Kidney Patient Finds Life Is Interesting With Machine

By GARY LEMMONS

The only time you really concern yourself with your body and its functions is when something goes wrong. Then you panic. Life suddenly shrinks from a broad, daily world of work, frustration and finance to a small, internal world of simple existence.

This was the case of Don Melquist, a 34-year-old Tacoma man who suddenly found that his kidneys were not functioning.

"Before I realized that I had kidney trouble, life was dull. But now it's more interesting," he said.

His "interesting life" began about six years ago when he was taken to a routine physical and was told he was either active duty in the navy.

One Not Working

"They discovered that my right kidney wasn't even working and my left one was only partially working. I had been tired my whole life and had never known why. I guess I found out," he said.

Melquist then had his right kidney removed and became dependent upon an artificial kidney machine at the Artificial Kidney Center in Seattle. It meant a trip three times a week to Seattle for 18 to 20 hours of treatment every session. Each session cost $190.

"One treatment on the machine lasts only about a day or so, then it starts to wear off," he explained in a very soft voice.

Purified by Chemicals

A tube from an artery and a tube from a vein in his left leg are plugged into the machine. The heart then pumps the blood from his body through a series of chemicals in the machine and back into his body.

Because of the thoughtfulness of the people at the center in Seattle who contributed to a fund set up at the Puget Sound National Bank and another fund at Peoples National Bank, Melquist was able to receive the necessary kidney treatment.

"WONDER OF THE MACHINE AGE"—Don Melquist will soon undergo surgery for the removal of his remaining kidney. He will take delivery of a $300,000 home model artificial kidney machine within two weeks. Then, instead of traveling to Seattle every three days for the treatment, he will be able to use the home machine during the night and return to an almost normal life.—News Tribune staff photo by Bruce Kellman.