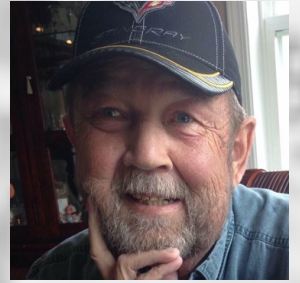


# RON ANDRES



Mentions in [The Daily Herald-Tribune](#), Grande Prairie, Alberta, Canada

# Dynamos a dynamic minor hockey force

By DAN SCHNICK  
Herald-Tribune staff

Calling the Grande Prairie Pee Wee Legion "AAA" team the 'Dynamos' isn't quite right. 'Dynamite' is a more suitable label.

Swan Cities' number one team for 12 and 13-year-olds has been on a tear this year, competing against and beating some of the best competition Alberta has to offer. In three tournaments entered so far, they have two firsts and a second while compiling a 25-5 win-loss record. Four players on the team are notching better than two points a game — one has a staggering 123 points.

This weekend the Dynamos along with their brother team in Grande Prairie, the "A" touring squad, will have a chance to show home-town fans what they've got as they host their 17th annual tournament.

Action kicks off today at both the Dave Barr and Johnny Macdonald Arenas at 4:00 p.m. with the opening ceremonies at the Johnny Mac. Four teams each make up the "AAA" and "A" pools with the finalists of round-robin play meeting in the finals Sunday afternoon. The "AAA" final goes at noon at the Dave Barr Arena.

Included in the tournament itinerary is a breakfast Saturday morning at the Johnny Mac sponsored by the Legion, whose logo the Dynamos carry.

"They have sponsored minor hockey for 17 years in this town," says Legion Dynamos manager Ken Chalmers. "We owe them a lot."

The Legion will run the opening and closing ceremonies including the trophy presentations on Sunday afternoon.

The Dynamos hope to repeat as winners of their own tournament. Last year they edged Peace River in overtime to claim first but the northern town got



Dynamos work out the kinks in preparation for weekend tourney

its revenge by eliminating GP from provincials competition.

However this season will likely offer a different finish for the Dynamos.

"We hope to get better by playing higher caliber teams rather than playing lots of games," says sophomore Dynamos' coach Ron Andres. "The boys had 67 games last year and we promised we would cut that down. We didn't do them justice."

Higher calibre means more travelling so it isn't uncommon for the team to put on 1000 km in one weekend — mostly in trips to Edmonton.

The ambitious schedule translates to dollars spent.

Andres predicts the actual costs of the team this year will exceed \$28,000 not including volunteer time. Most of cost is absorbed by parents with a share handled by G.P. Minor Hockey and sponsors like the Legion.

Quite evidently this isn't Sears Catalog and Rusty Bauers type hockey. The Dynamos require commitment from all parties involved.

"We had 53 kids try out for 17 positions in a seven-day camp this fall," says Andres. "The kids that are here

want to be here. We've got guys from LaGlance and Bezanson that get up to go to 6 a.m. practices."

The team philosophy reflects the amount of commitment.

"We believe in having fun but before that every team member has to work hard. These are a pretty motivated bunch of kids."

"I believe in teaching them to be competitive. Most of these kids aren't going to be chasing NHL careers so this will help them get ready for adulthood. If this silly sport of hockey help them in that regard, I think its great."

The Daily Herald-Tribune

Grande Prairie, Alberta, Canada • Fri, Jan 13, 1989 Page 13

# Drifters are the boys with the bus

By JEFF McCOSHEN  
Herald-Tribune staff

## MINOR HOCKEY

With six wins and eight losses in league play, the Drift Development Drifters don't own the best record in the All Peace Midget Hockey League.

But they are, no doubt, the

only team in the league with their own bus.

The Midget A club has its sponsor, Drift Development and, more specifically, Tom Wachter,

to thank for that.

Wachter purchased the bus in the fall to transport crews to job sites but offered the bus to the Drifters for weekend road trips.

With about two thirds of their games - league, tournament and

exhibition - on the road, the Drifters have put the 47-passenger unit to good use.

"These kids are pretty proud of it," says Drifters coach Ron Andres. "I'd say we're definitely the envy of Grande Prairie minor hockey."

