

## Four Stories With Heart: Long Shot Takes a Chance on Transplant

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By Tom Lutey, The  
Spokesman-Review,  
Spokane, Wash., The  
Spokesman-Review,  
Spokane, Wash.



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**Spokane Valley resident Cindy Scinto, fresh off a heart transplant six months ago, works for The Kings High Way publishing in Coeur d'Alene.**

Jan. 1--Sometimes, a good heart is hard to come by. No one knows this better than Cindy Scinto.

Twelve months ago, Scinto was in the hospital. Her heart had stopped beating the previous spring, and a pacemaker was pounding out the rhythm of her life.

Scinto needed a new heart. A lifetime of juvenile diabetes put her dead last on the nation's list of last chances. Diabetics have a low success rate with transplants, which means they take a backseat to those with better odds of survival.

With 25 failed heart catheterizations, and two short-lived bypasses on her medical record, Scinto seemed the antithesis of a world-beater: not a Seabiscuit in the derby for longer life, rather a Mr. Ed. When she spoke last December with The Spokesman-Review, the 45-year-old was just waiting for her next heartbeat.

"I think I've learned to surrender," Scinto said then. "That doesn't mean I've given up, it means I've surrendered to taking whatever comes around each day."

Scinto's got a new beat, a transplanted heart so damaged no one else wanted it, which has given her new life. And her motto of taking whatever comes next seemed the perfect lead-in to a reflective article on some of the people profiled in The Spokesman-Review's Monday column, Exit 289. Many of the 48 people who have appeared during the past year faced adversity. Most did exactly what Scinto did after being featured in the weekly column on life in Spokane Valley: They took whatever came next.

Scinto didn't just take the next step; she ended 2005 walking stairs for exercise, a big accomplishment for a woman who for more than three years risked a heart attack every time she walked to the curb to get the mail.

"This is a miracle and no one can deny it's a miracle," Scinto said of her heart transplant.

Six months ago, the mother of one who speaks in a strong accent of her native New York City, was in the hospital essentially waiting to die. She had suffered multiple cardiac seizures, and she was hopelessly buried on the donors' list.

But her doctor, Timothy Icenogle, suggested they take a chance. There was a 28-year-old organ donor on life support in Seattle. The donor's heart had a hole in it and a valve that needed repair, but it was Scinto's if she agreed to the transplant.

Scinto signed the necessary paperwork. Her doctor made the round trip to Seattle to retrieve the organ, repaired it, and returned to Spokane to transplant it into Scinto • all in the same day.

Scinto said her journey hasn't been easy. She takes about 45 different pills daily to keep her body at peace with her donor's heart and to deal with her continuing medical symptoms, but it beats the alternative, said Scinto, who is now working on a book, titled "A Heart Like Mine."

When life is hard, Scinto said, you have to keep stepping forward, especially when there's no going back.

Harry Goedde's journey forward was a bit different than Scinto's. The 81-year-old World War II veteran was walking his Schnauzer in Spokane Valley's Mission Park when the two were assaulted, first by a large, unleashed dog and then by a man Goedde assumes was the attacking dog's owner.

"You kicked my dog," the man screamed at Goedde, which was true. The man's dog had attacked Goedde's Schnauzer, Schatzie, and wouldn't let up. The smaller dog had become entangled in some bushes during the attack and couldn't get away.

As Goedde, who weighs about 150 pounds and stands just 5-foot-7, tried to fight off the attacking dog, the younger man struck Goedde hard, knocking him flat.

"All of a sudden I saw this flash go by me and bam! He gave me one hell of a push. I must have gone about 10 feet. I landed between two trees, and I couldn't figure out how the hell I got down there," Goedde said at the time.

Goedde lost his glasses in the spill and couldn't see well enough to identify his attacker, who stood over Goedde for a few minutes challenging the senior citizen to get up and fight before finally moving on. The fall bruised Goedde's right arm from wrist to shoulder. And then there was the matter of the decorated veteran's pride. Here was a man who had marched in General Patton's Army, survived the Battle of the Bulge and didn't return stateside until a sniper bullet shattered a leg bone.

Police investigated the incident. A deputy even took mug shots of canines living near the park in hopes that Goedde might recognize the dog and therefore finger his attacker. The case grew cold.

"They never did catch the guy," Goedde said recently. "You know I go down there every day at 5 p.m., the same time, thinking I'll catch him. I even cruised around the neighborhood apartments. I would like to see him pay for what he's done."

And he'd like to tell the man something about honor, about when to stand up, when to stand down and when to apologize.

The battle was just a small one, he said, one a true soldier wouldn't consider changing course over.

Sometimes all you can do is march.

James Dokken came home from the Iraq war last spring to find he'd missed a lot. His daughters had traded their fishing poles for makeup. His entire family had moved from Endicott to Spokane Valley. They only slightly resembled the people in the photograph the National Guardsman wore around his neck for a year patrolling the streets of Baghdad.

Were that the end of his story, Dokken likely would have swept up all those moments of lost time and been back to a "normal" life. But his story doesn't end there. Hurricane Katrina flattened the Gulf states in September, and Dokken was gone again.

When we stopped by his home last week, Dokken had just returned from a month in Louisiana. His oldest daughter was now on the verge of learning to drive. His younger two were edging ever closer to that age when dads take a backseat to boys.

Uncle Sam was right; freedom isn't free. When the smallest bill you have is time, freedom keeps the change. Someone always has to clean up the mess.

And speaking of cleaning up messes, Bill Moody is still cleaning up the Iller Creek Conservation Area in Spokane Valley. Moody walks the drainage daily,

gathering keg cups, busted glass, old couch cushions and worse. We wrote about Moody months ago as he tried to get Spokane County to join in the cleanup. The drainage was a multimillion-dollar gift to the county. Moody was hoping for a law enforcement crackdown on the all-night bonfire parties at Iller Creek, which is fire prone. He didn't get it, but he did get a larger garbage can in which to deposit the trash he collects and a county government phone number to call when the can needs emptying.

"I don't think it's been a waste of time," Moody said. "And the other day Hugger (one of Moody's neighbors) saw a patrol car driving up there."

We wanted to give you one more update, one about Steve and Carrie Allens' efforts to adopt a third child from China.

The Allens believe in the case for adoption so much, they've put their home on the market to cover the \$20,000 cost of bringing one more child to America.

Their house is still on the market, has been since October when we spoke with them last. The couple are en route to China. According to Steve's father, Bill Allen, the Allens expect to be home with Bi Lu, their new 12-year-old daughter, in time for Christmas.

And the beat goes on.

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