

RESCUE SQUAD, POLICE AND FIRE DEPARTMENTS RECEIVE NEW, LIFE-SAVING DEFIBRILLATORS

By Tom Kranz, EMT-B

If ever there were a living, breathing advertisement for the power of a battery operated box called a defibrillator, it is Jack Ruh. A 45 year veteran of the Fanwood Volunteer Fire Department, Jack has dealt with his share of dangerous situations. But none equaled the one he faced early on the morning of December 17, 2000, when Jack, responding to a fire call, collapsed in the kitchen of the firehouse on Watson Road.

"I have no memory of that moment or the week following it," Jack recalled recently during a chat in his home (right).

He learned later he suffered a case of sudden cardiac arrest. According to the American Heart Association, 95% of cardiac arrest victims die before even getting to a hospital. But when an electric shock is applied to the heart within the first 6 to 10 minutes, the survival rate is almost 50%.

As luck would have it, Jack collapsed in a room full of firefighters, several of whom were EMT's who are also members of the Fanwood Rescue Squad. They quickly pulled a portable defibrillator from one of the ambulances parked just 50 feet away and within just a couple minutes applied the shocks according to their training. Once they got a pulse, Jack was rushed to the hospital. He returned home the day after Christmas with his new best friend--an implanted pacemaker/defibrillator.



Portable automated external defibrillators (AED's) are standard equipment on the Fanwood's ambulances and police cars and, soon, fire engines. With money from grants and donations (no taxpayer funds), seven new Lifepak 500 defibrillators (left) have been purchased. Each of the Rescue Squad's two ambulances got one to replace the older First Medic models. The Lifepak 500, manufactured by Medtronic Physio-Control, costs about \$2,600.



AED'S are so simple to use even lay persons can be easily trained to operate them. They have only two or three buttons and a computerized voice actually talks you through the process.

Rescue Squad members and Fanwood police officers are certified in their use and training will be provided for fire personnel.

The following people participated in the resuscitation of Jack Ruh and his transportation to the hospital on December 17, 2000, and were recognized as "Lifesavers" by the Fanwood borough council:

- Eric Breidenstein, Rescue Squad
- Mark Crawford, Rescue Squad and Firefighter
- Bill Crosby, Rescue Squad and Firefighter
- John DeProspero, Firefighter
- Jeff Downing, Rescue Squad and Firefighter
- Tom Kranz, Rescue Squad
- Jason Lowrey, Rescue Squad and Firefighter
- John Oatis, Rescue Squad
- Eileen Ochsner, Rescue Squad
- Richard Regenthal, Firefighter

- Ed Sargent, Rescue Squad
- Dave Zawodniak, Rescue Squad and Firefighter

Jack Ruh passed away July 15, 2003. He will always hold a special place in our hearts.