



*John and Lori Guertin at their inn*

# A Lasting Connection

*MGH Donor*

*Retains a Bond Forged*

*25 Years Ago*

**T**HE ESSEX STREET INN makes for an ideal getaway. Nestled in the heart of downtown Newburyport, an intimate hamlet abutting the ocean on Massachusetts' North Shore, the inn welcomes hundreds of happy tourists every year. While soaking in the resplendent waterfront views and Victorian ambience, it's a good bet that few of the inn's visitors could possibly imagine the odds one of its owners, John Guertin, has overcome to be where he is today.

"When I was 9 years old," Mr. Guertin recalls, "I spent a lot of time going from doctor to doctor." Burdened with crippling pain in his left leg, he and his parents were faced with an additional obstacle: none of the doctors he saw could identify what was wrong. It was then, Mr. Guertin recounts, that he came to Michael Erlich, MD, (*now retired*), an orthopaedic surgeon at the MGH.

"As soon as Dr. Erlich examined me, he knew what was causing the leg pain," says Mr. Guertin. Dr. Erlich diagnosed the young boy with Legg-Calvé-Perthes disease, a condition most commonly afflicting children in which the head of the femur deteriorates due to insufficient blood flow. The lack of blood causes the bone to die, and while it eventually will regrow and repopulate itself with new veins, the bone remains soft, sensitive and extremely prone to injury in the meantime.

"I had surgery right after Dr. Erlich diagnosed me," Mr. Guertin explains. He spent 10 weeks in a body cast after his first surgery. He then underwent a second surgery, designed to slow the growth in his healthy leg so that it did not outgrow the injured limb. "Basically," he adds, "I am very grateful to the MGH and my parents for the fact that I can walk."

Mr. Guertin regained normal use of his leg and returned to an active childhood in his hometown of Haverhill, MA. His path would intersect the MGH's again, however: in

1996, he began to experience an all-too-familiar sense of sharp pain in his legs.

Although Dr. Erlich had since retired, Mr. Guertin again chose the MGH as his care provider. He met with orthopaedic surgeon William Tomford, MD, who advised that Mr. Guertin undergo hip replacement surgery (with surgeon Anthony Webber, MD) to repair 25 years' worth of wear and tear on his left leg.

Mr. Guertin has chosen to show his appreciation – as well as his faith in the MGH's ability to make a lasting difference for its patients – by making unrestricted gifts to the hospital's MGH Fund. MGH Fund donors furnish critical, unrestricted assistance to address the most urgent needs and priorities of the institution.

"I knew even when I was young how important philanthropy is to hospitals," Mr. Guertin notes. "I remember, during one of my visits to the MGH, asking my mother why people's names were on plaques on the wall. It made sense when I heard why, and it still makes sense today."

Mr. Guertin states that he is happy to have the opportunity to furnish support: "I know there are a lot of people at the MGH who need the help, right now," he emphasizes.

Mr. Guertin bought the Essex Street Inn five years ago, along with his wife, Lori, and his parents, and spends a good deal of time tending to the popular hotel. His primary care physician remains at the MGH, and he doesn't mind making the drive into Boston for his routine appointments.

"I know," he says, "that it's worth a trip."

For more information about supporting the MGH Fund through unrestricted giving, please visit [www.mghgifts.org/areas.asp?id=fund](http://www.mghgifts.org/areas.asp?id=fund)