Pilot Tells Exciting Transplant Tale

The local weather was too unpredictable to get back down at Greenville, and we opted not to attempt Morristown.

Both small airports didn’t offer ILS approaches, and it would have been “up a creek” trying to get her in, in time for her transplant.

Harrison and I stopped to get a quick Waffle House breakfast while the weather settled, then off to TYS and home by 8 a.m. Short night.

I called the family around noon and the daughter told me they had her mother sleeping and were just then harvesting the lung.

Apparently we had a little more time than we thought, but it all came out well. The daughter called me back and said her mom did just fine and has a new lung.

It was a major rewarding experience to be involved. Here is a little side note to ponder.

Both Harrison (the other pilot) and I usually go to bed between 11 and 12 o’clock. That Saturday night I told my wife I was unusually tired and for some reason, I went to bed at 8 p.m. I have NEVER done that before in my entire life!

When I woke Harrison up at 2:15 to ask if he’d come along, I apologized for the short night of sleep. He responded that for some odd reason he had been unusually tired that night and done something he’s never done before—he went to bed at 8 p.m.!

So we both had a full six hours of sleep when the call came at 2 a.m. Really, it was no problem at all. Wow, does that just give you the shivers or what??

Editor’s note: Angel Flight pilot Bill Jones, a business owner from Tennessee, flew a patient last spring to Nashville for a lung transplant. Below is his account of that critical mission.

I got the call at 2 a.m. A thunderstorm front had just passed Knoxville and the weather over Greenville was marginal with approaches to minimums.

I called an employee of mine who is also a CFII, and we went together to transport this patient. Turned out to be a good idea.

It was definitely a two-man operation getting through the weather. (Yes, it can always be done with one, but under this kind of pressure, the second pilot was a good and extra safe idea.)

By the time we got to our local airport (40 minutes from the call) and to Greenville (20 more minutes), the folks had been waiting for us for almost an hour. They went directly to the airport.

They seemed a little uptight about the “delay,” but I think that was only a matter of apprehension over the emergency at hand. Once loaded in the plane we took off with Mrs. B and her daughter.

We had trouble with a door that didn’t seal, and the weather was driving rain into the side of the plane.

Bill Jones and his Piper Saratoga accomplish mission