

Dear Transplant Nurse,

I am writing to you as the wife of a two time heart transplant. The first TX was in 1990, and my husband was taken by air ambulance from Northern California to the university of Utah (which had a large TX program at that time). He was 49 years old. The heart failed after 8 years (not a good match, many rejections) and he received a second TX at UCLA in 1998. This heart is a great match, no rejections, and our lives have been happier and healthier in the last ten years than we ever thought would be possible. He has lived to see both of our sons graduate college, and our eldest son has become a doctor (pulmonary/critical care). Both sons have married wonderful women and we have 2 grandsons (one from each son).

I would like to thank you for all your efforts on behalf of us and all other transplants. It was the day in, day out support of nurses like you who made it possible for my husband to recover and heal. From the pink sponge "lollipops" you brought him when he was NPO and his mouth was so dry and parched he couldn't talk, to figuring out how to double up on the IV drips because there were too many to fit on the pump stand and not enough ports to put them all into, your caring and ingenuity helped to make a very painful and traumatic experience much easier.

One story from this experience will always remain with me. When my husband was in ICU at Sequoia Hospital in Redwood City, he was barely alive and we were making arrangements for the flight to Salt Lake City. I had been supportive of him for many years, through his massive heart attack at the age of 34, defibrillator implantations, resection of a huge aneurysm on his left ventricle and then spiraling heart failure. I was sitting at his bedside, and told him that I would understand and could accept it if he didn't want to endure more pain and wanted to let go and die.

And then his nurse came into the room and said, "Larry, I want you to imagine a great big rope hanging down from the sky, and I want you to reach out your hand and grab on to it and hang on, you can make it if you just hold on". She was right.

Thank you for being a nurse. It takes a special person with a kind and generous soul to do your work, and we truly appreciate you.

Thank you,

Anita Fein