

To: The very special Transplant Nurses that helped me survive

Back in April of 2000 I went into the Hospital with a diagnosis of acute Idiopathic cardiomyopathy.

The prognosis did not look encouraging. This was the first time I heard the dreaded "T" word or transplant. I definitely was totally against this thought and immediately rebelled at the medical doctors even explaining this to me. I was a young 56 year old and I was going to make myself better, somehow.

Well, I wasn't getting any better when I entered the Hospital again in June of that same year with lots of trouble breathing. The diagnosis hadn't changed, just was worse. Now they Docs said maybe I should look at a pump as a bridge to a transplant. Boy, I flipped out at the thought. But..When the medical staff and my family started to discuss the inevitable choice.....death I started to listen.

So in July of 2000, I had the LVAD device "installed" since they didn't know when a heart match would be found in time.

These are the times when the nurses & coordinators ("angels") took over to get me back on my feet.

My wife of course was an integral part of the recovery process. I couldn't have asked for a more supportive team of people as I found while recovering from that traumatic operation.

After many hours of rehab and training on how to manage with the pump, they released me to home care. I was recovering well at home until some bleeding issues put me back in 3 months after to wait for a heart. Again the medical team of nurses and docs started to prepare me for the heart transplant.

Then 3 weeks after while I was across the street getting a milkshake, I was walking back to the hospital and "bumped" into my surgeon coming out. He said get ready for your transplant I'm going out to get you your heart that day.

So on October 3, 2000, I was prepped and received my new heart that early morning. This entire experience would not have gone half as well without the dedicated nurses, doctors and coordinators who delivered the best and caring rehab I have been privileged to have.

You are the reason I am here celebrating my 8th year and extremely grateful for the consistent help and encouragement that you rarely hear about. My new heart sincerely thanks you and all the medical team for my new life. Keep doing what you do so well; saving lives and helping people. This man certainly appreciates all your help when it was given.

Love and Best Wishes,

Don Kelly,

Transplanted October3, 2000