

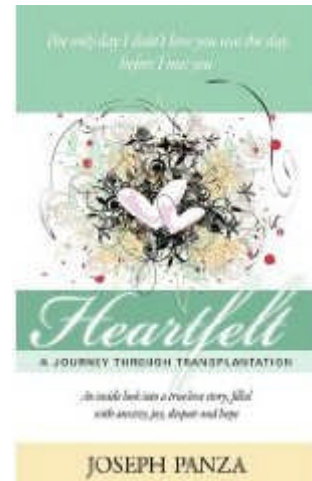
A Review of

Heartfelt, a Journey Through Transplant

Author: Joseph Panza

Reviewed by Jim Gleason, heart recipient

Heartfelt is built largely around a husband's blog account of their family life experience with the love of his life, his wife Jean, facing death, in need of a heart transplant to survive. While the web based blog wasn't intended to be a book, that daily capture of life makes for an insightful and inspiring read in this format. The reader comes alongside the family as they face the terrifying potential loss only to discover that modern medicine offers hope.



His blog is broken into chapters focused on three phases of the experience, from waiting to surgery and recovery to life after transplant. Each stage is captured in “real-time” as only a daily/weekly blog accounting can do honestly, reflecting the events and emotions of the moment. Beyond the blog chapters, there are interesting insights with chapters written by Jean as she looks back over the time traveled as well as others shared by their children. Each experiences the fears and celebration in their own unique ways.

In reading Jean's account of the weeks in waiting at Yale, she moved me to tears in her simple story telling as she described the depression that was offset by the friendship of her waiting fellow patients and finally on November 1st, 2007, the call that said, a heart had been offered. Even then the loving support of the medical team, especially that in the OR of positive words and encouragement is a powerful message for those in similar roles to hear and appreciate its impact on the patient as they “go under.”

This family is one of those relatively few (despite wide publicity of such stories, it is still rare) who have been able to meet their donor family. The story of that coming together is described with emotional detail that gives the reader a unique insight into that experience, tears included as the two mothers touch tenderly as only a heart recipient and donor mother can.

In another unique chapter and photo, we learn about 21-year old Drew, Jean's heart donor and his very special story with some “coincidences” surrounding these two families that meet and come together through the donation and transplant events. Of particular note is the role the donor family children play in making that decision to donate, an inspiration to the many who carry the message of organ donation to schools and students every day.

Heartfelt is a powerful resource for caregivers and family members alike to come to a fuller understanding of what may lie before them when they face a life challenge of this nature, hopefully coming up with the same beautiful happy ending that Jean and Joe offer us in this heartfelt sharing. Its chapters are mostly short and easy to read and once engaged, the reader will find it hard to put down, wanting to continue until the full 135 page book is devoured.

Note: **Heartfelt** is available in paperback at Amazon.com.

Brief bio:

Jim Gleason, receiving his own heart transplant Oct. '94, retired after 37 years with Unisys Corporation in 2005, is a volunteer with The Gift of Life Donor Program, NKF and UNOS as well as a nationally recognized speaker and author. His own book, **A Gift from the Heart**, is offered free in thanks to his donor family and can be obtained by contacting him at GLEASONJIM@AOL.COM.