

Heart transplant record holder dies of cancer

August 11 2009, By JAMES HANNAH , Associated Press Writer

(AP) -- A heart transplant recipient who lived a record 31 years with a single donated organ has died at age 51 of cancer, his heart still going strong, his widow said.

Tony Huesman died Sunday night.

"He had diabetes and [cancer](#)," Carol Huesman said Monday. "His heart - believe it or not - held out. His heart never gave up until the end, when it had to give up."

Huesman (HYOOS'-mun) got a heart transplant in 1978 at Stanford University. That was just 11 years after the world's first heart transplant was performed in South Africa.

He became the longest-living American recipient of a single transplanted heart in 2000, when a patient who had received a transplant a year before him had to undergo a second transplant.

At his death, Huesman was listed as the world's longest survivor of a single transplanted heart both by Stanford and the Richmond, Va.-based United Network for Organ Sharing.

"I'm living proof a person can go through a life-threatening illness, have the operation and return to a productive life," Huesman told the Dayton Daily News in 2006.

He worked as marketing director at a sporting-goods store.

Huesman was diagnosed with cardiomyopathy while in high school. His heart, attacked by a pneumonia virus, was almost four times its normal size from trying to pump blood with weakened muscles.

Huesman's sister, Linda Huesman Lamb, also was stricken with [cardiomyopathy](#) and received a heart transplant in 1983. The two were the nation's first brother and sister [heart transplant](#) recipients. She died in 1991 at age 29.

Huesman founded the Huesman Heart Foundation in Dayton, which seeks to reduce [heart disease](#) by educating children and offers a nursing scholarship in honor of his sister.

"He touched a lot of lives," Carol Huesman said.

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