

*“Season
of
Giving”
Edition*

Transplant Trends

Liver, Kidney and Pancreas Transplantation

Bumpy Road to Kidney/Pancreas Transplant *But after 42 years, Rudy Ortega is Free of Diabetes*

The odyssey leading up to Rudy Ortega’s life-saving transplant at Mayo Clinic Hospital was fraught with drama, adventure, thrills and trepidation.

And that was just getting there.

Rudy lives in Las Cruces, N.M., at least an eight-hour drive to Phoenix – on a good day.

The call Rudy had been waiting for much of his adult life came at 8 p.m. on the evening of Wednesday, Oct. 23, 2003. Ann Vanos, Mayo Clinic transplant coordinator, called to alert Rudy that both a kidney and pancreas had suddenly become available. Such a prospect involving two much-needed organs at once is a rare and precious gift.

Rudy was stunned. His wife, Hilda, sprang into action.

With successful surgery, because he would receive both a kidney and a pancreas, Rudy stood a strong chance of waking up from surgery free of diabetes – an illness he had struggled with for 42 of his 52 years of life.



Hilda and Rudy Ortega prepare to go home following Rudy’s successful kidney/pancreas transplant. They are grateful to the courageous donor family

There was just one problem. Rudy lives in Las Cruces, N.M., at least an eight-hour drive to Phoenix – on a good day. For the kidney and pancreas to remain viable for him, he faced a deadline of about seven hours to get to Mayo Clinic Hospital in time.

The math wasn’t working. “Panic set in,” confesses Hilda. “I lost it. I thought I would be calm, but I fell apart worrying about how to get Rudy there in time. I couldn’t face giving up

on the opportunity for him to get those organs.” Rudy had been so ill from complications of his diabetes just one week earlier that they worried he

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Bumpy Road to Kidney/Pancreas Transplant *(continued from page 1)*



Smiles were evident, even following transplant surgery for Rudy.

wouldn't even qualify for a transplant. And the day before, for the first, time, his dialysis hadn't worked.

Rudy, a retired electronics technician and student at New Mexico State University, was more introspective about the seemingly impossible deadline. He could only reflect, "Maybe it's not my time for this transplant. Maybe God has a different plan for me."

The Ortegas then enlisted the help of their neighbors – three young women who are students at New Mexico State University. Hilda was convinced the women could pull together and be resourceful in a pinch. It turned out to be one of the best decisions they ever made.

The women, Amanda, Desiree and Vanessa, "our three angels," as Hilda calls them, didn't flinch in their

With the state police serving as the lead car, and with lights blazing, the caravan took off, doing 100 mph.

determination to deliver Rudy to Phoenix in time for the transplant. They diligently worked the phones and the Internet, checking flights out of El Paso, Texas and Albuquerque, N.M. No luck. It was too late at night. They even checked with a private jet service, but with a price tag of \$10,000, that option was ruled out.

That's when the students pleaded Rudy's case to the New Mexico State Police. It worked, and the police advised Rudy and Hilda to immediately pack up their car and meet them on a bridge on Interstate 10 in Las Cruces. The Ortegas were to receive a formal police escort to the Arizona state line. Amanda, Desiree and Vanessa insisted they accompany Rudy and Hilda – driving their own vehicle as backup. With the state police serving as the lead car, and with lights blazing, the caravan took off, doing 100 mph. Every 50 miles, a new police car took over as the lead.

At the Arizona border, Arizona Department of Public Safety (DPS) officers took over, paving the way for the procession to continue, still burning up the road at a steady 100 mph. Then the unthinkable happened. Not far from the small Arizona town of Bowie, the car lurched. "I smelled burning rubber," Hilda recalls, still cringing. They had blown a tire. The DPS officers then told them to leave the car by the side of the road and transfer all their luggage (including Rudy's peritoneal dialysis equipment – just in case he didn't get the transplant) to the students' truck. Off they went again, now short one vehicle in the caravan.

But the night was still young in terms of adventure. With

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Bumpy Road *(continued from page 2)*

Rudy's car abandoned by the roadside in Bowie, they put the pedal to the metal in the truck – a vehicle with a history of gas guzzling. Sure enough, the intrepid crew soon discovered they were riding on fumes. They had no choice but to divert from

“Now that I don't have diabetes, people keep trying to feed me cookies. I still can't do it! It feels like I'm cheating!”

– Rudy Ortega

the Interstate another 10 miles in search of gas. But the first small town they came to, at 1 a.m., was totally closed down at that hour.

