

A Review of  
*I Left My Heart at Stanford* (2013)

Authors: Don & Mary Coover

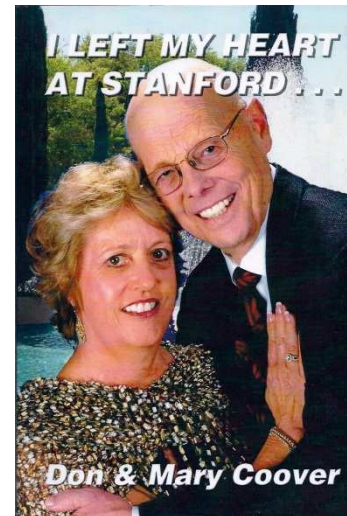
*“Think sex!”* What a wonderful send off as Don was being wheeled off to heart transplant surgery and his wife, Mary, whispered that into his ear, both a distraction to that surgery, putting him into that “happy place” frame of mind and an inspiration to fight through the challenges to get back to the normal life ahead.

That sets the tone for this amazing and wonderful story of a loving couple, married 26 years, as we read their life adventure. Alternating between his and her chapters of different perspectives of patient and caregiver wife, we gain a unique insight into years of joy, fear and successful transplant recovery involving not one, but three organ transplants.

Let me warn future readers up front that theirs is not a typical experience. Most patients, while each having their own unique story, travel through a much less complex transplant experience. Don’s story should not scare future transplant patients off, rather, seeing the many trials he/they faced, rather be inspired by how well he lives through and fully recovers from it all. Those other 99% of transplant recipients come through without a story worth writing a book about, so only the truly challenged write books, and that’s a good thing. Don certainly has the challenges and thus this great story to tell.

Don lived with a rare inherited connective tissue disorder known as Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome that complicated both his life and the later surgeries. Diagnosed with congestive heart failure, he carried on until finally being listed for a heart transplant at Stanford in 2006. He was so sick that just one day later a heart offer became available. When that first transplanted heart failed to restart while still in surgery, Don survived on life support until another heart offer came just 5 days later, resulting in his second heart transplant and a new life. Maintained in a medically induced coma for six weeks, his recovery was very tough but successful. His kidney’s failed to recover forcing him on dialysis. A year later, he had regained his strength to the point where Mary offered one of hers in a living kidney transplant. Mary describes her surgery as “the easiest of my surgeries” comparing it to two earlier caesarian-section deliveries and a burst appendix operation. Today both Don and Mary report they “are both doing wonderfully well” and isn’t that what transplantation is all about, getting one’s life back and living it to the fullest again.

Don and Mary’s book gives testimony to the power of today’s medical advances. Despite all his medical challenges, Don faces the prospect of living many more productive years of loving family life with Mary’s enduring support. Their story would be great reading for patients and families facing transplant, as well as medical professionals who want to see what their work looks like from “the other side” - both



from that of the patient and that of the caregiver. Their insightful and often emotional sharing is a powerful message of hope and evidence of the power of the human spirit to overcome anything that life may throw one's way. Thank you, Don and Mary, for allowing us to see inside your amazing life, your gift of "paying it forward" with this book is truly a blessing to many who follow.

**I Left My Heart at Stanford** is available in both paperback and Kindle formats on [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com) The authors' web site can be found at [www.doncoover.com](http://www.doncoover.com)

**Reviewer bio:** Jim Gleason, receiving his own heart transplant Oct. '94, retired after 37 years with Unisys Corporation in 2005, is a volunteer leader with TRIO, 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 viewed on-line from his blog at <http://gleasonjim.wordpress.com> or obtained (without cost) on a CD in PC readable format by contacting him at [GleasonJim@aol.com](mailto:GleasonJim@aol.com)