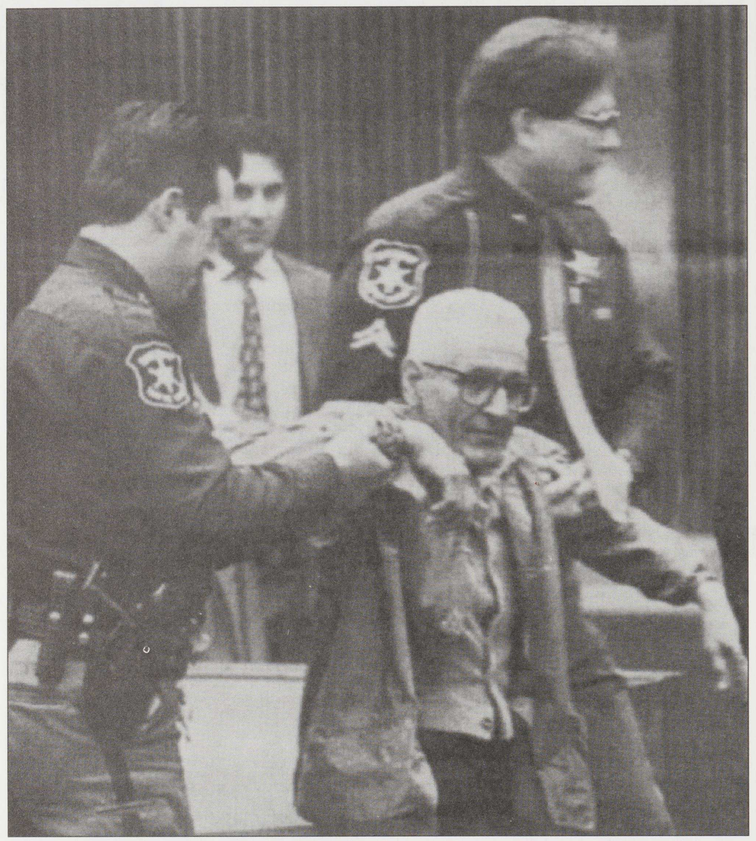
Kevorkian leaves jailhouse after man posts his bond; Commission begins hearings on legalizing suicide



Kevorkian goes limp. Learning from the Lambs?

Detroit, MI — Jack Kevorkian walked out of Wayne County jail at noon November 8, two hours before the new Michigan Commission on Death and Dying heard emotional appeals for and against his crusade to legalize physician-assisted suicide.

In the latest bizarre twist in the saga of the man known as "Dr. Death," Kevorkian abruptly dropped his threat to die by starvation in jail and accepted release after John A. DeMoss, a suburban Detroit lawyer, posted a $20,000 bond.

DeMoss said later that he provided $2,000 in cash to secure the bond because, if Kevorkian's hunger strike was serious, he wanted to save him, and if it was a "charade" designed to gain public sympathy, "I wanted to bring that to a screeching halt."

After meeting Kevorkian for the first time at the jail today, DeMoss said in a telephone interview, he concluded that the hunger-strike threat was "a big flim-flam."

While in jail, Kevorkian drank fruit juices and water and took vitamins.

Describing himself as a vehement opponent of Kevorkian's activities, DeMoss said Geoffrey N. Fieger, Kevorkian's lawyer, pulled him aside at the jail and told him, "You know, I could be a lot more effective if we leave him in jail."

Referring to Fieger, a flamboyant personal-injury lawyer who has gained national notoriety by representing Kevorkian, DeMoss said, "I think we have been subjected to a one-man show by someone who accuses every judge who rules against his client of being an idiot and everyone who is against assisted suicide of being a religious nut. I'd like to see the whole discussion on a little higher plane than that."

Fieger responded that he told DeMoss, "This makes it harder. We don't want people putting up the bond because then the issue doesn't get resolved. At some point this law has got to go."

Fieger said Kevorkian tried to refuse release on bond, but that Wayne County Sheriff Robert Ficano told him he had no choice.

Kevorkian, 65, a retired pathologist who has helped 19 people to end their lives during his three-year crusade, was jailed November 5 when he refused to post bond. Kevorkian refused to leave the courtroom under his own power and was carried out to jail.

He is charged with violating Michigan's new law banning assisted suicide for his role in the death August 4 of Thomas Hyde, 30, who suffered from amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, also known as Lou Gehrig's disease. Kevorkian had been free on a $100,000 personal bond, which required no cash payment.

But when Kevorkian participated in the suicide of Donald O'Keefe, 73, a cancer patient, eight hours after being charged in the Hyde case, Wayne County prosecutors sought and won the new bond requirement, which Kevorkian refused to meet. He has since been charged with a criminal violation of the assisted-suicide law in the O'Keefe case.

Kevorkian's surprise exit from jail overshadowed the first public hearing of the commission, created by the same law that banned assisted suicide. But emotions fueling the divisive debate were in full view as the panel listened to heartbreaking stories of suffering by the terminally ill and passionate appeals against giving physicians or anyone "a license to kill."

"Can't you see where this is leading, folks?" said Katherine Brown, who described herself as a wife and mother. "Doesn't it sound like government-sponsored euthanasia?"

Madeline Satwicz, 72, a retired nurse and member of the National Association of Pro-Life Nurses, warned that nurses would be forced to assist suicides if the practice is legalized. "When medical killing is embraced, the nurse will become the agent of the killing," she said.

