

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Artificial Heart patient Tom Christerson marks another milestone

LOUISVILLE, Ky....Tom and Speedy Christerson celebrated their 55th wedding anniversary with a quiet dinner at one of their favorite places – home. The couple said they were happy to be able to celebrate another year of marriage.

Background film of the couple is available by calling (502) 587-4230.

The celebration wouldn't have been possible without the surgery Tom Christerson had more than a year ago. During a landmark surgery at Jewish Hospital on September 13, 2001, University of Louisville surgeons Laman Gray, M.D., and Rob Dowling, M.D., implanted the AbioCor™ Implantable Replacement Heart. Mr. Christerson was the second person in the world to receive the AbioCor Replacement Heart, manufactured by ABIOMED, Inc., of Danvers, Mass.

Mr. Christerson was released from Jewish Hospital and returned to his home in Central City a little more than six months ago. He is the only AbioCor patient to return to his home.

He continues to enjoy spending time with his family and friends. Recently he has been able to do some of the things that were just a memory a year ago. Earlier this fall he spent an afternoon on his boat, the Scooby Doo, at Lake Barkley. And on September 19 and 20, he attended a Busch series race at Memphis Motorsports Park in Tennessee to watch his son, Ken Christerson, who is a member of the pit crew of the Timberwolf car.

Drs. Gray and Dowling say Mr. Christerson continues to do well at home. He still returns to Jewish Hospital in Louisville once a week for check-ups, and works with a physical therapist at the local hospital.

Recently the Christersons reflected about their marriage on October 25, 1947. The two met while attending a basketball game in Louisville. Mr. Christerson said it was love at first sight.

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“I just met her and I said that’s the one for me.”

“My friends were saying I’ll take that dark-haired one,” Mrs. Christerson added. “And I said no, he’s mine.”

Throughout the years, “we’ve had our ups and downs,” Mr. Christerson said. Added his wife: “But you analyze it and say this is love, and you get through things.”

Both say they don’t regret the decision to have the surgery to implant the artificial heart. They are happy to be enjoying another anniversary and look forward to more time together.

“I love you,” Mrs. Christerson said to her husband. “That’s our good morning and our good night. That’s what we say every morning and every night.”

“I love you, too,” Mr. Christerson added.

Jewish Hospital is among the premier heart centers in the United States and, along with the University of Louisville, is dedicated to excellence in clinical care, research and education. University of Louisville surgeons at Jewish Hospital have performed many heart care “firsts,” including Kentucky’s first heart transplant, the world’s first heart transplant following the use of a Thoratec bi-ventricular assist device, the world’s first endoscopic saphenous vein harvest and the first ventricular remodeling in the region.

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