

LIFE NEVER TASTED SO GOOD



Any one of the daunting hardships Randy Kelley has endured would have overwhelmed someone else.

Between 2007 and 2011, remarkable determination carried Randy through heart bypass surgery, kidney cancer, kidney dialysis three times a week for more than two years and a kidney transplant.

It began in November 2007, with heart surgery to clear five blockages. Eight months later, his family business, Cedar Rapids Lumber, was inundated by the 2008 flood.

Randy had rebuilt and just re-opened the business in October 2008 when severe pain led to the discovery of kidney cancer. He had already lost one kidney in 1968 when it stopped

functioning and was surgically removed. On Nov. 1, 2008, his remaining kidney was removed and Randy began kidney dialysis.

“The biggest thing I remember was walking into Mercy Dialysis and seeing all these people having dialysis, and then imagining me doing it,” he recalls. “It was shocking.”

Thanks to the in-depth education and guidance of the Dialysis staff, Randy adapted to four hours of treatment, three days a week. His care was carefully planned by a team of physicians, nurse specialists, dietitians and social workers.



Steve and Pam Smith (left) and Randy and Jody Kelley enjoy a special friendship since Steve donated one of his kidneys to Randy, who has had many health challenges and had been on dialysis since November 2008 before the April 2011 kidney transplant surgery.

“You become very familiar with the nurses. It becomes your daily life,” Randy notes. “Attitude is a large percentage of it. But that and having good people caring for you makes it a winning combination. I found that out early on.”

Through two-and-a-half years of dialysis, Randy bonded with the staff.

“They become your family. The time did go by smoothly,” Randy notes, adding with a grin, “I became so comfortable that I looked forward to dialysis so I could take a nap.”

His caregivers think of him fondly.

“Randy stood out because of his wonderful attitude toward everything: staff, facing cancer, dialysis – all these life-changing events,” says Sue Hubacek, Mercy Dialysis renal coordinator. “It was amazing how strong he was, always

pleasant and following everything carefully, so he’d understand his treatment.”

The protocol at Mercy Dialysis is exceptional. Team members work to exceed national standards, closely monitoring patients to provide the best care possible. Each month patients meet with staff to review lab results, from dialysis to diet change. Other dialysis patients become a strong support group.

The segue from Randy’s kidney removal to dialysis to transplant – a very complex, delicate process – was carefully managed and coordinated by a unique Mercy and University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics healthcare team. That collaboration made all the difference in Kelley’s recovery and ability to cope, with full faith in his team. (See page 11 to learn more about the collaborative alliance.)

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