



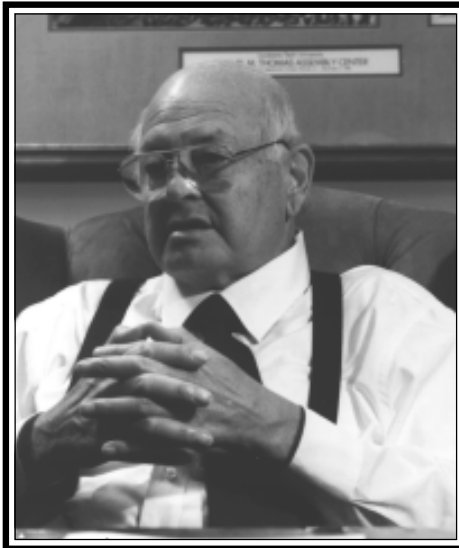
KIDNEY CONCERNS

SPRING/APRIL 1998

ISSUE 24

Successful Developer Faces New Challenge: Dialysis

Sam Thomas of Ruston and Monroe, Louisiana has had a long, successful career as a commercial real estate developer. In fact, he got his start back in 1970 when another famous "Sam" walked into his life. It was in



1970 that Sam Thomas met and formed a business partnership with "Mr. Wal-Mart" – Sam Walton. Together the two Sams brought Wal-Mart stores to several communities in Louisiana. It was the beginning of a long career in commercial development that Sam Walton took nation wide with his Wal-Mart chain and Sam Thomas took closer to home in Louisiana communities where he was born and raised.

Mr. Thomas was responsible for the commercial development of an area near Thomas Road in West Monroe, Louisi-

ana. At that site there are now several major chain franchises including restaurants and a discount "Super Store." Mr. Thomas used business relationships, marketing strategies and local advertising to his personal advantage and for the goal of advancing community progress. It's true that Sam has gained wealth and community status as his business interests grew and flourished, but he also remained close to his Louisiana roots creating economic opportunity for those in his neck of the woods. With the addition of each new business in the area the local economy grew and jobs became available for more community members. Prosperity for Mr. Thomas meant prosperity for his fellow Louisianans.

Then in August, 1996 things sure did change for Sam. Diag-

nosed with End Stage Renal Disease (ESRD), he had to go on dialysis. At first, Sam thought a lot about kidney transplant, but not so much any more as other health problems have come up as a consequence of thirty years of diabetes. Now, after more than eighteen months on dialysis and several extended hospital stays Sam gets around in a wheel chair most of the time and has someone drive him wherever he goes.

The adjustment wasn't easy. The world of dialysis was a very new and scary place for Sam in those first few months. Mr. Thomas was and is the kind of person who loves the excitement of doing business and making things happen. The physical demands of dialysis and the early feelings of depression were among some of the most challenging "deals" ever faced by this seasoned "Wheeler Dealer." It just wasn't an easy transition from active businessman to the role of a chronic disease patient. He was down for *(continued on page 4)*

"Glad You Asked That . . ."

QUESTION: *Now that I have been diagnosed with chronic kidney disease, I find that I often feel depressed and out of control. Is this normal, and what can I do to deal with these feelings?*

ANSWER: Depression and feeling "out of control" are very normal feelings for both the kidney patient and family members of the patient. There are often misunderstandings and increased anxiety among members of the family unit as everyone tries to adjust to the disruptions to everyday life caused by the demands of the new illness and its treatment.

Family members often feel helpless as family roles are reversed. Many face fears of death for the patient and deal with the guilt that there is nothing they can do to help.

Patients also face lots of changes. They may be too weak physically to continue to work at their present job. This may lead to role changes within the family causing loss of self-esteem for the patient. The family may also be confronted with financial difficulties caused by increased medical costs and/or decreased ability to work. Family and friends may be forced to take on added responsibilities that were once those performed by the patient.

Just what can we do to help decrease the stress of all these changes? There are several steps that can be taken to alleviate stress:

- First, learn as much as possible about the disease you have so that you can be an ac-

tive member in your care. Investigate all treatment options available before picking the one that's best for you. Ask questions. Talk to your physician or staff at your dialysis clinic about your treatment. If you have questions, write them down so that you don't forget. Obtain written information or go to educational classes about your illness. There are many national and local groups that can provide this information such as the National Kidney Foundation or local support groups. The social worker at your clinic is a good source for finding this information.

• Continue to do activities and responsibilities that you enjoy. Though you may experience initial weakness, some of your symptoms will improve as you become adjusted to treatment. Continue to exercise to keep up your strength. Be sure to check with your physician before beginning an exercise program so that you don't overdo. Try to continue to set goals for yourself and work toward meeting them. Arrange treatment schedules around those goals such as working or going to school.

- Remember to be patient with yourself. Give yourself time to adjust to lifestyle changes. Just because you may have to take some things at a slower pace doesn't mean you can't complete the task.

- Lastly, share your feelings. Be

open with your family and close friends. They are probably having some of the same feelings as you, but don't know how to talk about them. Talk with other patients. There is something very comforting about knowing there are other people having the same problems or fears as you. You can also learn different ways they have learned to deal with their problems. If problems or fears become too big for you to cope with, seek help from a social worker or counselor. They are specially trained to help you in these areas.

