Raymond Weaver
Age 81—Cardiology patient
Laramie, WY

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Raymond Weaver likes to stay busy. On his eightieth birthday, he went skydiving for the first time. In 2014 he also tried rock climbing and took a trip to Hawaii, where he parasailed, snorkeled and went on a zip line. Other activities Raymond still plans to check off his bucket list include paragliding and white water rafting.

Raymond also attends his grandchildren’s sports competitions as often as possible. He’s traveled as far as Tennessee, where he watched his grandson Zane Beadles, a football tackle and guard for the Jacksonville Jaguars, compete against the Tennessee Titans. He has a standing invitation from Zane to watch him play again.

Day to day, Raymond spends time in his woodworking shop, carving intricate intarsia and fretwork mosaics for friends and families. He also walks his two dogs, a Yorkie and toy poodle, around his Laramie neighborhood several times a day.

Plus, he’s part of three different men’s coffee groups and often plays cards with a group of women. “It’s eight women and my Dad,” said Jamie Legerski, Raymond’s daughter, smiling.

Raymond enjoys visiting Jamie and her family, but he’s often not available when they invite him over, Jamie said. “He always seems to have plans.”

“Funny feeling”

Given his active lifestyle, Raymond was surprised last fall when he had “a funny feeling” in his chest while walking his dogs. “It wasn’t painful,” he said. Still, he knew something was wrong.
Raymond went to his family physician for a checkup and was then referred to Cheyenne Cardiology Associates, where Dr. William Nienaber scheduled Raymond for a cardiac stress test. The results indicated a problem so Raymond was then asked to undergo a cardiac catheterization. A long, narrow tube was inserted into Raymond’s leg and was guided via a special X-ray machine toward his heart. A contrast dye was then injected into the tube to see if there were problems with Raymond’s coronary arteries or heart.

The test showed that Raymond’s three coronary arteries were 99 percent, 95 percent and 86 percent blocked.

“Once the doctor saw those blockages, he wanted Dad checked into the hospital right away. He wouldn’t let Dad go home until he had surgery,” Jamie said. “Everyone was afraid Dad might have a heart attack.”

To restore adequate blood flow to his heart, Raymond would need triple bypass surgery.

Raymond was taking a blood thinner for another condition so had to check into the hospital a week before surgery to allow time for the medication to clear out of his system.

“They wanted him to be as still and quiet as possible to prevent a possible heart attack. That might have been harder on him than the surgery,” Jamie said.

The best decision

Raymond underwent surgery at Cheyenne Regional Medical Center on October 27. His surgeon was Dr. Steven Bailey, who recently joined Dr. David Silver as a cardiothoracic surgeon at Cheyenne Cardiovascular & Thoracic Surgery.

“Dr. Bailey was never in a rush when he talked to us,” Jamie said. “He was happy to answer all our questions and made us feel comfortable about the surgery.”
“Picking Dr. Bailey was one of the best decisions we could have made,” Raymond said. “I would recommend him 100 percent.”

After surgery Raymond was in the Intensive Care Unit for five days and was then taken to the telemetry unit for additional care and monitoring.

Not much pain and improved kidney function

One of the biggest surprises, Raymond said, was that he didn’t have much pain after the surgery. On a scale of one to 10, with 10 being the highest, Raymond said he never felt like his pain was above a two: “I was amazed at how little it hurt.”

Still, Jamie was grateful that nurses on both units monitored her dad for pain and kept a close eye on him. “I knew he was in good hands,” she said.

The other surprise involved Raymond’s kidneys. He’d had a stent placed to improve blood flow to one of them several years ago. “We were warned that the surgery might cause his kidneys to shut down. If that happened, he would have to go on dialysis,” Jamie said.

Instead, Raymond’s kidneys are functioning better than they have in several years.

While he was in the ICU, Raymond’s care team also discovered that he had blood in his stomach. The blood was due to an ulcer, and it was making Raymond nauseous. Once the ulcer was cauterized, Raymond’s nausea quickly went away.

“He didn’t know that he had an ulcer before. So it was good that they found it and were able to take care of it,” Jamie said.

The bypass and the use of medication have also helped lower Raymond’s blood pressure. On a recent checkup, it was down to 120/70. Before surgery, it was at or above 140/85. “The nurse told me I have the blood pressure of a teenager now,” Raymond said.
Pleased with progress

Within a month of his triple bypass, Raymond was able to walk a block with his dogs every day and had gone from using a walker and a cane to walking with no assistance. He was scheduled to start cardiac rehabilitation in Laramie in early December.

Raymond is pleased with the progress he’s made since the surgery and looks forward to resuming his active life as soon as possible.

“I didn’t really think much about what was going to happen during the surgery,” Raymond said. “I’m just glad that everything turned out the way it did. I am feeling much better, and I got good treatment all the way around.”