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P. 33

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## Heart and Soul

Fear of failure is not a factor for Dr. Margaret Hall, one of the region's leading cardiologists



**BY SHEILA MICKOOL**

Whether it's saving a life, climbing mountains, cycling in the French Alps or whipping up a gourmet meal, Margaret "Peg" Hall likes a challenge. After she completed medical school, an internal medicine internship, a residency and cardiology fellowship training—all at the University of Washington—in 1988, Hall was one of only a handful of women cardiologists in private practice in Seattle. Today, she is chief of cardiology and medical director of the Cardiac Rehabilitation Program at Northwest Hospital & Medical Center.

The North Seattle resident is married and the mother of three grown children.

**SH:** *How did you choose to become a heart doctor?*

**MH:** I was a nurse practitioner for a few years when I was younger, then decided to go to medical school—I wanted to learn more, to do more. The more I learned about medicine, especially the heart, the more I wanted to know.

**SH:** *How challenging was med school?*

**MH:** School was the easy part. Actually, the most challenging thing for me was doing my residency with two "tweens" at home. You can't even begin to imagine!

**SH:** *What are the most significant breakthroughs in cardiac care since you've been practicing?*

**MH:** The single biggest advance in the treatment of coronary disease and the saving of lives is the rapid mechanical opening of arteries. Major hospitals now have catheter labs and specially trained doctors on hand 24/7. Two other important advances include the treatment of weak hearts with implantable defibrillators, which bolster heart function, and the introduction of statins [like

Lipitor] to reduce cholesterol and help prevent coronary disease.

**SH:** *Do patients always follow your advice?*

**MH:** The short answer: No. I'm a coach, but it's their show. I tell them what is likely to happen and give them advice—but it's their decision ultimately.

**SH:** *What do you enjoy when you aren't working?*

**MH:** I like to ride. I own a road race bike. I'm slow, but I can get up anything. I've ridden 22 of the hardest French Alps mountain climbs on the Tour de France. I love to cook, too. I have no fear of failure and will try cooking anything—even if I have to throw it in the garbage. I don't do as much baking anymore, but I can throw a pie together from scratch in minutes, and I bake a mean loaf of challah. I also enjoy sewing and making tallits [Jewish prayer shawls] for my nieces and nephews.

**SH:** *No fear of failure? Really?*

**MH:** Pretty much. I'll try almost anything—at least once—but I may not repeat the experience. For example, I climbed Cotopaxi in South America, but I'm not going to do that again anytime soon.

**SH:** *What's one of the toughest*

*things you've ever had to deal with?*

**MH:** My first husband's cancer. I married young, at 19, and we had two children when my husband was diagnosed with cancer. I had to figure out a lot of things: how to support my family, how I was going to raise the kids and what I was going to do to earn money. Practicalities drove a lot of decisions, like entering the medical field. You find the strength to do what needs doing.

**SH:** *What's next for you?*

**MH:** Professionally, I have a full practice, and that's fulfilling. But now I'd like to add more focus to prevention and the creation of smarter, proactive consumers. I envision putting together educational weekend retreats to explore the cardiac system and how to identify and head off issues before bad things happen. On the personal side, I'd like to push my physical limits—see how much endurance I have. I'm in good health, but I want to see where I can go from here. +

DR. MARGARET HALL IS USED TO HAVING A HEART IN HER HANDS—THIS TIME, IT'S JUST A MODEL