Chronic kidney disease brings many changes to your life and that of your family. It will take a while to adjust to all of the changes. Give yourself time. It's totally normal to be afraid and depressed. Just remember, there are thousands of other patients just like you dealing with the stress of kidney disease and making it through. With the support of family and friends, you will too.

If you have any questions for "Glad You Asked That," forward them to ESRD Network 13, 6600 N. Meridian, Suite 155, Oklahoma City, OK 73116-1421, or phone 1-800-472-8664. Selected questions will appear in future issues of *Kidney Concerns*.

Financial Assistance for Kidney Patients

For patients who live in Arkansas and have questions about the various types of assistance programs available for kidney patients in their state, they should contact:

ARKANSAS

Arkansas Kidney Disease Commission
Physical Restoration Services Division of Rehabilitative Services
P.O. Box 3781
Little Rock, AR 72203
Telephone: 800-330-0632 or 501-296-1629

The Louisiana Kidney Health Care Program (LKHCP)

LOUISIANA

The primary focus of the LKHCP, at this time, is to provide financial assistance to patients with End Stage Renal Disease who have a functioning renal transplant. The program provides immunosuppressive and high blood pressure medications to those renal transplant patients who meet all of the eligibility criteria for the program. Since November, 1996 there have been 83 patients enrolled in this program who have received financial assistance with their medications.

The eligibility criteria for LKHCP are:

1. Patient must have a functioning renal transplant.
2. Must be a resident of the State of Louisiana.
3. Patient does not qualify for any other benefits which provide assistance for the purchase of immunosuppressive drugs (Medicaid, VA, NORD, etc.)
4. Meet the adjusted gross income levels.

Presently there are three LKHCP programs. They are:

1. Regular Coverage
2. Bridge Coverage - Three months only.
3. Coinsurance Coverage

For more information about the program, and how to apply, contact your Transplant Center or call the Louisiana Kidney Health Care Program directly at 1-800-256-8540

Oklahoma Kidney Health Revolving Fund (OKHRF)

OKLAHOMA

This program is to provide financial assistance to individuals who have permanent kidney failure requiring dialysis therapy or kidney transplantation and are residents of the state of Oklahoma. All applicants will be required to have made application for Medicaid. Financial aid is intended for those with limited resources and a documented need. **The OKHRF is a payer of last resort.** Payments will be authorized for transportation, prescription drugs, physician fees (including dental) and Medicare premiums. Patients should contact their facility social worker or call the Oklahoma NKF at 1-800-946-6405 or 405-947-6405.

(Continued from Page 1)

the moment, but certainly not out.

As Mrs. Thomas said; "Sam's a 'Type A' personality. He may be slowed down physically, but his mind still works faster than most of the rest of us. He goes off on dialysis days with an armful of newspapers and his cell phone. Right from his dialysis chair he makes calls and keeps his business interests alive and well. His current project involves development of property along the Interstate. He just keeps going with the things he loves, slower now, but always looking ahead."

Sam Thomas has kept his independence and interest in life after adjusting to the shocking realities of kidney disease. He is a self-made man who won't let a little thing like dialysis stand between him and the career he loves.

A Sad Farewell to Friends

It is with great sadness that we note the passing of two beloved Network 13 friends. Richard Reeder and Hershel Banks, both charter members of the Network 13 Patient Advisory Committee, passed away in early February. Richard and Hershel were strong patient leaders and respected advocates for patients. Richard was the only patient in the country to serve as a Network Board of Directors' Chairperson. Hershel was the Chairperson of the Network Patient Advisory Committee. Both men provided valuable input in Network 13 decision-making. We will remember them and miss them always.

The Information Super-Highway

Want to learn more about ESRD? Check out these sites:

National Kidney Foundation (NKF)

www.kidney.org

American Kidney Fund (AKF)

www.arbon.com/kidney/home.htm

American Association of Kidney Patients (AAKP)

www.cybermart.com/aakpaz/aakp.html

Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA)

www.hcfa.gov

Renal Net

www.renalnet.org

There Is No Greater Love Than The Love of a Child for a Parent

The love of children for their parents is a powerful love. But how many of us love our parents enough to put our own lives at risk?

That is just what one Saline County resident's daughter did for him this week.

Angela Renee Bearden underwent surgery to have one of her kidneys removed so she could donate it to her father, James Wilder, who is suffering from nephritis, a condition that required him to undergo dialysis treatment.

Thanks to his daughter's selfless love, Wilder may no longer have to undergo dialysis treatments.

Doctors reported that the opera-

tion appears to have been a success and that both father and daughter are recuperating in a Little Rock hospital.

Time will tell if the new kidney will be successful for Wilder, but doctors say the chance for success is great, especially since Wilder's own daughter donated the kidney.

Bearden's actions demonstrate a strong love for a parent.

And, thanks to her love, her father has a good chance for a new lease on life. We wish them both the best of luck.

For more information on organ donation contact the United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS) at 1-800-292-9540.



KIDNEY CONCERNS

NEEDS YOU!

Kidney Concerns is published quarterly by the Patient Advisory Committee of ESRD Network 13. The next edition is scheduled for Summer/July. To make this newsletter a success, we need your assistance. If you are interested in contributing to this newsletter, please send any articles, materials and/or ideas to:

Kidney Concerns

% ESRD Network 13

6600 N. Meridian Suite 155

Oklahoma City, OK 73116-1421

1-800-472-8664

This newsletter is developed while under contract with the Health Care Financing Administration, Baltimore, Maryland. HCFA Contract #500-97-E031.