

INSPIRING HOPE

Rosalie Ungar's 35 year struggle with (and triumph over) Atrial Fib!

I can't believe it! This year (2017) I will turn 80 years old. What's more unbelievable to me is that I feel better mentally and physically than I have in over 15 years. Is aging gracefully working for me? Yes and no. I strive to thrive and survive. It takes energy and attitude, neither of which happen without effort.

Atrial fibrillation has been with me for 35 years. More than 5 million people in the United States suffer from atrial A-Fib. By 2030 projections show more than 12 million will have it. A heart attack woke me up.



Seventeen years ago I had a heart attack while giving a speech to 25 people about heart healthy foods. It happened in Omaha, Nebraska, while I was working as a regional sales manager for a food manufacturer. At the hospital I was told by the doctors that tests revealed that this was not my first heart attack. The question was, did I know it? I recalled some strong mid-chest discomfort a month before, but I was on a plane at the time and dismissed the pain as part of the atrial fibrillation I had been suffering from for the past 20 years. It wasn't the A-Fib. I was told that they weren't related.

I had to do something. Take charge of my body. I knew to be able to do this, I needed to partner with my doctors and from now on, be part of the cure. My contribution was a mild exercise program of walking outside 15 minutes a day. Then 30 minutes. Then 45 minutes and engaging what was becoming a habit to using a treadmill for days when weather didn't permit sharing my new found pleasure with the outdoors. When I got to a 15 minute mile and reserved an hour 3 to 5 days a week, life took on a beauty of its own.

My motivation was that I was almost 50 years old and I wanted to be 'in shape' by that milestone. Walking was good for much of the body, but not everything. My upper body strength was weak but I didn't know how to get it better. That's when I found a physical trainer.

It's been almost 30 years ago since then. I've had 3 different trainers using health clubs and some p.t.'s that trained me at home. It doesn't take much equipment or cost. Over the years I've lost 30 pounds, discovered that what I eat and portions can lead to all kinds of benefits inside and outside of the body. My exercise program includes pedaling in a stand up position on the spinning bike, treadmill, rowing machine, a lot of weight resistance training, crunches, squats, planks and a few months ago I did 100 pushups with a 10 second rest at 50. How many 80 year olds do you know that can do 100 push-ups?

Although, none of my health problems are cured, they're managed through medications, procedures, on-going visits with electrophysiologists, cardiologist, endocrinologists and pharmacologists. But most of all, diet and exercise are my primary regimen.

Mended Hearts of Central Ohio

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It is great to be alive – and to help others

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Doctors at The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center and Ross Heart Hospital say that I have reversed all heart damage from 2 heart attacks. I am told that this is unusual. Personally, I chalk it up to diet, exercise, attitude and partnering with my doctors.

My recent memoir *IN A HEARTBEAT: The Ups and Downs of Life with Atrial Fib* tells my story from a patient's point of view or go to: www.rosalieungar.com

If you've had a similar experience, or would just like to talk to Rosalie about living with heart disease, email her at rosalieungar@outlook.com

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