, families and hospital staff on our visitor program. The dedication and compassion that our visitors are providing, truly makes a difference.

We are always in need of new volunteers for our hospital visitation program. If you are interested in becoming a volunteer, please reach out to us at:

volunteer@pacificopenheart.org

Wishing you all a happy and healthy 2025.

Nancy Farrell, Vice President, POHA



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- 1 At the November AGM, the 2024 Don Topp Memorial Trophy was awarded to Rolf Gullmes. Rolf was President from 2019–2021 and is a long-time visitor at Royal Columbian Hospital.
- 2 \$6,000 to Royal Columbian Hospital Foundation. Pictured L to R: Ron Paley (POHA), Laurie Rosenzweig (Director Inpatient Cardiac, Medicine & Respiratory Services), Krista Smith (2S PCC), Tara Holland (2S/2N Operational Support), Kuljit Minhas (Manager 2S and Respiratory), and Dean McLaughlin (2S HCA).
- 3 Mike Martin (Grinch) and Len Mueller (Santa) from POHA, and RCH staff, distributed Christmas flowers to heart surgery patients.
- 4 \$2,500 to Abbotsford Regional Hospital for a cardiac scale that enables staff to obtain crucial metrics related to cardiac perfusion, such as stroke volume and pulse rate variability. Pictured L to R: Peter Langfield (POHA), Ingrid Long, Joyce Verwoerd, Dagmara Maliszweski, Karen Vandooren and Ron Paley (POHA).
- 5 POHA presented Christmas flowers to Randolph Rigets, a pre-op patient at St. Paul's Hospital.
- 6 \$6,000 to St. Paul's Hospital. Pictured L to R: Lisa Humphreville (Patient Care Manager), Davis Kosowan (POHA), Jen Mutch (CNE), Julia Kokan (CNL) and Jenna Tobias (RN).

Golf Tournament

The POHA Golf Tournament is scheduled for Wednesday, June 4th, 2025.
Venue: Delta Golf and Country Club, 11550 Ladner Trunk Road, Delta, BC.
Questions: Call Roger Kocheff at 604-467-2904 or email: rkocheff@telus.net

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