

Plastic Valve Means Life For Local Heart Victim



Howard Erb and his wife, Arlene, in their home off West Lincoln Avenue.



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A Lititz RD2 man has a new lease on life these days, thanks to a plastic valve that surgeons put in his heart six months ago.

Howard Erb, salesman, auction clerk, ex-farmer, faced certain death last summer. Today, following open heart surgery, he is back on his job and "a new man," as his wife says.

Many local farmers and sale enthusiasts will know Erb from his years as a clerk at the Garden Spot Auction and Green Dragon, and as a salesman for Roy Brubaker, farm implement dealer.

Discovering the 54-year old Erb's heart condition came about in a routine manner for all the drama that was to follow.

Five years ago (the first time in about 20 years, he says) he went to his family doctor because he had a cold. Upon examining him, the doctor found an irregular heart beat, and further examination turned up a bad valve leading to the aorta, or main artery in the heart.

The doctor advised him he needed surgery, but Erb put it off, not ready to face such an ordeal.

Erb nursed his faulty heart along for five years, but in July of 1971 it finally caught up with him, and he had a heart attack. Following near death, he was convinced that he could no longer put off the surgery.

Choosing the hospital and the surgeon was a big step, and after talking to other persons who had undergone open heart surgery, he decided on Temple University

Hospital in Philadelphia. He went there almost immediately after his release from Lancaster General Hospital, where he had been taken when he had his heart failure.

Dr. Gerald Lamole was to perform the operation. He told Erb he had a 50-50 chance of

coming through, no more, no less.

The operation itself lasted about five hours, a long day of waiting and wondering for his wife, Arlene, and two teenage daughters. He was taken from his room at 7 a.m. and brought back about 2:30 that afternoon. The first word Mrs. Erb received was at noon, when the surgeon came to the room to tell her the valve was in place and things were going smoothly.

Following two weeks in the hospital, during which his wife drove back and forth from Lititz every day to be with him, Erb was sent home to recuperate.

Facing the overwhelming fact

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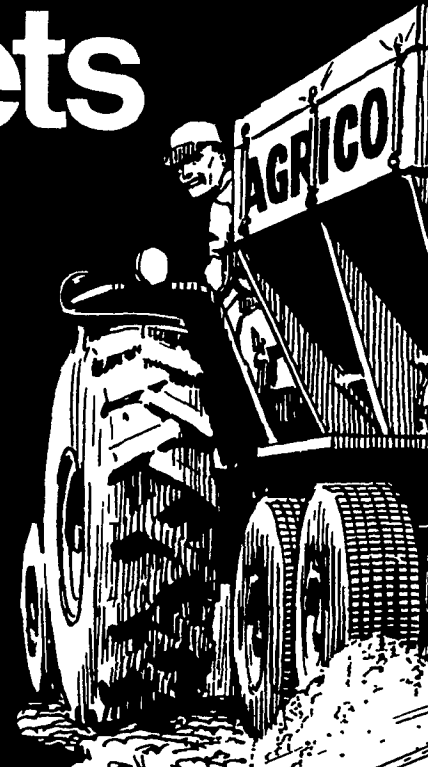
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