

# A World Away, Finding a Lifeline and a Friend

## The Enduring Gift Of a German Donor

By PAMELA GWYN KRIPKE

DALLAS — In 2000, after 31 years of robust health, James Chippendale, a wealthy Dallas business executive who had traveled much of the world, was found to be suffering from a lethal form of leukemia. His doctors told him that his only chance of survival was a bone marrow transplant, and that the likelihood of finding a matching donor seemed bleak.

"I was a hard match," Mr. Chippendale said, "and there was nothing for me in the United States. So we had to go on the international registry."

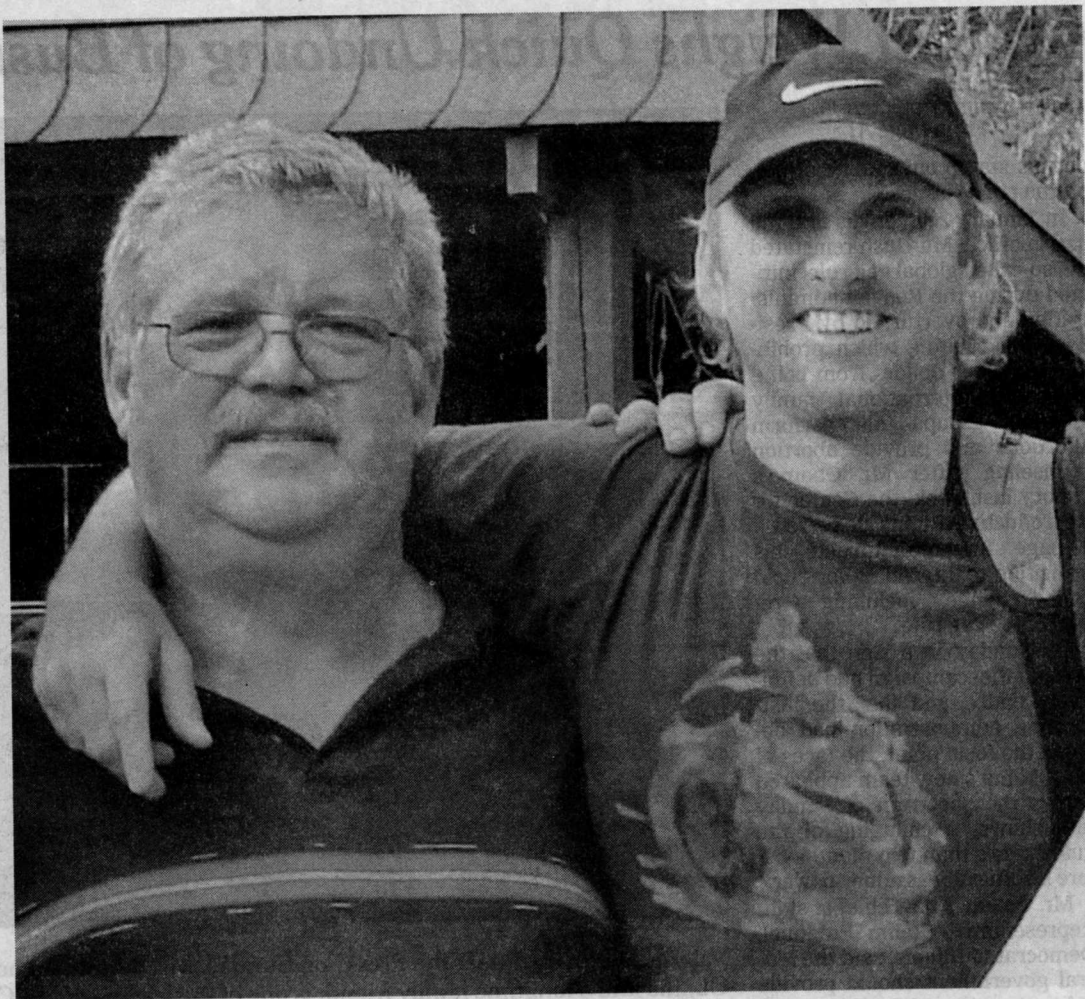
More than 5,000 miles and a world away, Klaus Kaiser, a simple man who repairs bicycles in the German village where he was born, had tried unsuccessfully to be a marrow donor for a friend with a blood disorder. Each year Mr. Kaiser received a form asking if he wanted to continue being listed on the donor registry. And each year he checked the box marked "yes."

