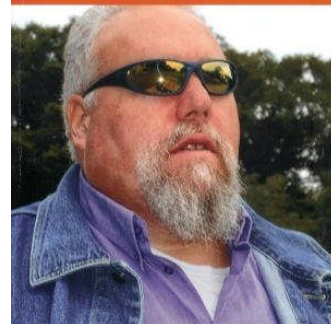
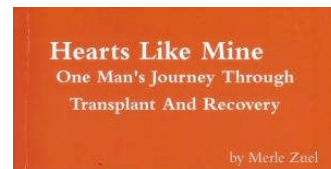


A Review of  
*Hearts Like Mine, One Man's Journey Through Transplant and Recovery (2009)*

Author: Merle Zuel



In this unique heart transplant experience story, we follow the life of this “gentle giant” of a man (6 foot 4, 560 lbs pre-transplant) who refuses to take no for an answer when he is seen as too much of a challenge for a life saving heart transplant. Advocating for himself, he slowly wins over the decision makers to go on to not only lose literally hundreds of pounds, but to get that heart transplant and actually live to hold his own heart in his hands. Along the way, Merle gets the donated heart and also wins the heart of Kim in the respiratory therapy department where he is treated, a friendship that grows in love resulting in their recent October 2009 marriage.

Dealing with increasingly severe heart issues since diagnosis at age 10, in 2006 a heart transplant eventually becomes his only option. His story is one of hope, as we follow in his huge footsteps, overcoming one seemingly impossible hurdle after another, and in the telling, offering inspiration for the thousands who are themselves looking for that “light at the end of the tunnel” in the amazing heart transplant experience that results in that hoped for, extension of life. Beyond that fateful day in February, 2007, when he receives that new heart, it is in the story of Merle’s life post transplant that we see the real miracle of organ donation and transplantation. Feel the thrill of life as he shares the success of his “Merle Jam”, a fund raising event built on his love of music that raises thousands of dollars to help the transplant world. Feel the excitement of being selected to help build and then ride on the “Stars of Life” Donate Life 2009 Rose Bowl parade float, showing the world through the stage of television the relationship between anonymous donor generosity and the success of transplant. Imagine being a subject for participating in the video for the Transplant Expo interactive display. Most recently, you may have seen Merle on nationwide NBC TV with the famous cardiac surgeon, Dr. Oz, discussing the challenges of post transplant weight control. All of this and more is the subject of this down to earth, easy reading book that will have you cheering with its happy ending, which is also his beginning.

No “wall flower,” today Merle’s life is filled with new meaning and purpose, not only in his new heart and Kansas City family life with Kim, but in using his unique transplant life experience as a speaking Ambassador, promoting organ donation in appearances from coast to coast. And of course, there is now this book, that can reach still thousands more patients, families of patients and donors, as well as medical professionals who will benefit from the “bigger than life” story Merle so openly and honestly shares in his writing.

Note: **Hearts Like Mine** is available in paperback from the “My Book” link on [www.merlejam.com](http://www.merlejam.com)

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**Reviewer bio:** Jim Gleason, receiving his own heart transplant Oct. '94, retired after 37 years with Unisys Corporation in 2005, is a volunteer with NKF, UNOS and the Gift of

Life Donor Program in Philadelphia, as well as a nationally recognized speaker and author. His own book, **A Gift from the Heart**, is offered in thanks to his donor family and can be obtained on a CD without cost by contacting him at [GleasonJim@aol.com](mailto:GleasonJim@aol.com)