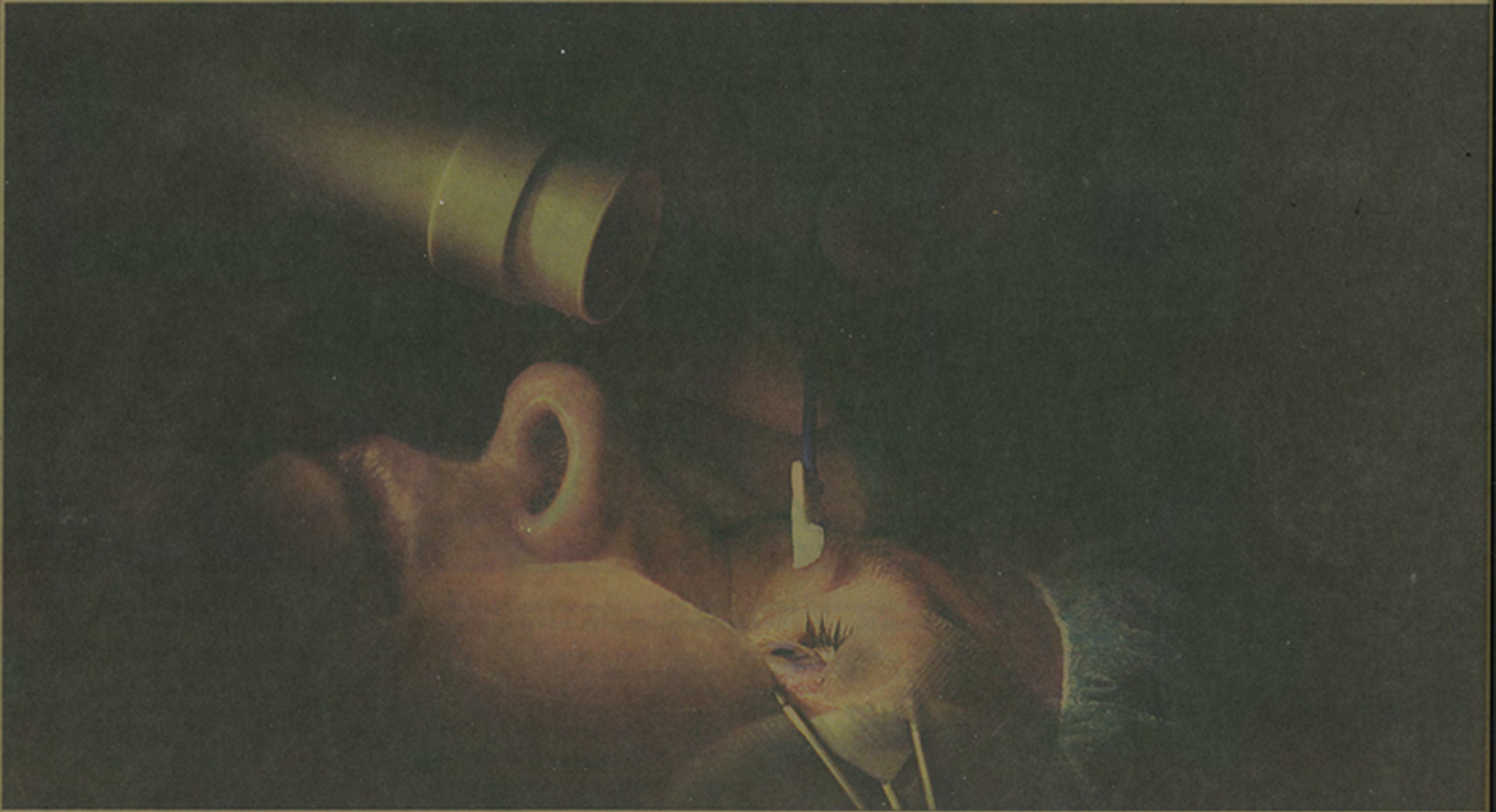


Time of Your Life

PLANNING FOR PEOPLE 50-PLUS

R SECTION > TORONTO STAR < SATURDAY, JUNE 12, 2004 ★ thestar.com



KEN FAUGHT/TORONTO STAR PHOTOS

Lois Brown, shown undergoing laser eye surgery at the Herzig Eye Institute, said she was thrilled with the results, but she had waited until she felt comfortable with improvements in laser technology.

I can see clearly now

Laser eye surgery gets thumbs-up from new patients

More people are turning to the 'miracle cure'

CATHERINE PATCH
STAFF REPORTER

Bob Pierce is swinging in the rain these days, and he's doing it without glasses.

Pierce, 51, had laser eye surgery five years ago and he's still thrilled about his crisp, clear vision and his greatly improved golf game.

