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Woman receives 'gift of life'

from dying neighbor, friend but neither Ortiz nor her moth

Thursday, November 17, 1988

CHICAGO (AP) — They were neighbors, schoolmates and friends. But between them, they had one sound heart.

The Battalion

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"The first thing that went through my mind is that a friend of mine is dead," 18-year-old Maria Ortiz said Wednesday from her bed at the University of Illinois-Chicago Hospital, where she is recovering from heart transplant surgery after receiving a surprise gift — the heart of a high-school friend.

"Now I've got a chance . . . and I'll be real happy because I know the girl and I know most likely how she was and I'll feel better than having a stranger's heart in me," she said.

Ortiz lived all her life with a weakening heart muscle.

After an attack Nov. 6, she was brought to the intensive care unit at Illinois Masonic Hospital, where doctors feared she had only a few days left.

Órtiz began trying to accept that she might never get to see her 4-month-old daughter grow

up. In a waiting room nearby, her mother, Carmen Geliga, struck up a conversation with another woman whose daughter was in the same unit with a neurological disorder that had left her brain dead, but with a healthy heart.

Geliga had no idea then that their daughters had exchanged greetings at the neighborhood pool and talked occasionally in the halls at Roberto Clemente

High School before Maria dropped out.

wanted to ask her, but I couldn't, because it seemed very cruel to come out and say, 'Please, give us her heart," Geliga recalled.

Instead, she went home and prayed. When she returned to the hos-

pital, Geliga learned the woman had asked to speak with her. "I had sorrow for her because

she was losing her daughter and it's hard to accept because her daughter was leaving and mine was going on me also.... Then she just says to me, 'I want to donate my daughter's heart so that your daughter can go on living." Both girls were moved to the University of Illinois Hospital,

Doctors have pronounced t transplanted heart "an excelle match," and say Ortiz' chan for survival are promising. Candace Wiberg, organ

curement coordinator at the pital, said doctors bypassed ast protocol for chosing a recipe from among all eligible paten because the donor's moth "likely wouldn't have donated unless she knew Maria would g

knew the donor was a friendum other friends of the two teenagers made the connection.

Ortiz says she has occasio bouts of sadness over her fri fate, and promises one of herf trips when she returns home be to visit her friend's mother.

Police officer makes use of toys for auto accident investigations

FREEPORT (AP) — When the finer points of his occupational specialty require further study, Police Officer Paul Leach opens the box of metal toy cars and begins to play. "I know it looks childish," Leach said, laugh-

ing. "My kids say 'Daddy, can we play with them when you're done?"

Through their juvenile exterior, the mite-sized whicles illustrate a growing trend in law enforce-ment of which Leach, 37, recently became a part. With two hefty handfuls of equipment that in-clude a calculator, plumb bob, video camera and

his Matchbox racers, Leach is able to reconstruct the scene of an automobile accident. It is an unloved art form that takes a good amount of physics and detective work to do right, he said.

"It's boring and brings lots of complaints, that's why people don't like it," Leach said. "I love math.

Though some Department of Public Safety troopers have similar training and all city officers learn the basics, Police Chief Charles Bankston said Leach is the only one in southern Brazoria

County certified as an accident reconstructionist. "He's good at it," Bankston said. "He's studied it hard.'

He added that it was an aspect of police work expected to become more important in the future

'Accidents have become so complicated these days," Bankston said. "Somebody needs to know how to do it.

To gain his certification, Leach took 140 hours of investigation classes and did well enough to be invited to the advanced school at Texas A&M University along with about 20 others from across the state, he said.

It was an opportunity the city's traffic enforcement officer couldn't refuse, one he has worked toward since he began in the profession 13 years

Leach said he would talk with longtime state patrolmen, who utilized car damage, skidmarks, momentum, drag factors and rotational energy in their investigations.

'You started finding out there may be more to

an accident than meets the eye," he said. combination of all these things that makeitt Learning the basics of the subject piqued interest.

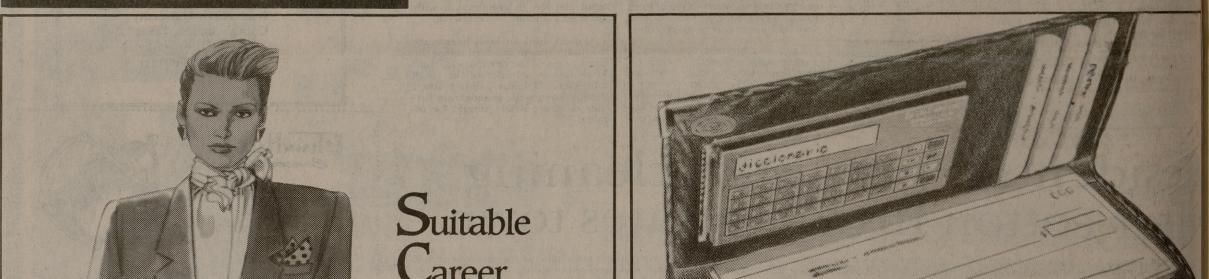
"I got the bug," Leach said. "I thought was an opportunity to better myself."

He has since traveled back to College St for lessons on braking systems and crush n surements.

On an accident investigation scene, he will mally arrive with about \$1,800 in equipme Leach purchased all of it himself, as a wayof paring for possible future work for an atto or as a teacher outside of law enforcement.

Leach said answers to some accidents ca arrived at to a near degree, the results of a where even the shards of a broken head studied in a laboratory can help solve the puzzle of the solve the so

The toys are used to play with differents narios. By tying the back wheels or pushing cars down a wooden ramp, Leach said it become easier to get a feel for what really might has happened during a crash.





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