

**KAREN VAN ROOYEN**

LAST night, Wally Katzke opened up his heart to the nation as he underwent bypass surgery in the first operation of its kind on South African television.

Thousands watched as Katzke, 52, was operated on at Netcare's Milpark Hospital as part of the Heart and Stroke Foundation's efforts to raise awareness of heart and vascular disease from which nearly 200 South Africans die daily.

After the operation, the project's cardiologist, Dr Graham Cassel, said it was a "great success".

"This was as uncomplicated a heart operation as I have ever seen," he said.

Katzke's family were separated from the media in a private room and his wife refused to watch. After the operation the family left the room looking extremely relieved.

The procedure began before 8pm, and many people who had seen other patients in the hospital during visiting hours stayed behind to watch.

Hospital spokesman Amelda Swartz said staff had been busy since 7am transforming the operating theatre into a TV studio and ensuring that all the broadcasting equipment was sterile.

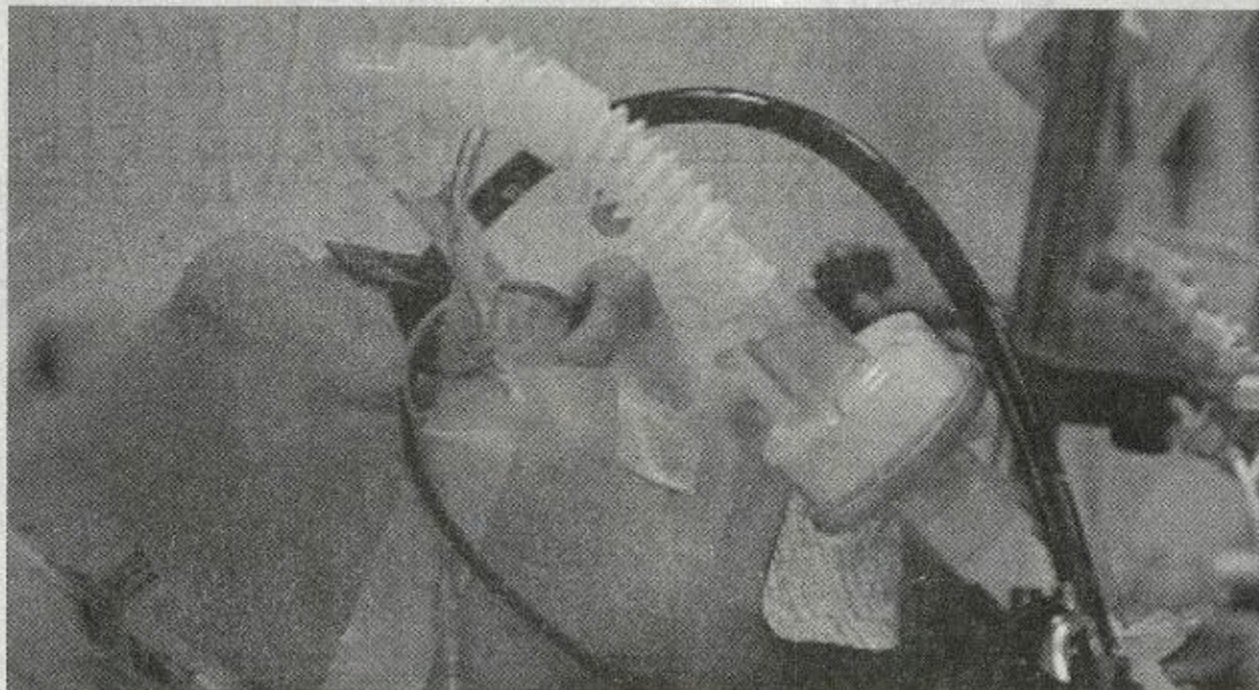
Heart disease hit Katzke, a father of three and grandfather of two, nine years ago on a golf course when he began experiencing chest pain and shortness of breath.

An angiogram revealed a blocked artery and a stent was inserted.

"After this procedure, I did not do much to change my bad eating habits," he said on his website.

"When I was younger I used to play squash and golf and cycle. However, after my stent I thought it was too dangerous to overexert myself. This was a huge mistake."

Six weeks ago, Katzke was again racked by severe pain and his



OPEN-HEARTED: Wally Katzke during his heart bypass, which was witnessed by viewers last night Pictures: COURTESY SABC3



'Bad habits catch up with you later in life, so don't think it could never happen to you. I hope sharing my story will help you make changes in your life today'

## Man receives bypass live on TV

cardiologist said he needed a single heart bypass.

Katzke said he had a "helluva lot" on his mind before the operation.

"I'm not a nervous type of person, but the stress and tension is getting to me. I won't say I'm petrified, but I've realised what it's about," he said beforehand.

At the prospect of becoming famous, Katzke's first thought was "Hell, I'm going to be under sedation, it's no skin off my nose," he said. "But it's roller-coasted into something I didn't believe could be this big."

The Heart Foundation's Shân Biesman-Simons said Katzke was chosen for the campaign as he displayed a number of risk factors, including diabetes and an unhealthy lifestyle.

"I can't compliment or praise Wally and his family enough for being willing to be a part of this process," she said.

A team of two cardiac surgeons performed the operation while Cassel provided commentary.

Cassel said Katzke agreed to the televised operation after thinking about it for several hours. Others

turned down the proposal — one man within 10 seconds.

Cassel said the TV crew perfected their lighting and camera positions during two other bypass operations. The crew were also told to stop filming if something went wrong.

Katzke said he had already changed his eating habits and had cut down on smoking.

"Bad habits catch up with you later in life, so don't think it could never happen to you. I hope sharing my story will help you make changes in your life today," Katzke said.