“It was like martial law,” insists Rudy. “There was nothing open, no movement on the streets.” At that point, Rudy said he began to lose faith that his surgery would actually take place. He prayed, “God don't let me down now. I've come this far.” But there was one other town, Willcox, not far off. This time they lucked out. Although the stop for gas blew \$50 of the \$100 in cash they had between them, they were able to fill up and proceed to Phoenix.

Finally. A happy ending was in sight. It was 4:30 a.m. and the Ortegas had made it to Mayo Clinic Hospital. The students were taken to a nearby motel for much-needed sleep. Some of the Ortega relatives gathered in the waiting room. And Rudy was

swept off to surgery, where the life-saving organs awaited him.

Seven hours later, Dr. Kunam Reddy, multi-organ transplant surgeon, emerged from surgery with the good news that Rudy had done very well, and that surgery was successful. Rudy Ortega, after four decades, was free of diabetes. Dr. Reddy later told him, “See, Rudy? It was your time after all.”

It was only then that Hilda even exhaled. “We broke,” she admits. “When we heard the good news, we went to the floor and thanked God and the wonderful, courageous family that made the decision to donate a loved one's organ. We were overwhelmed with gratitude to this family, wherever they are.”

Rudy, recuperating at the Arizona Transplant House, fights back tears as he ponders over how he came to receive a healthy kidney and pancreas. “I can be so happy, but at the same time, I think about what another family has gone through.” Hilda, seeing the transformation in her husband, vows to “return to Mayo some day to donate a kidney. I'm going to do it. I'm on a mission,” she vows.

Rudy has another lament: “Now that I don't have diabetes, people keep trying to feed me cookies. I still can't do it! It feels like I'm cheating!”



Mayo Transplant Program Welcomes Dr. Kunam Reddy

Kunam S. Reddy, M.D., has joined Mayo Clinic in Scottsdale in the Department of Surgery, Section of Transplant Surgery.

The growth of the Transplant Program necessitated the addition of a new multi-organ transplant surgeon, and Dr. Reddy is welcomed as an outstanding member of the team. The Mayo Transplant Program is recognized as a leader in solid organ transplantation.

Dr. Reddy earned his medical degree from the Guntur Medical College, Nargarjuna University, in Andhra Pradesh, India. He completed postgraduate training in general surgery at the India Institute of Medical Sciences in New Delhi and at Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Birmingham, England.

He then completed Transplant Surgery Fellowships at the Royal Victoria Infirmary in Newcastle Upon Tyne and at Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn. Before joining Mayo Clinic in Scottsdale, Dr. Reddy had an academic appointment and was on staff in the Department of Surgery at the University of Kentucky College of Medicine in Lexington, Ky.

25th Living Donor Liver Tra

'It's Always the Humble People who do the



Donor Ben Valasquez and liver recipient Angela Davis Brewer

Angela Davis Brewer weighed just two pounds when she was born in 1975. She was administered three blood transfusions to help her gain strength – unfortunately, at a time when blood was not screened for hepatitis C.

Fast forward to March 2003. Angela, now 28, is stunned to learn that her extreme fatigue and bloating was the result of hepatitis C, a condition she was unaware of all those years. Now the disease had taken its toll. She had given birth to a stillborn baby in January, at which time doctors noticed nodules on her

liver. In July, her liver stopped functioning and her only recourse was a liver transplant.

To be listed for a liver transplant from a deceased donor could mean that Angela would have a long wait – while her health continued to deteriorate.

Enter Ben Velasquez, 54, of Phoenix, a former colleague of Angela's at Motorola Corp. Ben's first wife, Thelma Ruth, had died of complications of diabetes seven years ago. Ben did not qualify medically to be her kidney donor. Now, nearly a decade later, he had a second chance, as he

said, to "give back." He insisted on being tested to be a living liver donor for Angela. This time, he passed all the rigorous tests and was cleared for the surgery.

On Sept. 29, Ben and Angela, in side-by-side surgical suites, became the milestone 25th living donor liver transplant procedure at Mayo Clinic in Scottsdale. Ben's generous gift of 60 percent of his liver for Angela was fully supported by Angela's husband, Michael, and by Ben's second wife, Elaine. Asked if she was reluctant to agree to have her husband donate to Angela, Elaine said, "Absolutely not. It never crossed my mind that he shouldn't donate. I told him that if he didn't work out as a donor, I would go and be tested myself."