John Finn, a physician and vice president of Hospice of Southeastern Michigan, said modern medicine is poorly equipped to deal with assisted suicide or even the natural process of dying. "Doctors years ago had a better sense of the dying process than technically trained modern doctors," he said.■

Kevorkian kills while on bond; tries to escape police

Detroit, MI — While on bail, thrown by attorney John DeMoss, Jack Kevorkian has killed yet another "patient" — this time in his own apartment.

On November 22, Kevorkian assisted the suicide of a physician, Dr. Ali Khalili, 61, a rehabilitative medicine specialist from Oak Brook suffering from bone cancer.

Khalili died after breathing carbon monoxide.

"There was no reason behind this except the political showmanship," commented Andrew Burnett, Director of the Stop Kevorkian Project. "The man was a doctor. He didn't need Kevorkian's help to do this."

Police Lt. Don Novak and his officers arrived after an anonymous call reported a "medicide" — Kevorkian's term for what he does.

Charges are yet to be filed, but police conducted a search of Kevorkian's apartment several days later on November 29, when it appeared that Kevorkian might be attempting another suicide assistance. Police had the apartment under surveillance.

It was later discovered that the incident was a ruse by Kevorkian and his friends who led in a man carrying a cane and walking with apparent difficulty.

An arrest warrant was issued for the retired pathologist on Monday, November 29 and, at a press conference held by Kevorkian and his attorney, police tried to execute that warrant. Kevorkian fled on foot to a waiting white automobile and was driven away.

The arrest warrant charged Kevorkian with the assisted suicide of 72-year-old Meridian Frederick in October.

The fugitive Kevorkian was arrested the day following his flight from justice. He is housed in the Oakland County jail on a $50,000 cash bond. He awaits two trials for assisting a suicide. Charges on the latest assisted suicide are expected soon.

Since the "hunger strike" from his last jailing, the eclectic former physician has been publicly represented by Michael Schwartz, another senior partner in the law firm of Geoffery Fieger. Fieger, the attorney usually associated with Kevorkian's antics, has been missing from the most recent events.

Mexican doctor refuses abortion industry bait

While physicians in the U.S. command high salaries, doctors in other countries often do not. Two hundred miles south of the southern tip of Texas, along the Gulf Coast, lies the Mexican town of Tampico. A busy industrial center with a population of over half a million, Tampico boasts the *Petroleos Mexicanos* Regional Hospital, one of many throughout Mexico which are operated by PEMEX, the nationalized oil conglomerate.

Adulfo Reyes, a gynecologist at that facility, has a small practice on the side. About once a week, he says, one of his patients requests an abortion.

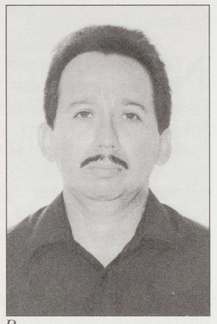
"I tell them, 'You've made a mistake in thinking that I would do such a thing,' " he says.

This might be considered an easy response since performing an abortion is still a criminal act in Mexico. But a closer examination reveals otherwise. Dr. Reyes has been offered the chance to work at three different abortion clinics—two in Mexico, one on the U.S. side of the border.

"They take advantage of the difficult economic times in our country," says Reyes. "They figure If they can get more prestigious doctors to work at their clinics, they will able to charge more."

His most recent offer occurred at the reunion of his medical school in 1992. Another doctor, a former classmate, enticed him with an offer of $4000-$5000 per month.

"It appeared to me to be a small fortune," he said. At that time he was earning about $600 per month.



Reyes

"It's immoral!" he admonished his friend. "Since I was a child I was taught to have respect for life."

"You need to think of yourself," the abortionist countered. "Isn't that why you studied to be a specialist? If it wasn't for the purpose of getting more money, why did you do it?"

"I studied gynecology to help women become pregnant, " Reyes replied. "And to carry the child to full-term, not to get rid of it."

"Here's my card," Reyes was told. "Any day you like, you have a job."

The choice to stand by his principles has not been without a price. The economic strain affected his first marriage, and even resulted at one point in the loss of his home. But he has no regrets.

"I believe that every positive action has a positive reaction. If it's a negative situation, I won't do it. Even though week after week I'm requested to do this, never—never—have I been tempted to actually do it."■

Church pledges to re-erect downed anti-abortion crosses

On Monday, November 22, it was discovered that vandals had knocked down 4,400 crosses at Palma Sola Bay Baptist Church representing the number of children aborted each day in the United States. The church spent all day Saturday erecting them.

About 10 percent of the crosses and an accompanying anti-abortion sign were destroyed at 7005 Cortez Road sometime early Monday, according to the Rev. Jim Killoran, the church's pastor.

The crosses will be replaced, Killoran said.

"The church was trying to make a statement to our community that 4,400 babies are killed each day in the United States," Killoran said. "Someone obviously did not appreciate that statement."

The church council decided to use the cross display to make the community aware of how many abortions occur each day, Killoran said.

The 15-year-old church, which has 1,500 members, belongs to the Southern Baptist Convention, which is opposed to abortion, Killoran said.

"This is a free country and anyone has the right to make the statements they want to, but for someone to say we cannot make that statement pretty much flies in the face of our Constitution," Killoran said.

Damage from the vandalism was estimated between $300 and $400.

Bryan Berman, 24, of nearby Harbour Pointe Apartments, said the crosses make the neighborhood eerie and morbid.

"If they are put up again, I'm sure they are going to come down again," Berman said.

"The church was trying to make a statement to our community that 4,400 babies are killed each day in the United States. Someone obviously did not appreciate that statement," said Killoran.■