

## Severe Drug Reaction Alters Man's Life



Pilot Bob Oglesby "came through" for Tellis and his wife, Sharon.

*Editor's note: Last month we published this photo of Tellis in the Angel Flyer and thought you would be interested in hearing his compelling story.*

When Tellis L. of Salem, Va., went to his doctor for gout in June 2000 and was treated with the drug Allopurinol, he had no idea that six months later his body would burn from the inside out and that he would go nearly blind.

The 33-year-old man developed a painful and sometimes fatal condition known as Stevens Johnson syndrome that results from an allergic drug reaction.

In Tellis' case, the reaction began in his mouth with blisters. "My skin started sloughing. My throat started closing." After a trip to the emergency room, he was airlifted to the University of Virginia burn unit.

"The next day I lost all the skin of my body. I was just pink. My wife almost lost it when she saw it. I had morphine patches on me left and right. I ended up with a tube feeding me through the nose. My lungs filled up with blood."

During the first couple of days at U.Va., doctors

had doubts he would survive. "I pulled through," Tellis says. "God has blessed me by keeping me here for some reason."

He and his wife, Sharon, have taken three Angel Flights to Miami, Fla., for treatment, including eye surgery. "I've had a total of 12 eye procedures," including three corneal transplants, he says.

A fourth flight is scheduled for this month.

One surgery, performed in March by an ocular plastic surgeon, Dr. Junhee Lee, at South Miami Hospital, involved reconstructing Tellis' eyelids, which, because of the burning, were like sandpaper.

Dr. Lee "removed all my eyelashes because they had turned inward. I have no tears. He made an incision on the side of my nose and grafted skin to the top and bottom of my eyelids."

Tellis, who was an inventory analyst for a branded merchandise company, Hanover Direct, is on disability and is legally blind.

Sharon works as a general ledger accountant and has gone back to college "to better her situation. We struggle from month to month," says Tellis, who enjoyed refereeing for baseball, softball and football before becoming ill.

"It takes your life. You have to become a different person. I was used to going outside and doing what I wanted. Now I need a cane. I'm dependent on someone else. I can't drive."

Tellis says the Angel Flights have been "a total blessing. Without Angel Flight we couldn't have gotten this far."



**Congratulations to Ed Boyer for receiving the Lifetime Achievement Award of the Virginia Department of Aviation. Boyer is the founder and CEO of Mercy Medical Airlift, and a cofounder and the current chairman of Angel Flight America.**