Bob needed donor blood to survive surgery that arrested pancreatic cancer

> *"Everything changed on September 19, 2006.. Nothing has ever been the same since that day when, sitting across from my surgeon, I was told that I had pancreatic cancer. I had six days to close my law practice of 35 years. I sold everything. But I was grateful that I was able to get care and did not have to stand in line for it. I knew that early diagnosis and the speed that the cancer was removed had everything to do with my outcome*."

Almost three years latter, Bob Carter, a respected attorney, shared the above thoughts.

He is one of the fortunate few who have survived pancreatic cancer. He was a good candidate for Whipple surgery, which under the right circumstances can successfully remove a malignant tumor in the abdominal area. This complex and lengthy surgery involves removal of a major part of the digestive system including the pancreas and a number of other intertwined organs. And it requires a readily available donor blood supply.

Bob is now focused on how fortunate he was to have an early cancer diagnosis. He also knows that he could not have defied the odds and survived this rigorous surgery for pancreatic cancer without the availability of donor blood. His life changed. The blood supply was there when he needed it during the ten and a half hours he was on the operating table.

Bob continued

> *"I only needed three units of blood during the surgery but my doctor had 11 or 12 units available in case I had needed it. I am aware that donors do not get paid for giving blood but I am forever grateful for everyone who is willing to donate blood. Without it, I would not have survived."*

While recovery has not been easy, Bob has learned to value life and all the good things he can enjoy. He says that one of the best things that happened is that last fall he got to attend his son's wedding.

Additional Notes

The *pancreas* is a *gland* located deep in the *abdomen* between the stomach and the spine (backbone). The *liver*, *intestine*, and other organs surround the pancreas.

The pancreas is about 6 inches long and is shaped like a flat pear. The widest part of the pancreas is the head, the middle section is the body, and the thinnest part is the tail.

The pancreas makes *insulin* and other *hormones*. These hormones enter the bloodstream and travel throughout the body. They help the body use or store the energy that comes from food. For example, insulin helps control the amount of sugar in the blood.

The Whipple procedure (pancreatoduodenectomy) is the most common operation performed for pancreatic cancer and may be used to treat other cancers such as small bowel cancer. Surgeons remove the head of the pancreas, most of the duodenum (a part of the small intestine), a portion of the bile duct and sometimes a portion of the stomach. After the pancreatoduodenectomy, the surgeon reconstructs the digestive tract.