Barb Cozic (shown left) was having some liver trouble. In the morning of
Nov. 1, she found out that “trouble” had developed into cancer. Later that
day, she and her niece Bree Cooper had a seat in the waiting room of the
Frank Sarris Outpatient Clinic at the Thomas E. Starzl Transplantation
Institute, where Cozic was to be assessed for a new liver.

A few minutes later, Robert “Bo” Garritano (right) and his wife, Joyce,
strode into the room. They had been there before. Many times. On Oct.
9, 2007, Garritano, at age 63—having been diagnosed with liver cancer
months before—underwent a liver transplant of his own. For the past couple
of years, the Garritanos have volunteered at the Starzl Institute, helping
others know what to expect before and after transplantation.

Bo Garritano introduced himself to the dozen or so in the waiting room
and then asked Cozic and Cooper where they were from. “Chester, West
Virginia,” they said. “West-by-God Virginia!” he boomed in response. The
voluble Garritano told his story and listened to theirs. “I don’t even feel
sick,” Cozic said to Garritano, “I said to myself, What am I doing here?”
He replied, “What you have is a compensating liver. When you feel this
good, you don’t know if you want a transplant. I felt so strong that I was
riding my bicycle in the city the day I got mine.”

Garritano then wished Cozic and Cooper luck, counseled patience and
resilience, and moved across the room to another waiting patient.
“So,” Garritano said, “where are you from?” —Joe Miksch
—Photograph by Martha Rial