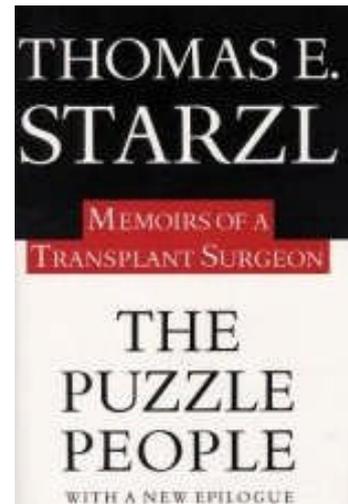


A Review of
The Puzzle People:
Memoirs of a Transplant Surgeon
Author: Thomas e. Starzl



The Puzzle People provides us with an up front and personal fascinating history of transplantation as told in minute detail through the experiences of one of the pioneers and pillars of transplant surgery, Dr. Tom Starzl. Using much of his history making role, especially in the field of kidney and later liver transplantation, we feel the pains of the early experiments and joy of eventual success in discovery of ever improving ways to save lives through organ transplant.

What is so amazing to this reviewer, a heart transplant now going on 15 years (in 2009) who has had the pleasure of meeting this renowned surgeon at the US Transplant Games shortly after his retirement in the summer of 2008, is that even at the age of 83, this man who has served as the instructor to just about every doctor practicing in the liver transplant field today, still greets the patients he meets by name, even decades after their life saving surgery under his knife or direction. It is only in light of reading this history that what we too often take almost as routine success today can be fully appreciated. In Starzl's stories, recounting in amazing detail of environment and fellow medical professionals, we can come to an understanding of both the medical advances but also the very human role so many played over those years in perfecting techniques that are still practiced around the world, a rippling effect of his pioneering work at various centers in the mid and later 20th Century.

These memoirs go beyond the operating room stories, beyond the research, and take us through his insightful and very experienced eyes into many of the challenges still facing patients and medical staffs alike in today's world. His thoughtful reflections on such diverse subjects as funding for research, hospital and medical school politics, remaining challenges to be overcome for achieving more successful organ transplants, the ethics and complexity of defining brain death, human experimentation, randomized clinical trials, and with the growing acceptance and success of transplantation, the corresponding need for increased organ donations.

This 1992 book is certainly not out of date, providing fascinating reading (if not a little hefty in its medical depth) for patients benefiting from the success of transplants themselves. But it really is must reading for any medical professional working in that field today to fully appreciate the gifts pioneers like Starzl, and the many others included in his telling, have contributed to their professions through this history of human endeavor, dedication and the success we enjoy today.

Note: **The Puzzle People** is available in hard cover on 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.