

LOCAL NEWS

After years of brightening lives of others, Tom Pattison facing life in the dark



Tom Pattison, shown in 2011, is dealing with a lengthy list of serious health problems including a severe loss of eyesight. The 71-year-old former entertainment promoter now lives in Willoughby Hills. (News-Herald file)



By **NEWS-HERALD EDITORIAL STAFF**

PUBLISHED: November 12, 2022 at 1:00 PM EST

Tom Pattison is a man who is struggling, but he's also a man who is not giving up.

The 71-year-old Willoughby Hills resident and former entertainment promoter is dealing with a lengthy list of serious health problems including a severe loss of eyesight.

Completely blind in his left eye and describing the limited sight in his right eye "like looking through a peephole," Pattison relies on others for help with driving to doctor appointments, shopping and anywhere else he needs to go.

Further trials include maneuvering through his apartment building which is not handicapped accessible.

"It has been a nightmare," he said.

So far five surgeries on his left eye haven't been successful and doctors have already told him that the minimal sight remaining in his right eye may eventually be lost as well.

Although not certain how the blindness occurred, some doctors maintain that it may have been from loss of oxygen when his heart, affected by atrial fibrillation, stopped for several minutes about a year and a half ago.

Fortunately paramedics were able to revive him and he was rushed to UH Lake West Medical Center.

"They put in a pacemaker and that has saved me so far. It runs my heart," he said.

Adding to his problems is a recent cancer diagnosis resulting in an operation to remove melanoma which opened up his face, leaving him with a scar traveling from the top of his eyebrow to his jaw.

“It’s a frustrating thing...when I thought nothing else could hit me. I’m constantly talking to Jesus and asking him ‘You must really be mad at me...I’ve tried to help people all my life...what did I do?’ ”

Over the years Pattison has enjoyed singing for residents at local nursing homes and other facilities. And despite a cluster of challenges, it’s a venture that he doesn’t want to give up.

He also would like to deliver motivational talks to high school and college students in hopes that relating his successful experiences as a promoter and entrepreneur might be of help to them.

“There’s nothing you can’t do in life. There’s always a way. I’m living proof,” he said.

After graduating from Mentor High School in 1969 Pattison attended Lakeland Community College and completed his studies in hotel and restaurant management at Cornell University in New York.

Returning to Lake County he started a production company that promoted various events such as The World’s Fair of Food at Shoregate Shopping Center in Willowick and Nightmare in Painesville at the Lake County Fairgrounds.

One of his favorite promotional endeavors was helping with the development of [Masters of the Gridiron](#), a video based on the Conan the Barbarian comic book character and featuring Cleveland Browns players.

“When I did Masters of Gridiron the NFL went nuts on it,” he recalled. “They picked up on it and followed up with other teams. I love doing entertainment. That was a natural for me.”

Currently, Pattison is discouraged with his inability to find assistance with rehabilitation and therapy. He notes that although doctors and medical facilities have been helpful, in some cases a “disconnect” exists and he’s yet to find a source that will teach him how to navigate through life with poor eyesight.

“I’ve struck out on trying to get help... I’m struggling in the dark...,” he said. “It’s so frustrating not to be able to see. I don’t want to give up. I just want to learn.”

Asked what message regarding his plight that he'd like to make others aware of, Pattison said, "If anybody out there knows how to help, that would be great. And if anyone wants me to sing at nursing homes I'd be happy to do that."

For those who would like to contact Pattison for possible help, email thomaspattison7@gmail.com.

2022 > November > 12