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Surviving a stroke

Local man shares his story during Heart Month

By Stephanie Thiessen
 CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

They remember it like it was yesterday. January 2, 2000. It was a Sunday morning, like any other, until 45-year-old Bill Schofield attempted to get out of bed.

Immediately, he fell over, hit his head on a dresser and fell back into bed. He couldn't talk or move the right side of his body.

His wife, Joice, said she knew from his symptoms he was having a stroke, and immediately dialed 911.

Their daughter, Kristine, was 16 at the time and said she remembers standing outside and waiting to flag down the ambulance.

"It was insanity. It was the worst day of my life," she said. "Our dad's like our hero. My brother and I never thought anything could happen to him."

Doctors confirmed that Schofield had suffered a massive stroke, and told Joice he wasn't expected to recover.

But Schofield had other plans.

He spent eight days in the Intensive Care Unit at Milton District Hospital and was then sent home, still barely able to speak or walk. But over the next few months, bit by bit, he re-gained his words and movement. Today, unless one listened closely to his speech, no one would know he'd suffered a stroke.

"Every day is a good day for me," Schofield said, adding he counts himself among the lucky ones despite the fact there are words to this day he can't say aloud. "Some days I talk better, some worse."

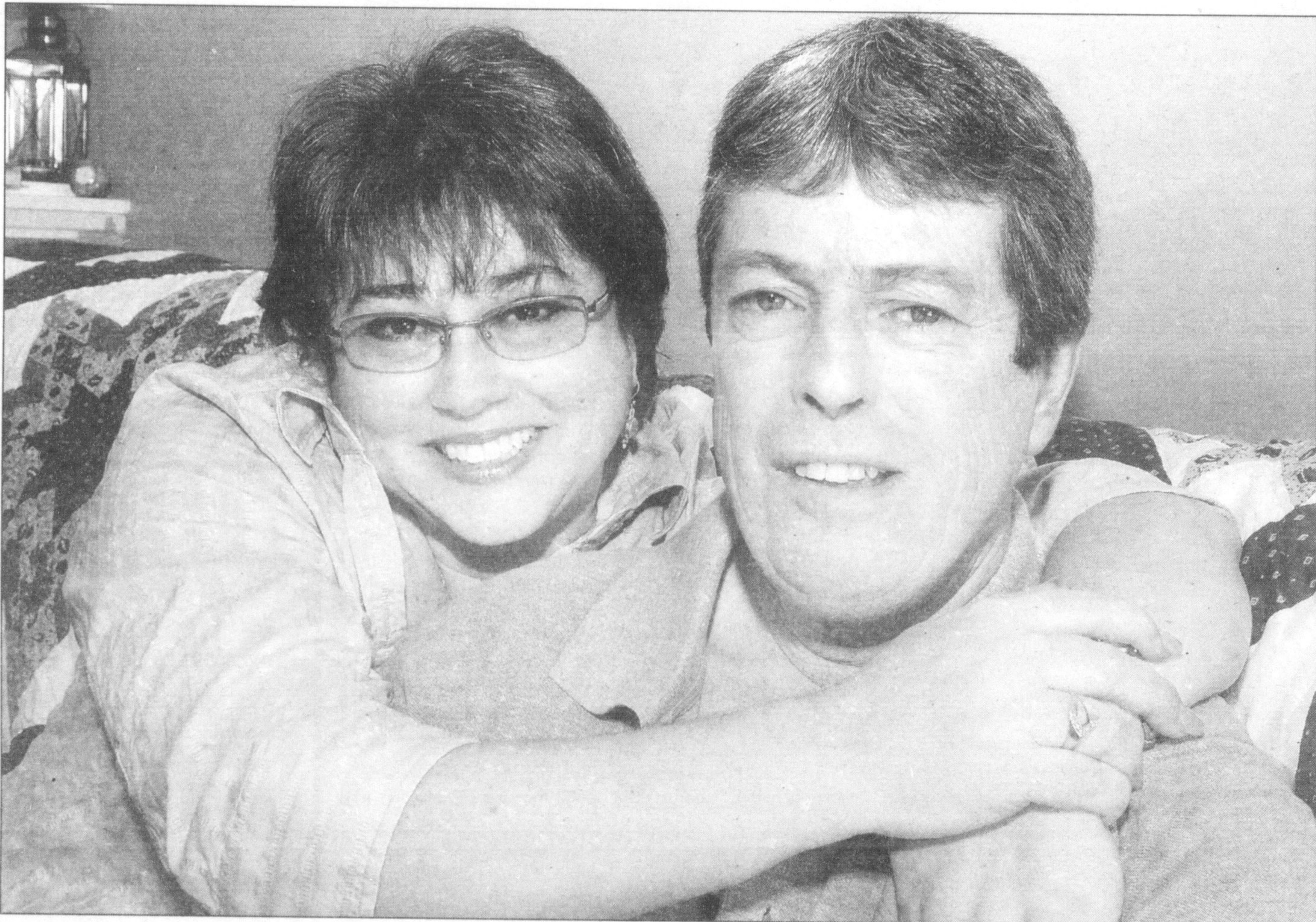
With February being Heart Month, Schofield wants to share his story and enforce the importance of regular doctor check-ups to help prevent heart attacks and strokes.

