

The Beat Goes On

When Bill Daem's wife bent down to kiss her mother good-bye, she was startled by the pumping of her mother's heart. "She's gone," the nurse assured her. "That's just her pace-maker still working."

On the way home Bill and Evelyn talked about it. What a waste that this expensive, life-saving contraption was going to be buried with the body. A pace maker costs from \$3,000 to \$9,000. After surgery, the total bill will be \$18,000 to \$36,000. Bill stewed about it for another year or so and then decided to do something about it.

In 1994, Bill Daem with the support of his wife, started **Heart Too Heart**, a pacemaker recovery organization in Billings, Montana. The money for phone calls, stationery and mailings come from the pocket of this Roman Catholic deacon and retired fire-fighter. Cooperation from morticians has been encouraging, with over 1,300 pacemakers sent in over the last four years. Some are still new but missing the leads; some were implanted for just ten minutes before death took over. All pace makers are tested, and only those still operating at 80% efficiency or better will be re-used. The others are returned to the makers for disposal.

Bill feels strongly that no money should change hands in the effort to recycle the pacemakers. Instead, they are passed along only to doctors who are willing to

donate the surgery and medical care for those receiving a Heart Too Heart pacemaker.

Ironically, the Food and Drug Administration will not approve recycled pacemakers or defibrillators for use in the U.S. Nor is Heart Too Heart allowed to ship them to another country. So what was Bill to do?

It turns out that medical devices may be hand-carried by one MD to an MD in another country. In a truly "catholic" endeavor, Bill Daem uses a Jewish doctor in New York to carry pacemakers to Israel where an Arab doctor donates his services to anyone in need. Bill is now working through doctors in various church ministries to get pacemakers to Sweden, Canada, Asia, the Caribbean, and Africa.

Non-implanted devices such as the telemetry transmitters for monitoring and resetting pacemakers are permitted to be re-used. But until there is sufficient pressure on the FDA, the poor in this country will have no option for receiving the pacemakers that go with them.

If you—or someone you know—wears a pacemaker, be sure to let relatives know that it can be recycled.

By the way, Bill Daem writes a personal "thank you" to the next-of-kin after each donation.



Hear Now

Hearing aids can be recycled, too. Yet such a tiny device is likely to get forgotten in the distraction of funeral arrangements. Low-income individuals pay a \$30 processing fee to receive one of these through the Hear Now program. Send the hearing aid in a padded envelope to: Hear Now, 9745 F. Hamden Ave., Suite 300, Denver, CO 80231. Include a return address if you would like a donation receipt for income tax purposes. For more information call 800-648-HEAR.



Lions to the Rescue

In most communities, the local Lions Club will recycle eye-glasses. If there is no Lions Club in your area or if you would like to donate glasses for distribution in other countries, mail them to Operation Eyesight Universal, 4 Parkdale Crescent NW, Calgary, Alberta T2N 3T Canada



For Diabetics

Even if you are covered by medical insurance, getting your company to fork over \$4,000 for an insulin pump is almost impossible. Even if you succeeded in getting one, your diabetes specialist probably knows someone who didn't. Recycling an insulin pump locally—through the doctor who prescribed it—is probably the best way to pass a pump along.



Medical Equipment

A wheelchair, commode, walker, or other medical equipment will be appreciated by others struggling with large medical bills. Check with your visiting nurse's association to see who in your area is handling such donations.



Another Card?

FCA has devised a red wallet card to carry if you have medical devices that should be recycled after death. Contact information is on the back for each of the various options. Ask and ye shall receive. Send an SASE to: FCA, 33 Patchen Road, South Burlington, Vermont 05403.

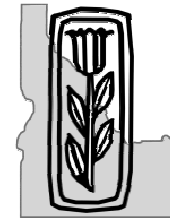
Smoothing the Way Series

Cremation Explained
Death Away from Home
Did You Forget?
Earth Burial: A Tradition in Simplicity
Eco-friendly Death and Funeral Choices
Guide to Funeral Planning
How to Help Grieving People
How to Plan a Memorial Service
Lay Me to Rest in a Plain Pine Box
Light, Like the Sun—an essay on cremation
No One Wants to Talk about Death
Organ & Body Donation: A Gift to Science
Prepaying Your Funeral: Benefits & Dangers
Recycle Your Medical Devices
Simple & Cheap, My Father Said—daughter of Supreme Court Justice Hugo Black
Ten Tips for Saving Funeral Dollars
Twelve Reasons People Spend "Too Much"
Veterans' Funeral & Burial Benefits
Viewing & Visitation: The Difference
What Shall We Do with the Ashes?
What You Should Know about Embalming

In addition to the above listed pamphlets, FCA has an excellent end-of-life planning kit, "Before I Go, You Should Know." The 20-page booklet comes in a freezer pouch with door magnet, a check list of items to store there, along with the state-specific *Living Will and Durable Power of Attorney*. Cost is \$10, which includes postage. Kit is provided free to members. To order with Visa or MasterCard, call 800-765-0107. Or mail a check to our address.

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Recycle Your Medical Devices



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