

A Review of

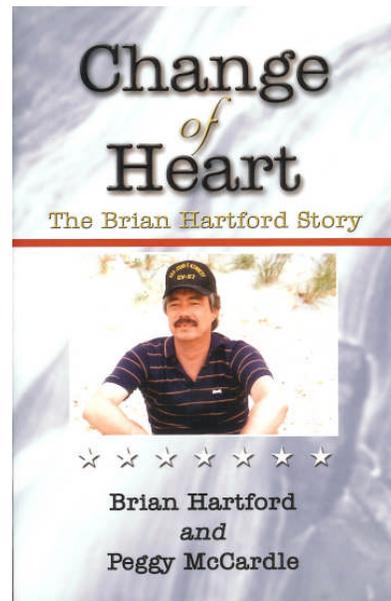
Change of Heart

The Brian Hartford Story

By Brian Hartford and Peggy McCardle

Reviewed by Jim Gleason, heart recipient

“So, how long will your heart transplant last?” To this well intentioned but often thoughtless question, one honest but humorous response is: ***“A lifetime!”*** In reading Brian’s 225 page story, the understated inspiration is that it has been 15 years since his heart transplant. His book, written in 1992, despite some minor differences, is still very accurate in describing what today’s patient can expect. While there certainly are new advances and much more just on the horizon, Brian shares in great detail his daily emotions and happenings that will prepare a patient for hopefully an equally successful heart transplant story of their own. His fears, frustrations, humor, both while waiting and then after the big event are very typical and hopefully will help the reader to better understand their own experiences as being both “normal” and survivable.



What is not typical is his otherwise complex life story. After being married to his childhood flame in midlife following a lifelong friendship that followed them through marriages and divorces, just three years later Jeanne comes down with incurable cancer, causing him to need a heart transplant after suffering a heart attack upon hearing her news. While waiting for his life saving transplant, his beloved dies, leading to another friendship with the stepmother of Jeanne’s children who in turn supports him through the mourning and his eventual transplant and a new life. Loosing his home while in the hospital to pay for the bills, his children cause both concern and are his support too, eventually taking him home with a new heart to this stepmother’s home for his rehab.

We read Brian’s daily journal entries supported by some hindsight commentary as he deals with all these challenges. After the transplant, his life is further complicated by the effects of the steroids and the many other drugs that will keep his heart alive. It is an uphill battle, but his Marine self-discipline repeatedly comes into play with inspirational telling that can help any of us who follow in his footsteps with our own heart transplant challenges.

This is recommended reading for patients and their families, especially where teen children are involved since we see him dealing with their issues as his children also have to deal not only with his critical illness and eventual recovery with a new heart, but also with the loss of their mother. This is a beautiful sharing of sadness and joy, both loss of life and a gift of life, of lost love and love found, and of fear and celebration. There are lessons for everyone in Brian and his co-author, Peggy’s, story of a Change of Heart.

Note: **Change of Heart** can be purchased on-line at Barnes & Noble

(length: 473 words)

Brief bio:

Jim Gleason, a heart recipient since Oct. '94, retired from Unisys Corporation in 2005, is a nationally recognized public speaker and author. His book, **A Gift from the Heart**, is offered free in thanks to his donor family and can be obtained by contacting him at GLEASONJIM@AOL.COM.