

Later this month I will be celebrating my 27th birthday. As you can tell from the video, I have had my share of challenges in my life, despite the best of efforts from excellent doctors in the field of cardiology. I owe a great deal of gratitude to Dr. Fred Bierman, who guided me through some difficult times with his skill and overall care of my medical condition. (If Dr. Bierman is in the audience tonight, I would like to ask him to stand and allow me to extend my appreciation to him)

I have been fortunate to receive the best of care from some of the top physicians in their field; however my ability to succeed through some of the most difficult surgeries and procedures was not only with a positive outlook but also on the latest developments in cardiac technology.

My life has been filled with happiness and disappointments.

I was not able to participate on the town's little league baseball team like the others in my neighborhood, but I gave 100% of my effort on a challenger league baseball team that consisted of special athletes in their own way. Special in a sense that we all had the desire to play like everyone else, but our medical limitations placed us in a league of our own.

Our opening day parade was not possible to take place through the streets of our town, but rather from the parking lot at our baseball field to the adjacent field of play. The distance didn't matter – it was the pride of wearing the uniform and knowing that I was playing on the same field as my friends.

Riding a bicycle was always a dream of mine. Watching others enjoy the speed of a ride and breeze blowing in their faces was not easy. But I came close when my parents bought me a bicycle built for two which gave me enjoyment.

Starting my senior year of high school recovering from a post operative stroke could have been a determining point in my life, however through the strong support of family and friends, I

gathered the strength to overcome my paralysis and walk into my high school three months later with a 100% recovery.

I have learned to live my life one day at a time because I have learned how precious life can be and should never be taken for granted.

After spending the first day of my life in three hospitals and learning in later life that I was only supposed to live to the age of 4, I can now look back and recognize what an important role medical technology has played in my life.

After reaching the age of 5, without a cure for my condition, I wondered how many more surgeries and catheterizations I would have to undergo before I could live a healthier life.

Five years later, at the age of 10, a cardiac breakthrough allowed me the opportunity for an improved health condition.

Today after 8 open heart surgeries and about 50 cardiac catheterizations, I can stand before you and tell you the importance of being able to be the recipient of technological breakthroughs.

Society has shown that people find a way to support a crisis. Evidence is seen in the recent horrible earthquake that struck Haiti. Millions of people reached into their pockets to help those whose lives were shattered.

9/11/01 is another example of an extensive amount of blood donations that were made to assist those in need. So many units were donated shortly after 9/11 with a large quantity that went unused.

We have a large population of people who also need your help. These are people like me who have benefited from people like you who donate to the American Heart Association.

Today, I ask you to find it in your heart to donate and save a person's life like mine,
because it can be their only hope.