Ben's relationship with Angela is beyond that of colleague at Motorola. Ben and Elaine are long-time friends with Angela and Michael and have been on ski trips together. Angela is "out there" with her emotions, she admits, and gushes with gratitude to Ben and Elaine – and to her caregivers at Mayo. Ben, on the other hand, admits he's quiet and rejects any notion that he should

nsplant:

Most'

receive “hero” status.

Notes Michael, speaking about Ben, “It’s always the humble people who do the most in the world and don’t require attention.”

“Ben was the first person to step forward to offer to donate. I am so blessed that I will always have him with me.”

– Angela Davis Brewer

Ben, now studying to be a motorcycle mechanic, continues to be in good health and checks up on Angela regularly. Angela, Fountain Hills, Ariz., insists on calling Ben her “hero,” adding, “Ben was the first person to step forward to offer to donate. I am so blessed that I will always have him with me.”

With the loss of their baby and the discovery of Angela’s hepatitis C, she and Michael admit it’s been a rough year – sweetened, however, by the generosity of Ben’s gift. The Brewers now plan to think about having another baby in the future. And Angela vows she is on a mission to educate people about the need for organ donation.

All in the Family Reunion To Celebrate Gift of Life

Some families gather to celebrate graduations, birthdays or to just reunite. Ed Gorton’s family gathers to swim, soak up the sun and, more importantly, to celebrate the gift of life.

Ed’s sister, Sherrie Hait, Northridge, Calif., donated a kidney to Ed in July 2000 at Mayo Clinic Hospital, a decision that she says made perfect sense. “You know brothers. They may not tell the full story,” Sherrie teases. “One day my brother fidgets a bit and then tells me he has to have a kidney transplant. I said I’d be his donor.” Ed suffered from polycystic kidney disease that had advanced to the point where he required a kidney transplant.

Now, in the third year of the Gorton family reunion to celebrate Ed’s successful transplant, the family members, from Arizona, California and New Mexico, gathered at a Scottsdale resort to

celebrate the health of both Ed and Sherrie. Ed and Sherrie’s mother, Eileen, Prescott, Ariz., admits she was nervous at the time of the transplant surgeries, noting, “They are the only children I have,” but is delighted at the outcome. They all marvel at how well things went at the time of the surgeries. Sherrie, whose kidney was removed laparoscopically, making for a smoother recuperation, had surgery on a Wednesday and was discharged from Mayo Clinic Hospital on Friday. Ed, who, of course, had surgery that same Wednesday, got out of the hospital the following Monday.

At the three-year juncture, Ed feels great and Sherrie is all the more convinced she did the right thing by being his donor. Ed, his wife, Barb, and their two daughters, Allie and Elizabeth, feel they have much to celebrate – at a resort, or any time.



Sherrie Hait donated a kidney to her brother, Ed. They celebrate this new lease on life every year.

Gifts...of a Lifetime

Recipients Humbled; Donors Insist t

It is the season of giving. And, with advances in medical science and greater awareness of the need for organ donation and livers. To make the crucial difference for a friend or relative. ❖ Very importantly, more families are exhibiting the ill. A time when they are in the difficult yet ultimate position to help another person in great need. ❖ The Transplant nature of families who consent to donation – and of courageous, healthy people who step forward to donate organs as a miracle. But there are common threads. Repeatedly, the first thing a transplant recipient tries to explain is that there “hero” status people want to bestow upon them, and most often express that they simply wanted to do the right thing ❖

‘He Needs to See His Grand Babies’



Kathy Ronspiez says donating a kidney to her friend, Brian Van Tassel, was the “right thing to do.”

It was a simple phone call between friends – friends who had been coworkers at Honeywell Corp. in Phoenix at one time. But to Kathy Ronspiez, who was living in

Kentucky, the seemingly innocent phone call from her friend Brian Van Tassel sent a subtle alert. She knew Brian had suffered from kidney disease. But this time he didn’t

reveal the severity of his illness.

“Brian had been my mentor at work – in database design. We talked a lot. I knew he was sick, but he didn’t dwell on it,” notes Kathy. But in this phone call, Brian didn’t reveal the whole story when she asked how he was. He didn’t tell her that his kidneys had gone into failure and that he would need a transplant.

“He didn’t tell me like he should have,” admonishes Kathy. “It was a no-brainer for me. I wanted to donate a kidney to Brian.” She boasts that she knew she would be a match for Brian. “I wanted to do this, and I knew I would be accepted.”

