

# Davis: A Modern Medical Miracle

By Brian Whitt  
Goldthwaite Eagle

Tom Davis has led a full life, working all over the United States and traveling widely for business and recreation. Once an avid motorcyclist, he has great stories to tell about his experiences cycling around the country. Now that he is semi-retired and living with his wife Kathryn in Goldthwaite, his days of adventure are mostly past, but he remains active, hunting and working on his property whenever he is able. That being said, he knows at age 74 that what he does depends in large part on his heart.

According to Tom, he had quadruple bypass heart surgery six or seven years ago. That was the beginning of an odyssey that would lead to him undergoing a rare procedure in Waco that not only saved his life, but made him briefly famous.

In a followup visit to his Lake Dallas doctor after the quadruple bypass, it was discovered that Tom had a leak in one of his heart valves. In the years that followed, he

made periodic trips to Waco Cardiology for checkups. In early 2018, an arrhythmia was found, and Tom was scheduled for an ablation. When the cardiologist tested Tom, "Dr. Z," as his patients know him, found that the valve had swollen.

Tom had experienced shortness of breath for awhile. Comparing it to running track, Tom said "it's what you felt like after running the first 200 yards" of a mile race. After the ablation, his cardiologist told him it was time to have something done about the valve. If Tom chose to do nothing, he was putting himself at high risk of having a stroke.

At the time, three Texas hospitals in Dallas, Houston, and Temple offered a new heart valve replacement surgery. Then, a young cardiologist trained in performing that procedure, Dr. Brian Barnett, moved to Waco from



Temple.

"My cardiologist had told me a few years back...I was going to be lucky, because when I had to have that valve replaced, they've got this new procedure that they don't have to open you up and go in your chest," Tom said.

Getting the needed surgery required qualifying for it. Tom said Dr. Barnett told him he was "right on the borderline." The doctor tested him thoroughly to be sure there would be no surprises, and after the tests, Tom was approved for the valve replacement.

"After I went through that open heart surgery, it was no question to me," Tom said.

Tom was the second patient ever to have the procedure done at Waco's Providence hospital on October 3, 2018. The first was a female patient scheduled before him on the same day. That earned him some time on television after it was over. During the procedure, the hospital kept a heart surgeon on standby in case Tom needed open heart surgery. To summarize what was

done, two tubes were inserted through his groin and a replacement valve constructed of animal tissue was set in place. The procedure was a complete success.

The day after the procedure, Tom was able to go home. The day after that, he attended the 6th Grade Field Day in Goldthwaite. He had to take it easy for awhile, but he was soon back to business as usual. There was simply no comparison when it came to measuring his recovery time versus what he had endured with the open heart surgery.

"After that, you know, I was feeling fine. I was out mowing the grass," he said. "I just felt good."

Tom has had some leg problems lately, but otherwise he is doing well.

"My only limitation is my legs, is my feet," he said.

One thing Tom's not worried about right now is his new heart valve, and he is very complimentary of the medical staff at Providence.

"Overall, the deal was good," he said. "I would highly recommend it."

## CRYSTAL DOWELL

### Family Nurse Practitioner

*We are excited to announce that Crystal Dowell, Family Nurse Practitioner, will now be at the Coryell Health Mills County Clinic full time, taking walk-in and same day appointments. Crystal has been in the nursing field for over 20 years, having earned her Bachelor's of Science in Nursing from the University of Texas- Arlington and her Master's of Science in Nursing-Family Nurse Practitioner (FNP) from South University. **Crystal grew up in Goldthwaite and enjoys spending time there with her husband and four children.***



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