

PATIENT: **Norm Rhodes**

Age 78, Bow, NH

FAMILY: 8 children, 17 grandchildren,
and wife Sandy

DIAGNOSIS: Angina history, coronary artery disease
and aortic stenosis

SURGERY: Quadruple bypass and aortic valve replacement,
January 15, 2009



Norman Rhodes and his wife Sandy have a special connection with Concord Hospital. They met there when he worked as a pharmacist and she served as a psychiatric nurse, a 1960 graduate of Concord Hospital's storied nursing school. In early 2009, as Norman prepared for surgery on a dangerously weakening heart and partially blocked aortic valve, they walked the medical center's modern halls with nostalgia. "Concord Hospital has changed," Sandy noted, "It's very beautiful now. I got lost for a while, but pretty soon I knew every hallway."

Norman was diagnosed 10 years ago with angina—broadly defined as chest discomfort experienced when the heart fails to get enough oxygen-rich blood. Since then, Norman has undergone three cardiac catheterization procedures at Concord Hospital. His cardiologist, Dr. Mark Klinker, kept the couple apprised of his condition and the slowly narrowing choices for treatment. "He gave us wonderful insight on what was happening and what our options were," said Sandy.

Admitting he had postponed surgery far too long, often so he and Sandy could visit their extended family, Norman knew that times were different. He wanted to go on vacation but couldn't walk. He was regularly short of breath. He could no longer play bugle in a band that raised money for the Shriners. Norman's hips and knees hurt, and his angina was back to stay.

Norman returned to see Dr. Klinker, an Air Force veteran; since Norman's son was in the same service the talk sometimes turned to their shared experiences. After reviewing his cardiac tests, Dr. Klinker changed the subject, recommending that the time had come to surgically treat Norman's weakening heart. Dr. Gerald Sardella (*shown above*), head of the cardiothoracic surgery program at Concord Hospital, performed a quadruple bypass and aortic valve replacement on January 15, 2009. Norman stayed at Concord Hospital for eight days.

Norman's surgery began at 5:30 in the morning. "The team that worked on me was wonderful," he recalled, "I was very impressed with Dr. Sardella, and with the anesthesiologist and nurse practitioners. They did an excellent job." Sandy, who coordinated with their large family to take turns staying with Norman through the night, was equally impressed with the care, adding, "The staff was very helpful, on every unit, including the dietician, and Dr. Sardella's physician assistants. I couldn't have asked for more, or better, information at any time."

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Sandy and Norman found the Family Centered Rounds offered by Concord Hospital's surgical and support teams to be exceptionally helpful. "I would ask a question of the team in front of Norman," said Sandy, "So I knew he would listen to their answers." The Family Rounds, offered to every cardiac surgery patient, were so valuable to Sandy she personally attended four of the five sessions during Norman's week-long stay.

Norman now believes that his condition is genetic, as he has cousins in North Carolina and Massachusetts who also have required aortic valve surgery and, in one case, mitral valve replacement as well. But the important thing is, he said, "I can get back to doing the things I love to do." Norman is driving again, volunteering at, among other places, Concord Hospital's Senior Wellness Program, raising money for the Shriners through bingo, and participating in the Shriner's parade.

Norman feels strongly that Dr. Sardella was given a gift from God and that he uses it every day to save lives at Concord Hospital. The fact that they operated on a person who would be soon turning 80 years old, and that he not only survived but is thriving, is a testament to the technology of today and the commitment of the entire cardiac team at Concord Hospital.

Glad to be back to his "puttering" and "collecting," Norman is also glad he had the surgery. "What happened to my aorta was like a garden hose, when you take off the nozzle and put your thumb over the end... There was way too much pressure building up. So they opened up my aortic valve and now I'm getting better circulation and blood flow." For the retired pharmacist and Sandy, his nurse bride, the warm nostalgia of Concord Hospital in the 1950s has turned to an even warmer, and brighter, future.

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