

Your Anatomical Gift Advisor

by Con Chapman

Since the promulgation of the Uniform Anatomical Gift Act, the practice of giving—and receiving—bodily organs as gifts has exploded. I don't mean the organs have exploded, because most of them have not, thanks to rigorous quality controls. But the gifting, and in some cases “re-gifting” of organs has raised issues at the forefront of medical ethics, etiquette and shopping. Here are some of the questions raised by our readers this month.

Uniform Anatomical Gift Act: It's spreading like wildfire!

Dear Anatomical Gift Advisor:

This girl whom I will call “Cheryl” because I have always liked that name has been a friend of mine since she and I and another girl named “Lisa” were on the “Zips” pep squad in high school. Long story short, I need a new kidney and I very delicately approached “Cheryl” to ask if she could donate one, it was for a good cause and all.

AGA, I was floored to hear that Cheryl had already given one of her kidneys to “Lisa” without telling me! Now she has only one left, and won't give it up, even to someone who's stuck by her through thick and thin, like when that guy Duane dumped her right before the junior prom in 1966.



"Let's see—I've got a spleen in taupe, size 40R, from a former PTA president in Muncie."

I don't think it is fair or right for somebody to just give up a kidney without publishing it in a local paper, like "I will no longer be responsible for the debts of my husband Jimmy Ray, the no-count loser, after September 30th, 2012." What do you think?

Judith Ann Oehrke, Florissant MO.



"A kidney—that is so thoughtful of you, Marianne!"

Dear Judith Ann—

(and my what a lovely name!) We never know, when we are in high school and working hard on crepe paper floats for homecoming and doing the many things that pep squads do that the damn hotshot football players don't appreciate and then go out with cheerleaders, who we are going to end up giving a kidney to. Will it be Judith Marie Swanson, who helped us TP the home of Claude Boul, Jr., who fumbled the game away against Knob Noster? Or will it be Nordica Newbill, the late-season "diversity" addition that the nerdy-looking ACLU lawyers forced on us? Frankly, not knowing the particulars of your particular pep squad I can't say, but you should ask if your high school alumni association maintains a donor list.



Anatomical Gift Society Chorus

Dear Anatomical Gift Advisor:

I was recently approached by my friend “Tina” (her real name, but I used quotes anyway to throw people off the scent) to donate a liver to her due to some hard drinking she has done in the wake of her divorce from Kenny “Chip” Whalen, whose dad owns that big truck body company on the west side of town. Of course I said yes—I have known Tina since we were at Miss Louise's Kindergarten together, and she broke up with Duane Edmunds so I could date him sophomore year.



Liver-pattern women's top. Also available with onions.

Anatomical Gift Advisor, I did a little research at the insistence of Duane, who is now my husband and the father (I'm pretty sure) of our adorable baby girl, Tiffany. He sent me to Wikipedia, a free encyclopedia that says people only have one liver. It also says that Christopher Columbus was named after a city in Ohio, so I'm not sure if I trust it. What do you think?

Sincerely, Marguerite Nostrand, Keokuk, Iowa



"Thanks very much for your liver. My wife is really going to appreciate her margaritas."

Dear Marguerite—

I'm afraid on this rare occasion Wikipedia is right—people are generally born with a single liver, unless they are freaks who appear at state fairs with the Blaser Brothers Traveling Amusement Shows. You have made a commitment to a life-long friend to give her your liver, so I'm afraid you are required by the common principles of etiquette and Robert's Rules of Order to give it to her, even though it means your certain death. I hope you survive on life support long enough to appreciate Tina's thank-you note.

"Come right in—we're looking for a few good spleens."

Dear Anatomical Gift Advisor:

Settle a bet for me. When a guy flying his own plane dies in a crash and you get some of his organs there is no need to test for alcohol because the FAA wouldn't let him fly if he'd been drinking. My brother Darrell says you should administer a breathalyzer test just to be sure, but he is a guy who locks his car when he's just going into the 7-11. If there is a law or something, fine, but I can't believe we've come to the point in America where you can't crash

your plane and give your organs away without some damn government agency getting in the way.

Furman Muller, Between, Oklahoma

Dear Furman:

I'm sorry but for reasons of purity *all* anatomical gifts must be passed through the point-of-sale scanner to see if they qualify for any specials or cents-off coupons. So many "donees" claim mail-in rebates or other financial benefits that the FDA has stepped in to protect unsuspecting check-out girls, yearning to take their cigarette break, who sometimes overlook the formalities of anatomical gift-giving. You do not say who, as between you and Darrell, was going to get the organs, but if the intended recipient can just "hold his horses" for awhile he or you'll be better off in the long run.

Available in Kindle format on amazon.com as part of the collection "Take My Advice, I Wasn't Using it Anyway."