She was right. After enduring “the most amazing, thorough medical exams I’ve ever had in my life” at

They are not 'Heroes'

...n, more people are coming forward to recognize the amazing power of the gift of life. To be living donors of kidneys
... profound courage it takes to say "yes" to organ donation at a time of tragedy, when a loved one is severely injured or
... Program at Mayo Clinic Hospital in northeast Phoenix has witnessed many miracles of the gift of life. The generous
... living donors – never ceases to thrill and amaze the medical and surgical teams. ❖ Each transplant story is a unique
... are no words to express appreciation for the gift of a lifetime – the gift of life. Donors, without question, reject the
... ❖ The next few pages recount just a few of those stories – stories that exemplify the season of giving:

Mayo Clinic in Scottsdale, Kathy was pronounced fit – in mind and body – to be a kidney donor to Brian.

"This was more than friendship. It was the fact that someone needed help."

– Kathy Ronspiez

"It seemed like just the right thing to do," says Kathy. "I had a spare kidney, and I knew my other kidney would adapt."

Their surgeries took place at Mayo Clinic Hospital on Aug. 11, 2003. Since Kathy's kidney was removed by the less invasive, laparoscopic surgical method, she was up and energetic within two days. One of her first missions was to see how Brian was doing.

"He looked so healthy," Kathy marvels. "He always had such a yellow pallor, and now he looked so good after the surgery."

Brian, on leave from his job at Honeywell, found it difficult to find the words to thank Kathy, his donor. "How do you find words?" he kept asking, allowing his tears to flow. The nurses on 4E of Mayo Clinic Hospital confirmed Kathy's observation that Brian looked – and sounded – so much better.

Life for Brian, 51, from Awautukee, Ariz., was a day-by-day challenge before his surgery. "You build your life around dialysis. Every day is a crapshoot." It was a letdown for Brian when no one in his family qualified to be a match for a kidney donation. He held out

little hope that he would find a non-related donor. "I didn't think I would ever get a transplant," he admits.

"You just don't go up to someone on the street and say, 'Hey, do you have an extra kidney I can have?'" So, when Kathy stepped forward to be his donor, he admits he kept asking her, "Are you sure? Do you really want to go through this?"

For Kathy, there was no hesitation. "Not one second thought," she confirms. "This was more than friendship. It was the fact that someone needed help." She admits to having a few moments of fear prior to the surgery. But one thought kept her going:

"Brian has a 17-year-old daughter. He needs to see his grand babies some day."

Gifts...of a Lifetime

Dual Birthdays Celebrated with Dual Kidney Surgeries

While Jackie Dietz spent her birthday in the hospital, her father, Chuck, felt like he was also celebrating – not only his birthday, but Christmas, the Fourth of July and every other holiday rolled into one. Chuck's 63rd birthday was Oct. 7, 2003. Jackie's 37th birthday was Oct. 10. And in between, on Oct. 9, Jackie gave her dad a very precious birthday gift – a kidney. Chuck has even given his new kidney a name: "Harvey."

Chuck, of Phoenix, was suffering from complications of diabetes and had gone into kidney failure. After spending a year on dialysis – a process he

characterizes as "the pits" – his world turned around when both of his two children offered to be tested to be his kidney donor. Although each went through the evaluations, it was Chuck's daughter, Jackie, who ended up as a better match. Now, Chuck says the difference "before and after" receiving his kidney is remarkable.

"There are a lot of people on dialysis who don't think a kidney transplant is an option," he says. "It really is not as bad as you might think. The surgery went well, thanks to the incredible care we received at Mayo. I already feel better and am getting stronger every day."

Although Chuck considers "Harvey" reason enough to celebrate, he and his daughter did manage a special birthday celebration. The night before the surgery, Chuck and Jackie, along with other family members – including Jackie's new husband, Jim – all went out for dinner. Ironically, their waitress was herself a kidney donor, which made the celebration all the more unique.

"It was really strange that it worked out that way," says Jackie, a social worker from San Diego. "It just shows you that kidney donation is more common, and much more simple, than you might think."

Transplant Reunion 2003

Mayo Chaplain Patrick Hansen, who presided at the reunion festivities, teams up with Madeline Mulligan for an "impromptu" performance on the podium.



John Hook, news anchor for Phoenix Channel 10 TV, was a special emcee at the Transplant Reunion event on Nov. 8.

Daughter – Father Liver Transplant



Liver recipient Ron Thomson, post-transplant, and his wife, Joan

“I couldn’t have received a more wonderful gift,” was the reaction of Ron Thomson, 66, who was the recipient of part of his daughter’s liver in September 2003 at Mayo Clinic Hospital. His daughter, Christina, 32, an attorney from San Francisco, recuperated quickly from the transplant and returned

to her job just weeks later. Ron, from Murray, Utah, near Salt Lake City, had

“I couldn’t have received a more wonderful gift.”

