

## ERIC AND SHARRON

“Nine doors down.” That’s how Eric Pottle describes the distance from his AGH hospital bed to the home he has shared with Sharron, his wife of 39 years. The close proximity to home consoles Eric, although he won’t head home in the foreseeable future.

A chance mishap on a Saturday afternoon last summer changed Eric’s and Sharron’s lives forever. They were sitting in their backyard with a few friends on August 27, when Eric stood up from his chair. He tripped and fell on his back, which was already damaged by a chronic spinal condition. Eric was rushed to the AGH’s Emergency Department where the doctor on duty immediately called the X-ray Department, which provides 24-hour service for emergency cases. A medical radiation technician rushed the AGH’s new digital portable X-ray machine to the ER and took an X-ray on the spot. After reading the X-ray, the doctor diagnosed a broken neck. Eric was stabilized and then transported to Ottawa where specialists performed surgery.

Two months later, Eric returned to AGH, first to the Medical-Surgical Unit and, on November 4, to the Rosamond Complex Continuing Care Unit. Eric is paralyzed now, with only limited mobility in his left hand. He receives his food and medication through a feeding tube inserted in his stomach. AGH nursing staff provide Eric’s personal care, while an automatic lift assists in moving him between his hospital bed and wheelchair. In a few weeks, Eric will be fitted with an electric wheelchair. He’s looking forward to that, “though I don’t know how long it will take to learn to drive it.”



Eric has adjusted remarkably well to his new life with the help of Sharron, who visits him every day. And Sharron offers generous praise to their family physician, Dr. Christiane Deschenes, who is also AGH’s Chief of Staff, and others on the AGH health care team. “We are so grateful to Dr. Deschenes. She has been our doctor for over 35 years. We don’t know what we would have done without her. Dr. Heather Abramenko was on duty when Eric was rushed to the ER. The nurses, the physios and all the staff are so caring and good to us,” Sharron adds.

The Pottles also appreciate the critical importance of AGH’s diagnostic imaging (DI) equipment in providing Eric’s care and comfort—first the X-ray machine used to diagnose Eric’s broken neck in AGH’s ER, and more recently an abdominal X-ray to check placement of his feeding tube. Each time, DI staff wheeled the X-ray equipment to Eric’s bedside. “The portable equipment makes such a difference to our patients with mobility issues,” says Dr. Deschenes. “They avoid the ordeal of being moved and brought downstairs to the DI Department.” The new digital X-ray equipment provides even greater benefits, says Dr. Deschenes. “The image quality in digital machines provides better diagnostic accuracy, and the digital machines have much lower radiation.”

Those benefits, and pretty well all the care Eric has received at AGH, are not lost on the Pottles. They are also thrilled that Eric is close to home. “We are so lucky that Eric is here in AGH,” Sharron says. “It’s like a second home for him. It so much easier for me to visit and it’s so nice for Eric’s peace of mind.”

Being close to home means a lot to the Pottles, especially after Sharron’s what experienced in the first two months after Eric’s injury. Two days after Eric’s accident, Sharron had knee replacement surgery. The surgery had been previously scheduled, and despite her worries about Eric, doctors advised her to go ahead with the surgery. When she was released from hospital a week later, she was confined to a wheelchair. Friends drove Sharron to Ottawa every day to visit Eric during her recovery period, until she was able to drive again. “Those two months were dreadful,” Sharron recalls. “It’s been so much better since Eric was moved back here.”

Now Sharron visits Eric daily, as do other family members. Three of Eric’s “coffee buddies” also drop in twice a week for an afternoon chat. Then there are regular workout sessions in the AGH’s Physiotherapy Department where physio staff play a CD of country music that Eric recorded back in 2014. The CD’s title, *That Foghorn Sound*, recalls Eric’s childhood in Conception Bay, Newfoundland. Eric, who retired in 2000 at the age of 60, used to sing and play guitar and violin with local musicians before the accident. He even fondly recalls performing for patients and residents at AGH and the Fairview Manor over the years. Now he is on the receiving end of those recreational visits from community-minded entertainers. Just one more benefit of being here at AGH, close to home.