

A Review of

Hanging by a String

Author: Marilyn Gibson

Reviewed by Jim Gleason, heart recipient

In this unique story (as everyone's transplant story is...), world class violinist, Marilyn Gibson, details her life challenged with lupus that eventually compromises her kidneys leading to a life saving living kidney transplant donated by her father. Your own transplant challenge, hopefully, is not this complex or such a long term life threatening roller coaster of daily frustrations and victories, but therein lays the value in reading this book.

The inspiration offered by Marilyn's story, shared in great detail (it's over 200 pages of this 222 page book before you come to the transplant event itself), will make anyone appreciate their own circumstances in a different light.



Let me say up front, her lupus disease added complications that are not the norm for most that have lived through the life changing transplant and the long return back to a recovered healthy life and even work afterwards. Marilyn spends most of her long pre-transplant life searching for spiritual and alternative medicine solutions to avoid the effects traditional lupus treatments have had in ravaging her mother's life with that same dreaded disease. She shares how, during a concentrated period of almost 3-1/2 months, of prayer, affirmations and faith, she is able to heal herself completely off the peritoneal machine for eight months, a pivotal point offering support that such process is in harmony with the principles she describes in her story. There are moments when such solutions seem to work, raising her hopes, only to have them fall again when relapse occurs as it does over and over again.

Sustaining her throughout is a love for her classical violin playing that she has worked so hard to develop into the world class performer she is. The steroid treatments needed to deal with her medical challenges repeatedly threaten to derail her hard won career, but with a determination that would inspire even Job of the bible, and the loving support of her fellow musician husband, Tim (and her family), she survives to finally accept the only thing that will finally take her off the dreaded dialysis treatments, a kidney transplant. While many do reasonably well with dialysis, Marilyn's story is one of those many who do not do as well, hence the fight to get off dialysis and reversal of her so common denial of the transplant option. Marilyn's 73 year old father becomes her donor and in that final chapter the transplant is successful, allowing her to return to a whole new life of energy and joy that had been such a daily struggle before.

A unique aspect of this book is Marilyn's sharing of both her spiritual revelations, including a near death experience, and the appearance of some psychic abilities. The final two chapters are an appeal to the reader to accept and understand the spiritual aspects of her recovery and dealing with disease over those many years. In this area I offer caution in two areas of the book and her sharing. The first is a minor one in her descriptions of the days immediately after her successful transplant as she describes what seems to be a list of other patients there at the same time who do not do so well which might cause the reader to feel the odds are highly weighed in the favor of the unsuccessful transplant experience. This certainly has not been the case in the many kidney transplants I have seen and may be a reflection on the state of the medical practice

in the 1990 era that her transplant story takes place, but that's just a guess on my part. Maybe it was her selective memory focus in that traumatic 11 days of her hospital life at the time.

The second issue I would alert the reader to is Marilyn's philosophy, stated much too simply here out of context, but quoted in her words from page 214: "***I believe that thought patterns held in opposition to the flow of life causes disease.***" If that is too radical an idea, you may not enjoy this book, but if you approach such thoughts with an open mind, read the full story and her expanded reasoning behind such suggestions, then draw your own conclusions. With the many emotional challenges facing a patient and family with organ transplant, it may be seen yet a further assault to consider you are the cause of your disease and this not the time to try and deal with that thought. Just my caution before you offer this book to someone you are trying to help.

Marilyn's story offers us the inspiration that a driven human spirit, especially one with a loving focus and dedication to living, can overcome even the most daunting of life's challenges.

Note: **Hanging by a String** is available from Amazon.com

Brief bio:

Jim Gleason, receiving his own heart transplant Oct. '94, retired from Unisys Corporation in 2005, is a volunteer with NKF, TRIO, the Gift of Life Donor Program, 2nd Chance Heart Support Group 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.