The bus, a 1976 GMC which team manager Roland LaCroix says rides "like a '92 Cadillac", has already logged more than 5,000 kilometres on road trips this season with trips to such destinations as Lloydminster, Peace River and Great Falls, Montana still ahead.

Because Wachter hasn't used the bus as much at work as he thought he might, it has been available virtually at the Drifters' beckon call.

"It might just as well be used to keep the battery charged," quips Wachter, not overly eager about the publicity his deed has brought him.

With Andres, LaCroix and Jack Gould taking turns doing the driving, the Drifters have become pretty much self-sufficient. Especially when you take into account that Andres and LaCroix are mechanics by trade and Gould is a truck driver, meaning the costs for maintenance work or repairs can be held to a minimum.

Andres says having the bus

available has more of an advantage than mere convenience. The bill for having to rent their own bus for a season would, he notes, make the cost of playing prohibitive for some players.

"Some of these boys just wouldn't be here because of sheer cost."

Wachter takes note of the revelation, and recalls how he first got involved with the Midget A team four years ago when he had a son playing.

"They were kind of like the Bad News Bears," he says with a laugh. "They couldn't get anyone to sponsor them."

The Drifters have established a few guidelines, including rules prohibiting smoking and drinking, to keep the bus in order. Wachter, a smoker, laughs at the notion that he can't ride on his bus.

Andres would not go so far as to suggest that having the bus is worth a few extra wins during a season - as the Los Angeles Kings suggest is the case with having their own plane - but the coach thinks the bus has brought the team closer together.

The kids are allowed to play cards and play music, but both must be done at low decibel levels.

"We keep control of that," says LaCroix. "It's liveable."



Staff Photo by Jeff McCoshen

The Drift Development Midget A Drifters have bus and will travel, which puts them in an enviable position in Grande Prairie's minor hockey system.

The Daily Herald-Tribune

[Grande Prairie, Alberta, Canada • Thu, Jan 23, 1992](#) Page 9

## Drifters top midget tourney

The Drift Development Drifters won four of five games to win a midget A hockey tournament in Lloydminster on the weekend.

A 7-4 win over the Fort McMurray Barons in the championship game sealed the tournament title for the Drifters.

Trent Dombrova scored a pair of goals in the final game but Drifters coach Ron Andres singled out goaltender Rob Greentree as his club's top player in the final game.

"He stood on his head for those kids," noted Andres.

It was the Drifters' second win in as many games against Fort McMurray. They opened play Friday with a 9-2 thrashing of the Barons.

Rob Testawich was named the game star in the opener and also received the award following a 9-2 win over Fultonvale. Testawich had two goals in the contest while Jeff Paton recorded a hat trick.

Paton won his own MVP award in the third game after scoring two goals in a 4-3 loss to the host Lloydminster Blazers.

Despite the loss, the Drifters finished first in their pool and then edged Provost 7-6 in a semifinal game Sunday morning with Testawich and Brian Noel each scoring three goals.

# GOOD LUCK DRIFTERS!

*The Drift Development Drifters would like to thank the following individuals and businesses for their sponsorship towards our trip to Great Falls, Montana, March 26, 27 & 28 to the Wendy's International Hockey Tournament. Special thanks to Tom & Pat at Drift Development Ltd.*



*Back Row (L-R): Jeff Patton, Bryan Noel, Jack Gould, Ron Andres, Tom Wachter, Roland LaCroix, Darcy LaCroix, Scott Fletcher, Trevor Denis, Rob Greentree. Front Row (L-R): Shaun Hutchinson, Robin Testawitch, Clayton Andres, Dalen Diepdael, Curt Selke, Scott Field, Brent White, Blair Musselman. Missing: Trent Dombrova, Ernie Miegs, Daniel Kosolofski.*

The Daily Herald-Tribune

[Grande Prairie, Alberta, Canada • Fri, Mar 20, 1992Page 35](#)



Ron Andres of Grande Prairie was recently awarded the 3M Coach Recognition Award for his outstanding contribution to minor hockey and the development of young athletes. Andres has coached minor hockey in Grande Prairie for 11 years, ranging in age groups from novice to midget, with a personal goal of teaching life skills as well as hockey skills. Players from past and present were on hand to honor Andres, who has worked with the Drift Development Drifters midget A club most recently, when he received his award. Among those gathered were (front row, left to right) Lane Kimble, Shaun Hutchinson, Dalen Diepdal, Darcy LaCroix, Brent White, Darren Winia and Chad Friesen. Middle row Roland LaCroix, Craig Nichol, Brody Thomsen, Ron Andres, Richard Gummer, Ryan Buitenhuis, Steve L'Heureaux and Lorne Kimble. Back row Clayton Andres, Denis Davis, Blair Musselman, Kelly Tarnow, Randy Dorscheid, Pindar Mangat, Bryce Culver, Jim Was, Jack Gould, Mike Gilles, Keith Zasadny, Dave L'Heureaux and Alain Kennedy.

