

## Blood Donor

*Overview: I have been a Red Cross blood donor for 55 years and have exceeded 55 gallons in donations, in particular through the Pheresis program. The opportunity to do something so simple and yet so important is tremendously rewarding.*

I got involved with the Red Cross when I was in 7th grade. My father was a blood donor and it never occurred to me not to be one when I hit 18. Classmates may remember the quarterly blood drives with competitions between fraternities and dorms. I was one of the students who helped the Hanover Red Cross Chapter run those.

After returning from Viet Nam, I had to wait 3 years before being eligible due to regulations about having been in a malaria zone, which was pretty frustrating. Until the late '70s, I was giving quarterly – so a gallon (8 donations) took 2 years.

Then I was contacted by the Red Cross and asked to become part of their Pheresis program – actually Apheresis, from Latin and Greek meaning to remove – a process where the blood is drawn, run through a centrifuge to separate it into its components (red cells, white cells, platelets, plasma) and one or more blood components are removed, and the rest of the blood returned to the donor. Because you are losing very little red cells, you can donate much more frequently. I typically do this once a month, but I have had a couple of instances where my blood (I am an A positive, but the blood is also typed by the different antibodies in it) matched so closely with the recipient's, the doctors kept asking for more platelets from me – every three days.

When you know part of your blood is that important to keeping someone alive, you can't not do it. This has been a very important part of my life for a very long time. I know other Classmates like Peter Hofman do the same thing. It's never too late to get started.

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