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Ordinary Rotarians, extraordinary tales

Rotary

Ordinary Rotarians can find themselves in extraordinary circumstances. In their own words, they tell us

what it's like to...

illustrations by GWEN KERAVAL

give a kidney to a stranger

SCOTT DUDLEY
Rotary Club of North Whidbey Island Sunrise, Wash.

WHEN YOU JOIN A ROTARY CLUB, you become a member. But there's another time when you actually become a Rotarian. For me, it was on a trip to deliver a container of wheelchairs to people in Mexico. I came back from that trip changed. I came back a true Rotarian.

After that, whenever I saw a need, I couldn't help asking, "How can we fix this?" Even when someone stood up at a meeting of the Rotary Club of Haney, B.C., which I attended as a guest, and said, "My 37-year-old husband is dying of polycystic kidney disease and badly needs a kidney," I thought, "Well, I've got two kidneys." And I knew I was at that meeting for a reason. I went up to her afterward and said, "I've got your kidney."

She looked at me like I needed another glass of wine. But she gave me a card for their hospital. It wasn't until almost a year later that I finally met her husband, Phil. We met four days before the surgery. They told us that, based on blood typing, we would have to have been twins to be a better match.

My wife and I stayed in a hotel the night before the surgery. I felt at peace. I felt like it was meant to be. At the hospital, they keep asking me, "Are you sure you want to do this? You're about to alter your body for the rest of your life." But I felt very calm.

The next morning we got to the hospital around 6 a.m. We met the anesthesiologist. Then they wheeled me in. I was on the table by 8:30 or 9, and the next thing I knew I was waking up in a recovery ward.

After dinner, I was up and walking around. I felt surprisingly good. I just wanted to find Phil's room. It turned out it was just a couple of doors down.

In his room, I found him and his wife, Keesha, along with his mother, who didn't speak any English. She was from Portugal, and to see her thanking me, saying something that I didn't understand, with tears in her eyes for saving her son's life, I thought, wow, you can help one person, but you don't always see how it affects their family. You don't always get to see how far it goes.
– As told to Frank Bures

EDS. NOTE: Scott and Phil have enjoyed good health since their 2012 surgery.