

The background of the entire image is a photograph of a dirt path that curves through a wooded area. The path is light brown and appears to be made of dirt and small stones. It is flanked by tall, dry grass and various trees, some with green leaves and others with bare branches. The trees are of different sizes and species, creating a dense canopy in some areas. The overall scene is a natural, outdoor setting.

Figure It Out For Yourself

Paul E. McMahon

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Living With Heart Disease and Other Small Challenges, Second Edition

Paul E. McMahon

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*To the medical staff at Mount Sinai Beth Israel Hospital in New
York City*

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A few months after my 18th birthday my father died from his third heart attack at 58 years old. Before he died he impressed upon me the importance of always having a goal in life and never ever giving up. When my sister died from complications of Lupus erythematosus at 53 years old her words resonated in my brain: “Don’t trust the damn doctors. Figure it out for yourself.” From her I learned to figure out what’s going on inside my body and to manage my own challenges. I am 65 years old and living with aortic heart valve disease. I am also a marathon runner who doesn’t plan to ever stop running even though I know my disease is progressively getting worse. I will eventually need to undergo open heart surgery to replace my aortic heart valve. This is the story of two weeks in my life that occurred in December, 2014.