The Daily Herald-Tribune

[Grande Prairie, Alberta, Canada • Wed, Apr 24, 1996Page 16](#)



Sports Comment

**Jeff  
McCoshen**

## Christmas comes early for coach

**R**on Andres got his Christmas present already and it's the best one the 42-year-old will ever receive.

Andres is in the University of Alberta hospital recovering from a lung transplant that will allow him to resume the active lifestyle stolen from him last spring.

That's when a condition known as pulmonary fibrosis, essentially an inflammation of the lungs which prevents the body from transferring oxygen into the blood, took control of his life.

Andres started feeling the effects of the condition while volunteering as a transfer co-ordinator during the 1995 Canada Winter Games in Grande Prairie, and felt himself get progressively worse. In April, the situation was so bad he was given an oxygen tank to carry around that had to go everywhere he went.

It was no way to live, but it was the only way he could.

"It was a pain but I tried to be as positive as I could," Andres, who had to give up coaching minor hockey in Grande Prairie after 12 straight years because his lungs couldn't handle the cold, said yesterday from his hospital bed.

Andres dreamed of the day that a lung transplant would be possible and his dream came true Dec. 2 when his wife Trudy got a call informing them that a transplant was available. Andres was driving home from work at Weyerhaeuser when his wife phoned him.

"That was big time," Andres said of the excitement he felt after receiving the news. "I'm very fortunate. Some people wait years."

Andres was flown to Edmonton that night, he was in the operating room by midnight and out by 6:30 a.m. After spending five days in intensive care, Andres is now under regular watch in the pulmonary ward.

"I'm feeling like a million bucks," he said. "Everything went A-okay."

Andres won't out of hospital for a few weeks yet because he has to go through a series of tests with anti-rejection drugs. He's faced with having to take "between 30 and 40" of these drugs on a daily basis for the rest of his life, but that doesn't concern him now.

His thoughts Thursday, as he spoke in a determined voice of getting his life back together, were about skating with his six-year-old grandson Kristin, who is playing his first year of organized hockey in Sexsmith.

"I'm just kind of chomping at the bit to get my skates on," said Andres.

He also vows to let everyone who will listen know about the wonders of the organ donor program.

"I want to make people aware," he said. "That's the biggest thing we can share."

# Communication the key to organ donation

IAN WILSON

Herald-Tribune staff

It didn't seem like much.

Ron Andres was taking dancing lessons with his wife a few years ago when he noticed he was having trouble keeping up. So he went to the doctor.

It's probably just indigestion or something, he figured. Unfortunately, it wasn't that simple.

After more than two years of doctor appointments and tests Andres was diagnosed with pulmonary fibrosis. Translation: He needed a lung transplant.

In April and May of last year Andres went to the University of Alberta Hospital for a "workup" designed to prepare him both mentally and physically for his

transplant.

"After four and a half months (on the waiting list) we got the first call," recalls Andres. "We went

up in October, but something was wrong with the organ so we went home."

However, Andres' luck improved a couple months later.

"Dec. 4 came along and I was coming home from work and we got another call," he says. "And by 11:30 that night I was in the operating room getting a new lease on life."

"I was very very fortunate that I only had to wait six months," says Andres, who is dancing with his wife again and expects to return to work at Weyerhaeuser sometime between June and September.

Andres' story is just one of the many happy endings that has emerged thanks to organ and tissue donations.

Canada has one of the lowest rates among developed countries for organ donation, according to Mutual Group spokesman Gordon Meyers. In 1995, there were 2,600



**"I was very very fortunate that I only had to wait six months."**

— donor recipient Ron Andres

**"It's so critical for families to talk about it."**

— Gordon Meyers



people on waiting lists - 114 of those died.

