

## Book Review

# Stark Choices: A Surgeon's Story: From Prague to London and Beyond

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Jaroslav F. Stark has once again written a masterpiece book that is must reading for all who are interested in paediatric and congenital cardiac care. Entitled “*Stark Choices: A Surgeon's Story: From Prague to London and Beyond*”, this book was published by Primo, An Imprint of Peter Owen Publishers, London and Chicago, on February 20, 2016 (Figure 1).

Mr Stark has previously authored three versions of his classic textbook: “*Surgery for Congenital Heart Defects*”. The first two editions were authored with Marc R. de Leval, and the third edition was authored with Marc R. de Leval and Victor T. Tsang. As a complementary text to the three editions of this well-known paediatric cardiac surgical textbook, which is a classic standard textbook used by paediatric cardiac surgeons around the world, “*Stark Choices: A Surgeon's Story: From Prague to London and Beyond*” tells the compelling life story of one of the fathers of paediatric cardiac surgery.

Mr Stark has trained dozens of paediatric cardiac surgeons around the world. I had the honor and privilege of training at The Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children under the mentorship of Jaroslav F. Stark, Marc R. de Leval, and Martin J. Elliott. My life and career were shaped by the awesome time that I spent at Great Ormond Street with these legendary teachers and mentors. I learnt to operate and I learnt to think!!! I am thankful to all three!!!

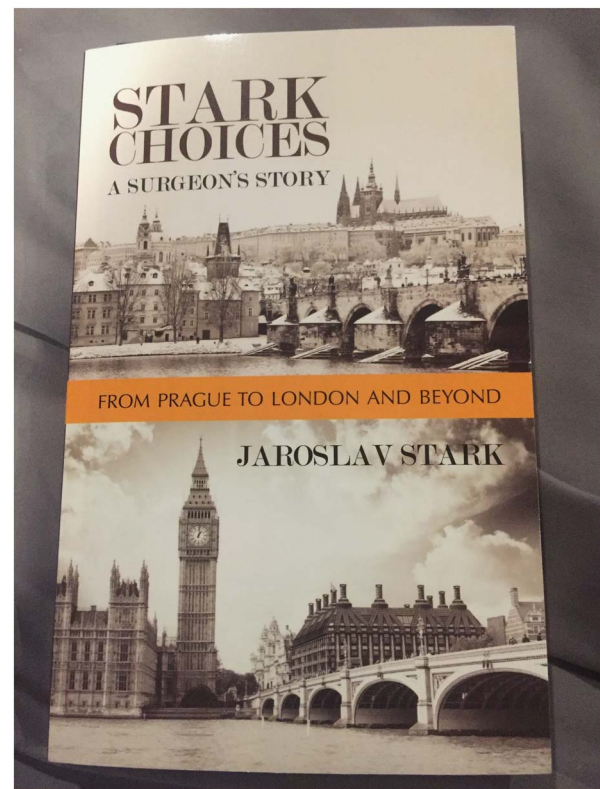


Figure 1.

“*Stark Choices*” is a compelling read that tracks the challenges and successes of Mr Stark as he became a world leader in paediatric cardiac surgery and a leading educator and mentor of paediatric cardiac surgeons. The amazing parallels in the lives of Jaroslav F. Stark and Aldo R. Castañeda are notable.

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Mr Stark writes about “*From Prague to London and Beyond*”, and certainly Dr Castañeda has a similar story of “*From Guatemala to Boston and Beyond*”!! Most of the paediatric cardiac surgeons on the planet can trace their pedigree to Mr Stark or Dr Castañeda, and the many similarities in their lives are truly stunning.

The incredible detail of this book about the life of Mr Stark is stunning. For example, Mr Stark recalls with great detail his trip to Saint Petersburg, Florida, in January 2005, when he was Visiting Professor at All Children’s Hospital and when he and Sheelagh visited the Salvador Dali Museum in Saint Petersburg. Mr Stark and Sheelagh stayed in a resort

on Saint Petersburg Beach. I fondly remember driving Mr Stark and Sheelagh to their hotel. While driving in my Mustang convertible, my 4-year-old daughter Jessica asked me, “Who is Mr. Stark?” and I answered, “My teacher”.

Indeed, Mr. Stark is the teacher of many. All his students, and all the students of his students, should read this book!! In fact, anyone interested in paediatric and congenital cardiac care should read this book!!! This book tells the life story of one of the fathers of my profession – paediatric cardiac surgery. The content is valuable and meaningful. This book is a must read, and its author is a great man and great surgeon!!!