

Mayo Clinic News Network

Title: Patience and a Plan Pays Off / Date: April 2016

Intro: When Randy Marlow needed a heart transplant, he recalls being told that the odds were really stacked against him. A host of factors made finding a compatible donor extremely challenging. Still, his Mayo Clinic doctors told him, if he had the patience, they had a plan. Here’s Dennis Douda for the Mayo Clinic News Network.

Video	Audio
Total running time [0:00]	/// VIDEO
Randy Marlow speaking	“It’s crazy, the look in doctors’ and nurses’ eyes when they came and seen me. I felt like a newborn baby or a puppy or something.”
Dennis Douda speaking	The scene of the celebration – St. Marys hospital at Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota.
Kevin Praska speaking	“A lot of good things, I think, happened while he was in the hospital. He really became part of the fabric and the family up on 4 Domitilla with the nurses and with the staff.”
Brandon Grovdahl speaking	“Oh, great guy.”
Dennis Douda speaking	Four Domitilla is the organ transplant floor. Randy Marlow is finally being discharged after being here a very long time.
TITLE: Randy Marlow Organ Transplant Patient	“I came up there. They put me in the hospital. And they didn’t let me leave for 596 days.”
Dr. Richard Daly speaking	“That’s a terribly long time in the hospital.”
Randy Marlow speaking	I call it being in jail with the nicest guards ever.
Dr. Barry Boilson speaking	“Ah, we got to know him very well in that time.”
Dennis Douda speaking	Randy’s medical journey began as a young man, with the discovery of a congenital heart defect.
Randy Marlow speaking	“Yes, I found out that I had an atrial septal defect, which is a hole in the heart.”
Dennis Douda speaking	Four open-heart surgeries would follow over the years. Despite that, Randy worked hard as a successful heating and air conditioning technician and was an avid outdoorsman. He thrived in the beautiful high country of Colorado.

Randy Marlow speaking	“Backcountry snowmobiling up in the Colorado Rockies, playing ice hockey, riding my ATV and going camping up in the mountains.”
Dennis Douda speaking	But, by his early forties, Randy’s condition progressed to heart failure.
TITLE: Barry Boilson, M.D. Mayo Clinic Transplant Cardiologist	“He was starting to exhaust his medical therapy options. He wasn’t doing well.”
Dennis Douda speaking	Dr. Barry Boilson is Randy’s cardiologist. He says, eventually, Randy’s last hope was a heart transplant. Unfortunately, Randy had a less common blood group, and blood transfusions during earlier surgeries had created high levels of antibodies to most donor tissues.
Dr. Barry Boilson speaking	“When patients do, then that presents a problem, because those patients are much more likely to reject the heart immediately once it’s implanted.”
TITLE: Richard Daly, M.D. Mayo Clinic Transplant Surgeon	“Of the donors that come up, he might only be able to take 10 or 20 percent of the potential donors, which makes it very difficult for him.”
Dr. Barry Boilson speaking	So, all of those factors really prolonged his waiting time. He also needed two organs -- not one.”
Dennis Douda speaking	Two organs, because severe fluid buildup from Randy’s heart condition had caused his liver to begin to fail, as well. But, that turned out to be a blessing in disguise, if Randy’s new liver could be transplanted first.
Dr. Barry Boilson speaking	“Based on the observation in other solid organ transplant groups that the liver has this unique capacity to mop up these preformed antibodies.”
Dennis Douda speaking	But, because the donor heart can only wait outside the body for a limited time, transplant surgeon Richard Daly says minutes count and careful coordination of each step is a vital.
Dr. Richard Daly speaking	“Have to manage that particular situation very, very carefully in terms of the choreography of the surgery.”
Dr. Barry Boilson speaking	“For heart transplants, at least, it’s an experience that’s unique to Mayo.”
Dennis Douda speaking	Once Randy’s transplant team had a plan, he was admitted to Four Domitlla. There, IV medications could support his failing organs and he could be monitored.

TITLE: Kevin Praska, R.N. Mayo Clinic Transplant Coordinator	“We have to be careful with your fluid intake and with your diet and you have to exercise regularly and all the things that need to be done and you need to encourage someone to do that.”
Dr. Barry Boilson speaking	“There’s the medical aspect for sure, but the psychological aspect is all -- is almost the more pressing in my mind as these patients wait.”
Randy Marlow speaking	“I called it Groundhog Day. Every day you wake up and it was the same thing, again and again and again.”
Dennis Douda speaking	Not knowing if suitable organs would ever become available, Randy launched into his quest with one simple thought.
Randy Marlow speaking	“Patience. You have to take it day by day and wait for that right day, for the miracle.”
Dennis Douda speaking	Randy’s girlfriend Lisa visited as often as possible.
Randy Marlow speaking	“I did surprise Lisa on one of her visits. The nurses helped me out there and they took a conference room and turned it into a little dining room; put lights all around the room and got some flowers and the chef prepared us a steak dinner.”
Dennis Douda speaking	The nursing staff did everything it could to keep the hospital walls from closing in.
Randy Marlow speaking	“I got to go to the power plant. Being a heating and air conditioning guy, I wanted to see what runs this place -- what kind of equipment does it take to run Saint Marys. So I got a personal tour of that and they said I was the first person ever to ask for that one.”
Brandon Grovdahl speaking	“He played a lot of jokes. Some things I probably can’t say on the camera.”
Dennis Douda speaking	Brandon Grovdahl was one of several nurses with whom Randy forged friendships.
TITLE: Brandon Grovdahl, R.N. Mayo Clinic Cardiac Care Unit	“I think almost every day, from four to five o’clock, I was probably in Randy’s room just listening to his issues. He listened to my issues. We just created a bond that way.”
Randy Marlow speaking	“I spent a year and eight months with these people, you know. Yes, they became, you know, my second family.”
Dennis Douda speaking	So, just like home, if Randy got a craving for something...

Randy Marlow speaking	“I said, boy, a Philly cheesesteak would be good. So, he went shopping and got me, you know, the true thin-sliced rib-eye. I made Philly cheesesteaks. The staff -- they were awesome. They just made it, made my days, go easier. “
Brandon Grovdahl speaking	“That’s part of taking care of the transplant patients that is really rewarding, and it’s something that they need as well.”
Randy Marlow speaking	“Actually, one nurse did my Christmas shopping for two years. I would give her a list, and she would go get it.”
Dennis Douda speaking	Holidays and entire seasons passed. And finally, on Randy’s 575 th day in the hospital, his turn arrived.
Dr. Barry Boilson speaking	“And it worked incredibly well. Nothing more gratifying, you know. There really isn’t.”
Dr. Richard Daly speaking	“Everybody has an emotional commitment and tie to somebody that’s in the hospital that long.”
Dennis Douda speaking	After three more weeks to recover and a few weeks at the Gift of Life Transplant House to transition back to life outside the hospital -- Randy was ready to hit the road with an appreciation that will last a lifetime.
Randy Marlow speaking	It's a miracle. I would not be here, you know, if it wasn't for Mayo and the nurses. It's good to be alive and feeling good.”
Dennis Douda speaking	For the Mayo Clinic News Network, I’m Dennis Douda.

Anchor tag: April is National Donate Life Month. Randy says words cannot express the gratitude he feels for the family of the organ donor who made his transplants possible. While Mayo Clinic has successfully performed the liver-first, then heart double-organ transplant successfully on several women, Randy is believed to be the first man in the world to undergo the procedure. On any given day, more than 4,000 people in the U.S. are awaiting donor hearts to become available.

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