"If I'd gone to my doctor first, (there would have been) no stroke," Schofield said. "I tell people at my job to go to the doctor once a year."

His stroke actually turned out to be a blessing in disguise, because it alerted doctors to the pre-existing heart condition that caused it. Schofield had scarring on his aortic valve, which most likely caused blockages in the blood vessels in the brain.

Schofield was told he needed heart surgery within six months or he would die. Four months after the stroke, doctors replaced his aortic valve with a mechanical one. Two months later, he returned to his job as a communications electrician.

Schofield was lucky — he got a second



STROKE SURVIVOR: Bill Schofield, who overcame a massive stroke, gets a hug from his wife, Joice.

GRAHAM PAINE / CANADIAN CHAMPION

chance.

Carolyn Seabrook-Ferguson, the Heart and Stroke Foundation's area manager for Halton, said despite education efforts, many people still don't understand what a stroke is and how it differs from a heart attack.

They're both caused by the same thing — a blood vessel blockage. A stroke occurs when that blockage is to the brain, and a heart attack is when it's to the heart.

"It's just random where that blockage occurs," Seabrook-Ferguson said.

In both cases, a build up of cholesterol in the arteries breaks free and travels through the blood stream. If the clot lodges where an artery is narrow, the blood supply — to the brain or heart — is cut off, causing a heart attack or stroke.

A heart attack is often characterized by severe chest pain, while symptoms of a stroke may include loss of muscular control, loss of sensation or consciousness, dizziness

or slurred speech.

The Heart and Stroke Foundation works in three areas, Seabrook-Ferguson said — prevention, advocacy and research.

The foundation works to educate people, giving them plenty of ways to improve their health. Some of those include eating healthier, less fatty foods, minimizing unhealthy trans fats consumed, increasing consumption of fruits and vegetables, maintaining a healthy weight and increasing physical activity. "Being healthy in general reduces your risk of both heart attack and stroke," Seabrook-Ferguson said.

She recommends that people monitor their blood pressure — it can be taken at most drug stores or pharmacies — and discuss it with their doctors. A high blood pressure creates a larger risk for a heart attack or stroke.

This month, Seabrook-Ferguson is encouraging Milton residents to give to the

volunteer canvassers — there are more than 1,200 in Halton — going door-to-door.

"If you get a canvasser, please recognize they're volunteering their time in the freezing cold," she said.

What followed Schofield's heart surgery was months of often frustrating rehabilitation and speech therapy.

"I bought him some kindergarten flash cards and pretty much taught him how to talk again," Kristine said.

As for her dad's progress, Kristine said it was "kind of like a miracle."

Although doctors don't know if Bill will ever fully recover from his speech limitations, he looks on the bright side.

"It's a bad thing, but I'm lucky to be around. I'm not dead yet," he said.

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Programming Schedule — Tuesday, February 14 - Monday, February 20, 2006

Tuesday, February 14	Wednesday, February 15	Thursday, February 16	Friday, February 17	Saturday, February 18	Sunday, February 19	Monday, February 20
1:00pm SportsZONE Live (Replay)	1:00pm Halton Hills Council Feb 6 2006	12:00pm Swap Talk (Replay)	1:00pm Halton Region Council Feb 8 2006	4:00pm TVC Sports: Jr.A Hockey Playoffs	10:30am TVC Sports: Jr.A Hockey Playoffs	1:00pm Halton Region Council Feb 8 2006
5:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA	4:00pm - 8:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA	5:00pm - 9:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA	5:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA	6:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA	6:00pm Halton Region Council Feb 8 2006	4:00pm - 8:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA
6:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA	8:00pm Swap Talk (Live)	9:00pm Halton Region Council Feb 8 2006	6:00pm - 9:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA	7:00pm TVC Sports: AHL Hockey (Live) - Omaha vs Hamilton	10:00pm - Midnight Plugged In! EXTRA	8:00pm SportsZONE Live
8:00pm Auto Experts (Live)	9:00pm - Midnight Plugged In! EXTRA		9:00pm TVC Sports: Jr.A Hockey Playoffs			9:00pm - Midnight Plugged In! EXTRA
9:00pm Halton Hills Council Feb 6 2006			11:00pm - Midnight Plugged In! EXTRA	10:00pm - Midnight Plugged In! EXTRA		