In 1992, the Mutual Group introduced By Mutual Consent, a program that asks Canadians,

as part of Organ Donor Awareness

Week, to consider organ donation and discusses the issue with loved ones.

"The problem is that people aren't ready for it, but as life insurance agents we know when we sit down with people they have a tough time talking about it," says Meyers. "It's so critical for families to talk about it and know each others wishes."

Meyers says even if you've already filled out your organ donor card you should discuss the issue with your family.

"Most doctors are reluctant to move ahead without family support even if the person fills out an organ donor card," he says.

"It's up to the family to make the decision and if they haven't talked about it there's often confusion."

# Transplants are a breath of fresh air

## GP woman recovers from a double lung transplant

TODD NOGIER  
Herald-Tribune staff

Linda Ingram didn't have turkey on Thanksgiving. She got a couple of lungs. But that's all right by her. Ingram, 38, was flown to University of Alberta Hospital Sunday where she received a double lung transplant on Thanksgiving Monday.

Friends report Ingram is recovering well and will likely be moved from the Intensive Care Unit to the Pulmonary Ward.

"This was a special Thanksgiving because it was when she got the gift of breath," said friend Connie Nesbitt, who also chairs the Grande Prairie Asthma Support Group.

Ingram suffers from a little-known condition called alpha 1 antitrypsin deficiency. It means the body isn't producing enough protein to protect lungs from disease.

As a result, Ingram suffered from acute emphysema and asthma so bad, she needed the aid of pure oxygen inhaled through her nostrils.

She had been waiting for a transplant for almost three years when she got the call informing her a set of lungs was available.

Ingram, in surgery at 3 a.m. and out at noon, is expected to remain in Edmonton for three to six months in a recovery program.

Then she will be free to return to Grande Prairie where her sister and friends are waiting.

"She is fiercely stubborn so I have no fears about the strength of her spirit, it's her body I am worried about," said Anita Haunholter, an eight-year friend.

She has seen Ingram go from a healthy, energetic woman to one who's frustrated at times dealing with a condition that often tethers her to her home.

Despite her illness, Ingram has been a pillar for other Grande Prairians suffering from lung disease.

City resident Ron Andres had a single lung transplant last December. The 43-year old suffers from pulmonary fibrosis, which is an inflammation of the lungs.

The body reacts by scarring the lungs, blocking oxygen from the bloodstream.

Andres' body has accepted the lung and he is doing so well, he is back at work part-time at Weyerhaeuser as a maintenance foreman. His own lung is still afflicted with his condition, but his new one is almost at 100 per cent capacity.

"It's great to be able to breathe again," said Andres. He still must be careful around smoke and dust. Nevertheless, he has begun a new life.

"You learn to enjoy life a lot more and your family a lot more," Andres says of his wife, two kids and one grandchild.

Andres' success story must be a source of hope for Donna Tink, a Grande Prairian who has been waiting for a lung transplant for over two years.

Tink has chronic bronchitis and emphysema caused by an unknown disease.

Tink is on oxygen as well as a plethora of pills to regulate her condition. She dislikes talking about her ailing health preferring to remain positive, but she does admit the feeling of not being able to

### Quick Facts

#### Prolonged lung conditions produce other associated ailments:

- ✓ Shortness of breath and increased oxygen need
- ✓ Decreased activity level
- ✓ Wasting of muscle groups including respiratory muscles; postural or trunk muscles; arms and leg muscles
- ✓ Cardiovascular deconditioning
- ✓ Fear or anxiety due to breathlessness

#### Alberta Lung Association's most recent facts on asthma include:

- ✓ About 5 per cent of adults and 10 per cent of children in Alberta suffer from asthma - this is equal to 200,000 Albertans.
- ✓ Alberta's mortality rate of asthma sufferers is highest in Canada and three times that of Saskatchewan and Manitoba.
- ✓ Average hospitalization for asthma is 4.28 days totalling 28,865 in 1992/93.
- ✓ Canada spends approximately \$600 million each year on asthma.
- ✓ In 1992, there were no lung transplants conducted in Alberta.
- ✓ In 1996, that number increased to 14.

#### Well-wishes can be sent to Linda Ingram at:

Linda Ingram  
Attn: Unit 3A2  
University Hospital  
8440-112 St.  
Edmonton, Alta.  
T6G 2B7

breathe is difficult to put into words.