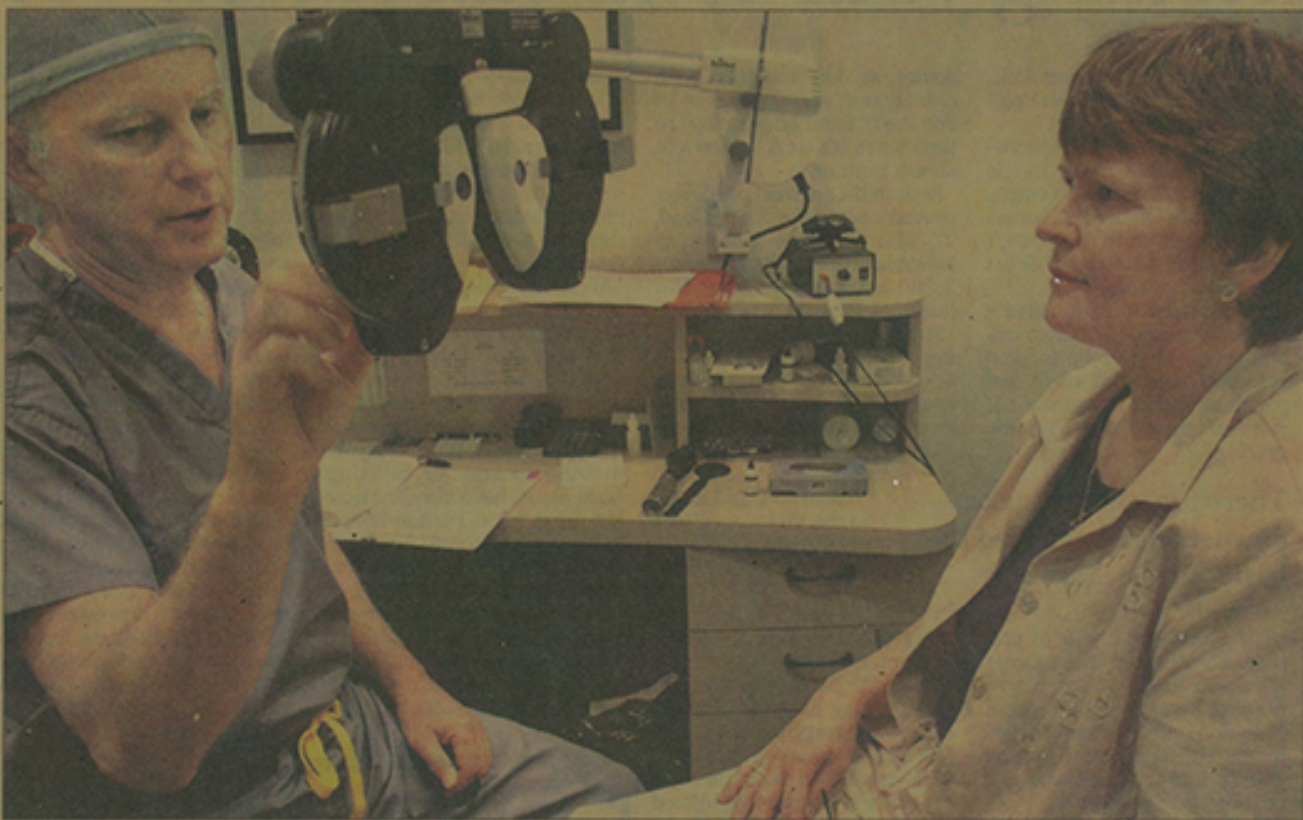
"Just to be able to play golf without my glasses fogging up (in the rain), that alone was worth every penny," says Pierce.

Peter Bieling, 36, wore glasses from age 3 up until the end of April, when he had his surgery. "For me, it's about freedom," says the Hamilton psychologist, who had surgery at the Herzig Eye Institute in Toronto.

"After my surgery people were telling me I looked better," he says.

"But I really didn't care about that. It was about getting rid of the glasses, the cleaning and the fussing around."

A few hours after his surgery, Bieling was checking his e-mail. Three days later, he dusted off his clubs and headed for the golf



Dr. Sheldon Herzig of the Herzig Eye Institute gives a pre-operative checkup to eye surgery patient Lois Brown.

course. "It was the best decision I've ever made," says Eileen McMahon, 43, who was visiting the Herzig clinic for her pre-

checkup. "I had my surgery at 4:30 in the afternoon and I was back in the office at 8 the next morning," she says. "I woke up and I could

see my alarm clock without having to hold it up. It was amazing."

Lois Brown, 57, had been waiting for her big day for years. It

came early this month at the Herzig clinic. Her son, who had laser surgery five years ago, went with her. "I was waiting for the technology to improve to a

point where it is now," she says. "Laser magic? Instant miracles?"

We're getting there, says Dr. W. Bruce Jackson, director-general of the University of Ottawa Eye Institute at the Ottawa Hospital.

"We started back in 1993 when laser eye surgery was very controversial and people were highly skeptical about whether it would work," Jackson says.

"It was one of the reasons we felt, as a new institute opening in Ottawa, that this was something we should investigate.

"Pretty well all our patients, when they come, are entered into research studies, so we're evaluating new hardware, new lasers, new software on the lasers and new techniques," he says.

"That's been our role, as opposed to the commercial clinics that run in the community."

Jackson says he and his colleagues were also skeptical in the beginning.

"But the answer is, it really has really worked extremely well," he says.

"We've gone through many generations of lasers and they continue to improve."

Ophthalmologists use one of two techniques to treat the eye: surface ablation, or PRK, and LASIK, the technique most commonly used.

> Please see Laser, R7