Randy especially admired Dr. Fadi Yacoub, a nephrologist with Internist Associates of Iowa who heads Mercy Dialysis.

“He sat down and talked with me,” Randy recalls. “If I had an appointment, it was like he had nothing else going on to interrupt that time. He’d stop to talk at Dialysis, too. That speaks volumes to me. He was very good at explaining the process and procedures.”

Dr. Yacoub, in turn, praises Randy’s attitude, saying, “Randy has been pretty unique among dialysis patients. He was very healthy from the start. He’s done very well on dialysis, both physically and mentally. And his transplant brought no health setbacks. It’s a major change in lifestyle and diet – not an easy transition. It takes a lot of work from the patient to adapt. Randy is our poster boy for taking the initiative.”

Randy had to be cancer-free for two years to qualify as a potential transplant candidate. Once he achieved that, the University of Iowa Organ Transplant Center placed him on a waiting list for a donor. That took time. Family members tested as potential donors did not qualify. Randy waited.

Then, Steve Smith offered to be tested. Steve’s wife, Pam, is a friend and coworker of Randy’s wife, Jody. Steve was the right match. In March 2011, Randy got the green light for his transplant.

“Everything went well,” Randy recalls of the transplant in April 2011 at University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics. “I don’t think it could have gone any better.”

He spent four days in recovery.

“It felt good,” Randy says. “Dialysis can drain you, and leave you tired. You don’t realize how much natural good feeling you can transition to with your own kidney. I could taste food differently when I had my first meal in the hospital. Everything changed overnight.”

In particular, he says, “I really looked forward to my mom’s potato salad. Steve and I shared a big container of potato salad when we got home.”

Today, he and Steve enjoy get-togethers with their wives. Randy’s check-ups at University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics are now once every six months. Occasionally, he stops in at Mercy Dialysis to say hello.

“You talk about people winning the lottery! Well, I won,” Kelley insists. “Everything has gone well. We are so lucky to have Mercy Dialysis right here.”

Throughout his medical journey, Randy stresses the value of the support of his wife, Jody, family and friends.

“I was and am so very fortunate to have Jody,” he says. “Dialysis takes a great deal of time and commitment. I was lucky to have the help and understanding from a tremendous group of employees at Cedar Rapids Lumber.”

Randy participates in seminars Mercy Dialysis sponsors for new patients who face dialysis to understand all their options.

“Randy wants to give back and talk with patients facing chronic kidney disease,” Sue says. “He has been magnificent.”

“I could taste food differently...
I really looked forward to my mom’s potato salad.”

Randy Kelley
Kidney recipient