

## Television reporter recalls lifesaving bypass surgery

By Mary Lou Callaway  
special writer

Channel 7 Newsman Jim Herrington was the logical choice as honorary chairman for the Michigan Heart Association celebrity fund-raiser in Troy recently sponsored by the Oakland County Heart Unit.

Herrington had triple bypass heart surgery Dec. 17 and was back to work by Feb. 1.

He didn't hesitate to accept the chairmanship. "I figure I owe them. They've been very kind. They do a lot of neat things like CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation)."

In person, Herrington's features are younger and manner courtly in contrast to the more aggressively skeptical veteran reporter who appears on the television screen.

Interviewed between assignments at WXYZ in Southfield, Herrington recalls his surgery: "I had a couple of angina attacks. The blockage was advanced to the point that if I had had a cardiac arrest, I wouldn't have lasted three seconds."

After a week in Sinai Hospital, Herrington's cardiologist gave him no choice. They discharged him from Sinai and told him to get on the next plane for the Cleveland Clinic, the nationally known Ohio heart surgery facility.

"THE ALTERNATIVES were an extremely restricted life or a second alternative was death. At Cleveland they tell you they're going to take your body and hammer the daylights out of it. They split you open like a chicken. It's going to hurt off and on for a year," Herrington says.

The cause of his heart problem is heredity, he was told. His mother, a nurse, lived with angina for 40 years.

"Everybody here at the station was astounded. I'm relatively thin and in good shape for an 'older person,'" jokes Herrington, who signed with WXYZ in 1980.

There was no history of high blood pressure or elevated cholesterol. He quit smoking a pack of cigarettes per day cold turkey in December. "The arguments in Cleveland were very convincing."

"To avoid stress, he says: 'Do you want I should get a new job?' When 3

p.m. comes in the bustling Channel 7 newsroom, Herrington says: "I sense the stress level is moving up. I guess I'll leave now."

The thousands of letters, cards and calls he got were gratifying, he admits. "I called back every heart patient."

THE SURGERY replaced the coronary arteries with veins from his leg. He has five scars to prove it. "It's amazing to think a few years ago it was a 50-50 chance operation."

Now, at least at Cleveland, it's 90 percent," he says.

"My heart was slowly starving to death from lack of oxygen and blood. Exceptionally strong heart muscles were the only reason I survived," Herrington says he was told by Cleveland Clinic doctors.

There are no major changes in his lifestyle. He watches what he eats, takes brisk walks and is enthused about working in the WXYZ garden.

"I love the quiet time... stretches

of time when even the day of the week doesn't matter," he says.

President of the Detroit Press Club, winner of seven Associated Press awards, twice named AP reporter of the year, Herrington has two local Emmys and three Press Club Foundation awards to his credit.

Now divorced, Herrington lives in a

Southfield condominium. He has three children, two grown and one living with his former wife.

He started broadcasting with the Armed Forces Radio Services in 1946 while in Cuba with the Navy and was a journalism and speech major at Northwestern University. The 1962 Stevenson-Eisenhower presidential cam-

paign was his first. "I worked as a gofer in Chicago for NBC," he recalls.

Since then he has done weather and sports, anchoring and administration. But he says he's best at being a street reporter. "I've been at this 30 years. Sports is easy, the toy department. But you grow to hate sports interviews, the sameness of them."



JOHN STANDI/staff photographer

"My heart was slowly starving to death from lack of oxygen and blood. Exceptionally strong heart muscles were the only reason I survived," says James Herrington.

## Learn to ride cycles safely

Not knowing how to operate a motorcycle safely can cost the operator dearly.

But it costs nothing to complete a series of nine sessions in motorcycle safety offered this June on the Orchard Ridge campus of Oakland County Community College (OCC).

Those who enroll in the class will be asked to post a \$15 registration fee, but the money will be refunded to those who complete the safety course, says Vince Consiglio, coordinator of the class.

Registrants don't have to own a motorcycle to take the class. Fourteen motorcycles will be used for instructional purposes.

Two classes will be offered — one which meets 5:30-9:30 p.m. Mondays, starting June 1, and one which meets 5:30-9:30 p.m. Tuesdays, starting June 2.

Enrollment is limited to a maximum of 28 persons per class.

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