– Ron Thomson

once been told in Utah that he “might last four or five years,” due to his diminished liver function over time. Ron is now doing well.



Daughter Christina, San Francisco, donated a portion of her liver to her father.

Gifts...of a Lifetime

Michael and Margaret Moreno: **A Chance for a Healthy Future**

For most Americans, Sept. 11 is now a day of quiet reflection. The same is true for Michael and Margaret Moreno, Casa Grande, Ariz. But this year, Sept. 11, 2003, was a different sort of day for them. It was a time to bond in a very special way.

It was the day that Margaret, 61, donated one of her kidneys to her husband, Michael, 65, who suffered from complications of diabetes and required a transplant.

For Margaret, her decision to be her husband's donor was not a difficult one. Even though it was to be only her second surgery in her lifetime, she was ready. "I've got a spare kidney, and I'm healthy," she insists. "And I really didn't want our four children to have any risk." In fact, Margaret was told she was not past the "cut-off" to be a kidney donor because of her healthy condition. "They told me it was more about how healthy I was. I went through several tests and passed all of them."

So on a somber day when others might avoid surgery, Margaret and Michael excitedly were rolled into their respective surgery suites at Mayo Clinic Hospital – for a life enhancing



The Moreno's transplant story captured the attention of the media. Above, Margaret and Michael pose with mayo physician assistant Ian Cranmer for a Phoenix television interview.

procedure that they are confident will ensure their healthy future together. In one room, Dr. Paul Andrews removed Margaret's kidney laparoscopically, a less invasive procedure that makes for faster healing. In the other surgery suite, the medical and surgical team prepped Michael – and then Margaret's healthy kidney was transplanted into him by Dr. Kunam Reddy, multi-organ transplant surgeon.

Several hours later, they were both in recovery, doing very well. And within just a few days, a Phoenix television news

crew was interested in telling their story.

"And to think that my doctor in Casa Grande predicted I wouldn't be a match to donate a kidney to my husband," recalls Margaret. "It's unusual, I understand, for a non-related donor to be a match."

Michael, retired from the Arizona Department of Transportation, has his energy back and is participating in golf tournaments.

Margaret has resumed her job in the Healthy Family program in the Division of Public Health for Pinal County.

Liver Patient Almost Misses Chance for Transplant



Singer Vicki McDermitt did a private vocal performance for John while he waited for a transplant.

The clock was ticking for John Casey when a vocalist, part of the Humanities in Medicine program at Mayo Clinic in Scottsdale, stopped by his bedside on Sept. 25.

The singer, Vicki McDermitt, reserves these personal performances for only the very ill. In John's case, she was right on target – and just in time.

John, 34, in desperate need of a liver transplant, was nearly too sick to respond to Vicki. But he managed to request soothing and inspirational songs. He obviously had plans, no matter how close he was to not surviving his illness.

John had been suffering for more than a decade with primary sclerosing cholangitis, a disease that attacks the bile

ducts of the liver. Thinking he was invincible, he had resisted being put on a list for a transplant until it was almost too late.

But things changed 24 hours after Vicki's visit. Because of the courage and generosity of another family, and with timing on his side, John was able to get a liver – just in time. He is now recuperating at his home in Cave Creek, Ariz., and vowing to get back on the ski slopes in late winter.

Read more about John Casey's journey to his transplant and his recovery in the next edition of *Transplant Trends*.



John celebrates his transplant with his mom, Linda, and stepdad, Marty, at the Mayo transplant reunion in November.

Outcome Statistics: Kidney Transplantation	
Total Transplants 6/99 - 11/30/03	199
Living Donor Transplants	144
Current 1-year graft survival rate	89.03%*
Current 1-year patient survival rate	93.30%*
Current 30-day patient survival rate	98.59%*
Median length of hospitalization	5 days
*www.ustransplant.org	

Outcome Statistics: Liver Transplantation	
Total Transplants 6/99 - 11/30/03	173
Living Donor Transplants	25
Current 1-year graft survival rate	88.24%*
Current 1-year patient survival rate	90.24%*
Current 30-day patient survival rate	98.78%*
Median length of hospitalization	7 days
*www.ustransplant.org	

Attention Physicians – 24-Hour Physician Referral Line: 1-800-344-6296 or 1-800-446-2279



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