"Just think of what it would be like to be smothered - that's how it feels," said the 54 year-old wife, mother of one and grandmother of four.

Waiting for the transplant is difficult. The U of A hospital could call at any moment and she'd be whisked off to Edmonton for surgery. She knows one-third of the people on the transplant waiting list die before a suitable organ is located.

But she remains optimistic. "Having a positive outlook is one of the tools in dealing with a chronic illness, in the same way that medicine or rest is," says Tink.

Haunholter is thankful a donor came forward to possibly save her

friend's life.

"In their time of grief and sadness, they have been able to give her a new life - for that I thank them," she says of a family who had to lose a life for Ingram to gain hers.

Haunholter says it takes special people to realize that out of grievous loss can come happiness and life. Through the ordeal with Ingram, Haunholter has become a fervent organ donor believer.

The Daily Herald-Tribune

Grande Prairie, Alberta, Canada • Mon, Oct 20, 1997 Page 4

# GPMH launches new cash lottery to help offset hockey costs

LAURA TESTER  
Herald-Tribune staff

Grande Prairie Minor Hockey is hoping to score big in fund-raising dollars with the launching of its "Between the Posts" cash lottery.

Tickets at \$100 a shot went on sale Friday for GPMHA's first-ever lottery, awarding over \$500,000 in prizes. Association spokesperson Ron Andres made the announcement during the Grande Prairie Minor Hockey Nike Celebration for Coaches at the Golden Inn Friday.

"Our main focus for the lottery is to make minor hockey in Grande Prairie affordable for all players

who wish to enter our great sport," Andres said. "We hope to achieve this through several avenues that the lottery will afford GPMHA. Funds will be used to offset the cost of ice rental, player equipment, game equipment, arena equipment, and to provide further education to both players and team officials. A scholarship fund is also hoped for."

Andres said they're not certain how much money they will make from the lottery, but he said young players will reap the benefits.

"There will be a reduction in costs. For instance in inter-city hockey, a young atom player has to pay \$310 to play the game, just

registration and without equipment."

The lottery package consists of \$250,000 for first prize and a total of 526 cash prizes will be awarded. The chances to win are one in 20, with an early bird draw for \$25,000 on New Year's Eve and the final draw on March 17. Tickets – 10,500 in all – are available through The Locker Room at the Dave Barr Arena, at all GPMH tournaments, and at yet-to-be-announced retail outlets.

The lottery announcement comes in conjunction with the 40th anniversary of GPMHA. Several months ago, a committee of five volunteers initiated the quest

for a major fund-raiser.

One of the driving forces was Greg Lancaster who Andres said was like a bulldog — once he grabbed onto something, he wasn't going to let go.

"He was adamant about having a large lottery," Andres said of Lancaster, the GPMH president at the time of his death. "He had a passion for the game and to see kids fulfilled in the sport."

Lancaster died in May due to cancer. His son Josh attended the coaches' celebration to purchase the first ticket in memory of his father.

"It's an honour," Josh told reporters later. "I think it's great in remembrance of my father."

The Daily Herald-Tribune

[Grande Prairie, Alberta, Canada • Mon, Sep 25, 2000Page 12](#)

# Poor ticket sales force minor hockey to cancel lottery

**MARK EVANS**

Herald-Tribune staff

Grande Prairie Minor Hockey Association has pulled its Between the Post lottery from the fund-raising game due to low scoring ticket sales.

"It's very disappointing," lottery spokesman Ron Andres said Friday.

The \$500,000 lottery was put in the penalty box with six weeks to go until the final draw date and only 1,380 of the 10,500 tickets, worth \$100 apiece, sold.

The Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission approved the association's request to cancel the lottery.

"The association made a mistake," conceded Andres. "We misjudged public interest and response to the lottery and the cause it was to support."

A \$25,000 early-bird draw was made Dec. 3 with Doris Boivin of Eaglesham winning the jackpot. The association is going to be out that money and all the lottery related expenses it incurred to date.

"We have lost money on the lottery," Andres said.

However, the loss is manageable now, he said. Had the association pushed ahead with the lottery, and awarded the grand prize of \$250,000 along with secondary prizes totalling \$309,000, it may have turned into a huge financial problem.

