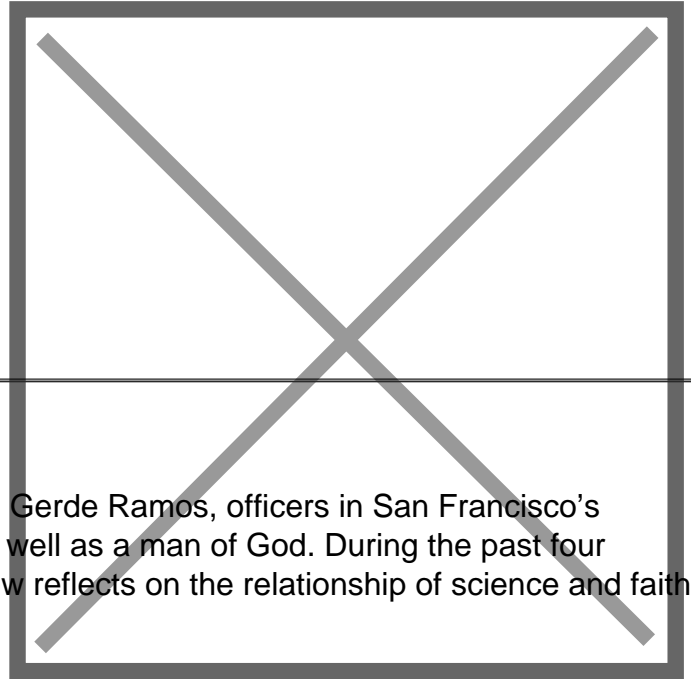


## Danny Ramos Rebuilds Life With Prayer and His Handy Computer

Ramos GOOD TIMES—Danny Ramos (center front) with his parents Majors Gerde and Hector Ramos, and brother Hector, Jr., enjoy cooking dinner.



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*By Judy Vaughn –*

Danny Ramos, 23-year-old-son of Majors Hector and Gerde Ramos, officers in San Francisco's Mission District, sees himself as a man of science as well as a man of God. During the past four years, he's been put to the test on each count. He now reflects on the relationship of science and faith in so miraculous an operation as a heart transplant.

Four years ago, marine biology was his dream, computers his hobby. When a prolonged bout with the flu turned into pneumonia, he had no way of knowing until a few months later that the virus had entered his bloodstream into his heart.

One day, when bike riding on a trail, he was struggling for breath after only a quarter of a mile. At the emergency room, they suspected allergies. Six weeks later, by then having difficulty breathing and sleeping, he went in for a second opinion. "Scratch the bike riding. Scratch the scuba diving. Scratch the Tae Kwon Do," said the doctor. "My friend, you've got an appointment with the echo cardiologist."

In the past, his surfing on the Internet had taken Ramos to Navy and Coast Guard sites dedicated to chondrichthes, the study of sharks. Now his research was cardiomyopathy, congestive heart failure. There are over 120,000 web sites on the subject. Using Alta Vista, one of the most powerful search engines, he found support groups, information and referral, questions and answers.

"By this time," he says, "I knew that no matter how much you treat the condition, it's going to get worse. Muscles start degenerating. Everything seemed to be leading to a heart transplant." Medication and diet were prescribed, but an arterial/ventricular blockage made it clear his life was now headed in a new direction.

A pacemaker was installed, and the initial steps were set in motion to find a new heart. Months went by. The waiting game had begun. He took a leave of absence from college and jumped onto the Internet. Noting his interest, doctors developed a good rapport with him. "If you want me to trust you, tell me like it is," he said to them. And they did.

Again and again they reminded him *the patient is his own best advocate*. If you show the doctors you care, they'll reciprocate with straight answers. No sugar-coating.

Removal of three wisdom teeth early in 1995 escalated the process. Bone fragments left in the gums caused his diabetes to flare up. His blood pressure was low. His heart was acting up. After a series of trial medications and tests, he was classified as "Status 1" and hospitalized more than three months, hooked up to an IV machine to receive a new drug.

Was it difficult not being hooked up to a computer as well? "Oh, but I was!" Ramos announces proudly. "I connected my laptop through the phone lines!"

Computers are his lifeline to information. A few years ago, when a "really good deal" came up to buy a computer, he jumped at the chance, not realizing it would be in parts and that he would have to assemble it—which he did. Coming to terms with the fact that scuba diving is no longer an option, he's now looking more closely at electronics as a profession.

In the hospital, he lived closely with four people, all older than he, waiting for hearts. When the next heart became available, Ramos was a perfect match, and the transplant was done.

The day came, however, when he felt his new heart pounding in his chest. The nurse monitored the situation, and when it stopped, she was there. In ten seconds she had connected the exterior pacemaker to the cables sticking out of his chest. For those brief few seconds, he was clinically dead.

Ramos is home now. The pacemaker is surgically implanted. He is recuperating well, and his mother, who with the rest of the family has been with him regularly, is finally catching up on her sleep.

"We're playing God. What God arranged once, we are rearranging. Some people believe it's all science. But not all the science in the world can explain what happened with my heart. They told me I had the most perfect match in the world. If it is all truly, purely science, why were there problems with this perfect heart? There comes a time when you have to trust a higher source.

"As a computer integrator, you have to trust that you're assembling the parts correctly. As a man of God, I'm trusting that my surgeon has done it correctly. There are no instructions for success. No manual. Just the doctor with the knowledge he's gained and the guidance of God in his hands."