On paper at least, or more accurately on sophisticated medical computer screens, Mr. Kaiser's marrow seemed a perfect match for Mr. Chippendale. In November 2000, doctors extracted marrow from Mr. Kaiser's hip bone, packed it in 10 pounds of dry ice and flew it 5,214 miles to Dallas, where Mr. Chippendale and his medical team waited anxiously at Baylor University Medical Center.

They need not have worried. The bone marrow transplant was a success, and today, Mr. Chippendale said, his doctors tell him he is cancer free.

"Here, you are on the list for life," Mr. Chippendale, 40, said of donor registries in the United States. "There, you have to check 'yes' each year. I am alive because Klaus checked 'yes.'"

Two years after the transplant, Mr. Kaiser received a telephone call from the donor organization that had found him. "They asked if I wanted to get to know the per-



James Chippendale of Dallas, right, received a bone marrow transplant from Klaus Kaiser, a German who was on a donor registry. "I am very proud of James," Mr. Kaiser said.

son who received my bone marrow," he said. "It made me so happy, because I knew then that it had helped. I didn't know before."

A short time later, a letter appeared in Mr. Kaiser's mailbox in Gutter, a town of 150 people west of Berlin. Mr. Kaiser did not speak or read English; he did not have to. Mr. Chippendale had had a friend translate into German the words he had written to the man who had saved his life. He sent the letter to the tiled-roof cottage where Mr. Kaiser grew up and where he lives with his wife, Regina.

When the letter arrived, Mr. Kaiser said, "it felt like a close family member emerged from somewhere."

But Mr. Chippendale knew that a single letter could not begin to express his gratitude. He enrolled in night classes to learn as much German as he could and

## In a small town, steins lifted high to celebrate a thankful American's visit.

bought a plane ticket. His arrival in Gutter in early 2003 was cause for a villagewide celebration, with songs and beer lifted high in steins.

"The whole family was there," Mr. Kaiser said, "and we were full of joy when we met James in person. For me, James is my blood brother."

The visit was equally moving for Mr. Chippendale, who is single and owns an insurance company that serves the entertainment industry. He works with celebrities as a matter of course. But after his illness and meeting Mr. Kaiser, he said, rubbing el-

bows with the rich and famous does not matter nearly as much.

"You would think we would be so different," Mr. Chippendale said, "but down to the core, we are not. Klaus would do anything for the ones he loves, and he has taught me to do the same."

On his first visit to Gutter, Mr. Chippendale brought presents, a laptop computer with translation software and a digital camera for swapping photos. He has returned three times — once to surprise Mr. Kaiser on his 50th birthday — and he sends e-mail messages twice a week to him and Regina and their children — Steffi, a dental technician, and Jens, a metalworker like his father, who with his girlfriend is about to have a baby.

On his most recent visit to Gutter, Mr. Chippendale took note of the house across the road from Mr. Kaiser's, a storybook stone bungalow left abandoned and overgrown. "I thought Klaus would like to have his first grandchild close," he said, "so my fam-

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then knowing.

Now, a village effort is under way to renovate the home. "Everybody is something," Mr. Chippendale marvels, "a carpenter, an electrician, a bricklayer."

Mr. Chippendale had some other ideas about what he wanted to do with Mr. Kaiser's gift of life. He wanted to climb. In 2007, he and a fellow cancer survivor, Mike Peters, a rock musician, thought they could raise money for hospitals that lacked the resources to provide modern cancer screening and treatment.

They started the Love Hope Strength Foundation, which puts on concerts in unexpected elevations worldwide: the Empire State Building, the base camp of Mount Everest and, last month, at Machu Picchu in Peru. So far they have raised \$1.5 million.

Their settings are places Mr. Kaiser will probably never visit. He has never been on an airplane and seems content not to travel far from his home. But he certainly does not feel deprived.

"After the transplant," Mr. Kaiser said, "the physician thanked me for the donation in the name of mankind. I am very proud of James. He tries to give back to the world what he got from me. I am very happy that we have become such great friends."