Lottery proceeds were going to be used to help make minor hockey affordable for everyone in Grande Prairie by offsetting the cost of ice rental, player equipment, arena equipment, game equipment and education for players and team officials.

Giving all kids a chance to play continues to be a goal the local hockey association will continue to shoot for, said Andres. Grande Prairie minor hockey will hold its annual general meeting near the end of May.

At that time, they will take good hard look at what happened to the lottery and decide where they will go from there, he said.

"We'll just continue," said Andres, not ruling out another large lottery.

All ticket buyers will receive a refund sometime in the next few weeks.

The association's chartered accounting firm will oversee the refunds.

Andres was appreciative of all the volunteers and sponsors who committed to the fund-raiser.

"Those are the people that need to have a pat on the back for giving it their best go," Andres said.

# Brothers' predicament points to need for organ donations

DEB GUERETTE  
Herald-Tribune staff

It is a simple message, but for brothers Jim and Elmer Ford and over a dozen other Grande Prairie-area residents, awareness of the need for organ and tissue donation is a matter of renewed life.

Both in their late 50s, Jim, of Grande Prairie, has been on a transplant waiting list for a pair of lungs for two years, while Elmer, of Bezanson, has been waiting a year for a pair of lungs and a heart.

"Other than that we are just fine," Elmer jests.

Making the decision to accept an organ transplant to overcome the life-threatening advance of emphysema was a huge step, but the waiting is now proving to be its own challenge, the brothers said.

New federal plans for public education about the need for and benefits of organ and tissue donation with an Edmonton-based program headquarters, should hopefully improve Canada's dismal donation numbers, both men said.

Approximately 18 Grande Prairie-area residents are on organ transplant waiting lists for hearts, lungs, livers and kidney.

Throughout the province, 207 people are waiting for major organ transplants, said Ron Andres, a single lung transplant recipient and speaker with the Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Speakers Bureau.

There were 30 donors in Alberta in 2000, he said.

Public education programs may help, but a more planned approach to deal with the families of donor candidates is also going to be important in boosting Canada's donation rates closer international averages, Andres said.

"There needs to be someone at the hospital level to specialize in that, to somehow say



Donna and Joan Ford stand behind husbands Jim and Elmer as the pair wait for double lung transplants. Both men are in advanced stages of emphysema. Photo: Deb Guerette

'have you considered this?' It takes a very professional person to do that," Andres said.

Transplants are not a cure for what ails recipients but it can provide a better quality of life and reprieve from imminently fatal disease.

Drug therapy is also rigorous, Andres said estimating he's taken some 60,000 pills since his transplant five years ago.

Attached to 50-foot oxygen lines to feed lungs falling below 20 per cent operating capacity, the Ford brothers can only hope for that post-transplant experience.

"A real frustration sets in pretty bad, over the waiting," Jim said.

"(My wife Joan) does a lot of booting to keep me up and going," Elmer said.

Some time ago Jim did get the highly anticipated all-of-a-sudden-call from the Edmonton based transplant team saying lungs were available, spurring them to make the trip south in the few-hour window required for the procedure.

"The call came at 7:23 a.m.," Jim's wife Donna said.

"How traumatic is that, that you remember the exact time

the phone rang," she said.

By 11 a.m. however, the adrenaline and excitement crashed into news that the lungs were not suitable for transplant.

"You should have taken them anyway and told them you need one for you and one for your brother," Elmer joked again.

"It took days to settle down again," Jim said.

Both men say the transplant team in Edmonton and others they know who have received or are waiting for organ or tissue transplants give them great confidence about undertaking the major surgeries.

"No fear," says Jim. "It is quite a family of people you know through this."

His family gave permission for organ donation from their son when he died some years ago, Jim said.

"When you die and get packed off to a cemetery, it is just a waste," Elmer said.

"The spirit is gone and so much good could come of it," he said.

"Donate, donate, donate. Sign your donor cards," Jim said.

"The life you save could be someone you know," he said.

The Daily Herald-Tribune  
Grande Prairie, Alberta, Canada

• Mon, Apr 16, 2001 Page 1

# Ten years ago today

## Grande Prairie resident celebrates a decade after lung transplant

DEBI RUHL

Herald-Tribune staff

At this time every year, most people's thoughts are with their families and friends.

