

A Patients Perspective: Deceased & Living Donor Kidney Recipient



Ardy and her living brother donor Stuart

Deceased Donor Kidney Recipient 10/10/1973 as well as a Living Donor Kidney Recipient 12/1/1983

When I was 15 years old my parents were told, after 3 weeks of agonizing waiting, that I had glomerulonephritis. The prognosis was that I wouldn't live past the age of 18 or 19. Although my sisters were too young to understand my 12-year-old brother understood as well as a 12 year old could. But then, who can really understand a chronic disease and why it happens or to whom it happens. This would later lead my brother to make one of the biggest decisions of his life.

After being stabilized, at the age of 15, and put in a research group at the University of Iowa, (I fortunately got to take medication in my group), life in the Boley family went on. I attended 9th grade over an intercom and only went to school half days in 10th grade. But, I completed high school on schedule and got married at the age of 19. When I was 20 my husband and I adopted a beautiful baby daughter. We brought her home from the hospital when she was four days old.

At age 23 my blood pressure skyrocketed (290/190) and as a result I was declared an End Stage Renal Disease (ESRD) patient. I began Hemodialysis in July of 1972. In April of 1973 my mother began testing for living related donation. She, unfortunately, didn't pass her angiogram and my father began testing. He, like my mother did not pass the angiogram. My sisters were too young to be tested and my brother, just 20 years old with a wife and new baby was not an option, in my opinion. In September 1973 I was placed on the deceased donor waiting list. At the same time my husband left because my illness was too much for him to handle. If it hadn't been for the grace of God and the emotional and moral support of my family, I'm not sure I would have survived. On October 9, 1973 at 3:00pm, I received that wonderful, yet sad, call from the hospital stating "we have a kidney for you." I was the 100th kidney transplant performed at the University of Iowa. The kidney worked immediately and I went home two weeks to the day after my transplant.

Life, again, went on. I gained a whopping 60 pounds in the first 6 months after my transplant and knew I had to remedy this. In August of 1974 I vowed to a girlfriend

that I would be at least 30 pounds lighter, have a job, and either be engaged or married. By December 1974 I had lost 40 pounds. In February of 1975 I began working at Mercy Hospital in Des Moines and in June I married my current husband, Jim. Jim adopted my daughter, Tammy and in 1980 we adopted another beautiful baby girl, Maryanna. Life was wonderful and through it all were my parents, sisters, and my brother. No one could have asked for a more loving and supportive family.

In June 1983 in a "freaky accident" my kidney failed and I was airlifted to the University of Iowa. I had a fistula created to prepare for dialysis. My two sisters and my brother were all tested as potential donors. My brother, Stuart, seemed the best match (3 antigen) and on December 1, 1983 we found ourselves in surgery. The recovery room staff told us that our first questions after waking were "How is my sister?" and "How is my brother." I had always been close to my sisters and brother, but when Stuart gave me this precious "Gift of Life" I knew I could never do or say anything that would ever come close to expressing how I felt toward him for giving me that renewed life. After receiving this gift from Stuart I began thinking when you receive a deceased donor gift, you grieve for the family who lost a loved one and at the same time you thank them for giving you the "Gift of Life." When you receive a living donation you have so many things going through your head such as: what about their financial well being?; what will this do to their family?; what if they do this for me and it doesn't work?; do they understand they are going into the hospital healthy and strong and will be waking up feeling awful while I on the other hand am sick and will feel much better than they when I wake up?"

Anyway, here we are 25 years later and I am doing well and working in at Fresenius Medical Care as a dialysis unit office manager and my brother is fantastic. Thanks to my experiences I have had the great pleasure of working in dialysis for 23 years, I have served on the Medical Review Board and am currently serving on the Executive Committee for Heartland Kidney Network, currently a member of the PAC (Patient Advisory Committee), currently board president of National Kidney Foundation of Iowa, have been a member of Community Health Charities, and an active member of First Church of The Open Bible in Des Moines.

I've never had the opportunity to meet my deceased donor family but thank them everyday for donating their loved ones organs, even though they were grieving their loss, it gave me 10 precious years. I also want to thank my brother (my friend) whose kidney has given me another 25 years and counting.

One last thought.... If you have renal failure or any chronic disease, I can't stress enough how important emotional and moral support from friends and family can be and don't give up on yourself – as you can see I have lived well beyond the 19 years I was expected to live.

If it hadn't been for my faith in God, love of life, and encouragement from my family and friends I'm not sure I would have survived this long. I have said it many times but would like to say, again, thanks to my wonderful husband Jim, Maryanna, my dad, Karen, Erma, and all my other family members for being there when I need you. I love you all with all my heart!!! And to my brother...you gave me this new life (even though I am now old) and hope for the future. Thank you and I love you!!