



John Boyd, hip
replacement patient

NEW HIPS & HURRICANES

Both are more dramatic when they come in pairs

LAST FALL WAS QUITE EVENTFUL for **John Boyd**, 73, of St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands. In August, he finally received long-awaited surgery to replace both hips—during one single operation at Sibley. In September, while he was completing rehabilitation at the hospital, two Category 5 hurricanes just weeks apart pummeled St. Croix and his home.

The damage was devastating. However, despite having such a major medical procedure at the end of August, Boyd was mentally and physically ready to tackle the rebuilding when he returned home. He credits his team at the hospital for that.

“I ended up at Sibley by doing my homework,” he says. “I looked for the best physician to do my surgery, one who could replace both hips at the same time, so I would be free of pain and get back to life as soon as possible.”

Finding the Right Team

As he conducted his research, Boyd learned of a newer hip replacement procedure that involves moving aside, instead of cutting through, the muscles and ligaments of the joint.

With this technique, called the “anterior approach,” there is less tissue damage, less pain and shorter hospital stays, compared to traditional surgery.

Rehabilitation is also faster. Most people return to work or other normal activities in as little as 10 to 14 days, versus up to six weeks with traditional surgery.

Since Boyd was having both hips replaced, these advantages were important to him.

“After deciding on this procedure, my next step was to find the right surgeon,” he says. His research led him to **Stuart Melvin, M.D.**, an orthopaedic surgeon who has performed nearly 1,000



Stuart Melvin, M.D.,
orthopaedic surgeon

total hip replacements using the anterior approach. That level of experience is an important factor in patient results, according to studies.

“Dr. Melvin was the fourth surgeon I interviewed,” Boyd says. “Based on his training and his understanding of my goals—he was my first choice.”

Proven Successes, Future Goals

The Sibley Institute for Bone and Joint Health focuses on the future. Philanthropic gifts to the Sibley Foundation have helped support the hospital’s orthopaedics program, including research and rehabilitation services.

“We’re embracing new techniques, technologies and devices to improve hip replacement surgery,” says Dr. Melvin. “Our patients have profound and immediate improvement, and it’s impressive to see what they can do afterward that they might not have done in years.”

Bouncing Back

“Over the years, I went from doing 20-mile fundraising walks three times a year to having trouble just picking something up off the floor,” Boyd says. “Gradually, activities kept disappearing out of my life.”

After surgery, things began to change dramatically. His rehab team customized his therapy to match his goals. These

included getting back to his home of almost 40 years to start massive repairs.

“Instead of walking around a gym floor, my physical therapist walked around outdoor trails with me to help me regain my strength and balance,” he says. “And knowing about the destruction on St. Croix, the occupational therapist taught me techniques for safely removing branches and debris and how to get down on the ground and back up with my two new hips.”

Boyd’s research, choice of surgical team and rehabilitation paid dividends immediately when he returned to St. Croix last fall. Cleanup included getting on and off his roof, transporting wheelbarrow after wheelbarrow of debris, and hoisting 30- to 40-pound pails of water for drinking and cooking—many times a day.

“I did heavier yard work during those first six weeks than I had done in the past four years,” he says.

He relishes in smaller victories, too. “I can put on my pants without holding my leg up with my hands,” he says with a chuckle. “And something I totally didn’t expect, I no longer have back pain.”

“I could have had this surgery done anywhere, by anyone,” he says. “But I made the right choice in my team.”

Today, with his own home cleaned up, he’s looking forward to helping wrangle a relative’s yard into “perfect” shape. And he has plans to resume one of his many hobbies, a 10- to 15-mile charity walk in St. Croix this summer.

For more information about the Sibley Institute for Bone and Joint Health, call 202-660-6789.