For Ron Andres, however, the holiday season means thoughts always stray somewhere else – with a family he doesn't know and people he's never met.

Ten years ago today his life was saved by an organ donor.

"Usually at this time of year I get very emotional. My thoughts are always with the donor family," said Ron, who received a lung on Dec. 4, 1996 after battling idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis for two years.

"That has been my biggest struggle with this whole thing. That family had to lose someone for me to live. Every year at this time, there's a seat at that family's table that's not taken."

Ron was Grande Prairie's first lung transplant patient 10 years ago. Prior to his illness, he was known as "the boss" – he worked long hours at Weyerhaeuser, coached minor hockey for 20 years and was always in control.

All of that, however, was ripped away with an X-ray and a doctor's diagnosis.

"I found out something was wrong when (my wife) Trudy and I were taking dancing lessons about 12 years ago. I couldn't keep up and I was always breaking into a heavy sweat. I finally went to the doctor and they started doing a bunch of different tests," he said.

"I was a guy that was in control of everything. All of a sudden, here I was, out of control. Someone else was in control and that was really an emotional time for me."

Because his doctors thought he had asthma, Ron was put on several different medications.

After eight months, his condition hadn't improved so he was sent to a specialist.

"She took one look at me, did some X-rays and said, 'You're in big trouble.' I was told I needed an open lung biopsy. I just sat there taking it all in," he said.

"I didn't know what that meant. I didn't know what was going on. A lot goes through your mind when you hear something like that."

In mid-1995, Ron underwent the biopsy at the Grey Nun's hospital in Edmonton. He was subsequently diagnosed with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis, a condition in which enough oxygen doesn't get into the bloodstream.

"They said right off the bat that they didn't know how long someone with this condition would live," Trudy



Trudy and Ron Andres are celebrating the 10th anniversary of the lung transplant that saved Ron's life.

Photo: Debi Ruhl

said. "Most people don't live two years after they're diagnosed."

Ron was put on the transplant list and went about his business. He was on oxygen 24 hours a day, carried extra oxygen tanks in the back of his car and waited by the phone.

Andres got his first call in October 1996 that a matching lung had been found. After getting to Edmonton and checking into the hospital, Ron and Trudy were told the lung was damaged, forcing them to head back to Grande Prairie.

However, it wasn't long before the next call came in.

"They flew us out on Dec. 3 right after work and did the operation shortly after midnight," Trudy said.

"When you get that call, it's like you've never heard of a transplant before but that's what had to be done. You don't have time to second-guess anything. You just take it. It's a gift and you move forward and deal with it later."

Dealing with the situation was a

hurdle Ron himself had trouble with. For eight months, he had been waiting for someone else's death in order for his own life to be saved.

"I was horrendously emotional and I was not that type of guy at all. Just think about that: You have to wait for a death," he said.

**"They said right off the bat that they didn't know how long someone with this condition would live."**

– Trudy Andres

"Things were happening and moving so fast. They worked unbelievably quickly and gave me one lung and gave the other to another man. I got through with the support of family and friends. Trudy never left my side and that was huge for me. I know I'm so fortunate. I was only on the waiting list for six to eight months and that's just unbelievable."

That year, the Andres family spent Christmas in a hotel room in Edmonton. Ron left the hospital after three months and went back to work.

Four months later he went into rejection and was in and out of the hos-

pital for the next several months.

"I was as sick as a dog every day," he said. "However, something happened all of a sudden to turn it around. Since then I've had a few blips but everything has been pretty good. In the last two or three years I have not been admitted to the hospital at all. I'm feeling better every time I go in for a check up."

Although he thinks about the transplant and the donor family each year around this time, the 10-year mark has put things into perspective for both Ron and Trudy. Although Ron initially resisted the idea of a transplant, he's now counting his blessings.

"I have never thought of it as much as I have this year. Every day is a good day. Some people may complain about the wind, the snow or the cold but I just feel like it's a fresh day. I'm here. I can breathe," he said.

"It changes your perspective on things," added Trudy. "You prioritize and realize that some things aren't as important as you thought they were. We enjoy every day. You have to be because you learn that you might not have another."

The Daily Herald-Tribune

Grande Prairie, Alberta, Canada • Mon, Dec 4, 2006 Page 3