

A Review of

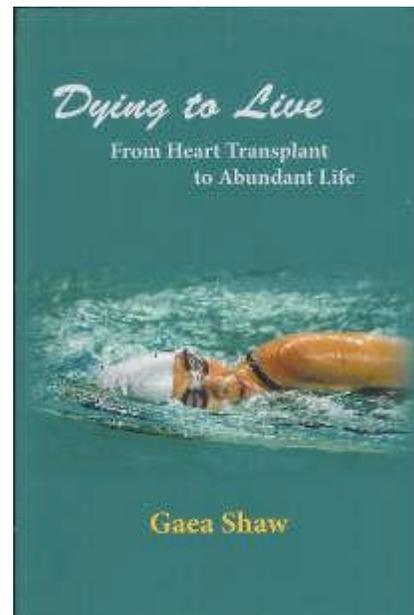
## ***Dying to Live***

***From Heart Transplant to Abundant Life***

Author: Gaea Shaw

Reviewed by Jim Gleason, heart recipient

For anyone about to face an organ transplant or for those dealing with life post transplant, Gaea's fairly short book (just 95 pages which include 20 pages of appendices) is an inspiration and an easy delight to read. Facing her failing heart and the life saving transplant, she shares with us the many challenges so typical of anyone going through such an ordeal, even though each story is unique. Times of misery, finding faith and learning to accept the support around her even when used to being so self-sufficient, Gaea openly shares her pain, fear, anger, love, challenges, hope, trust and joy. She emphasizes that we all have choices no matter the challenge we face.



Tracing her family story from first meeting her husband, Barry, and taking the reader through his loving support over the years leading up to the transplant and beyond, we see the onset of cardiomyopathy in 1993 that eventually progressed to the new heart in 1997 and her years of recovery and living a fulfilled life to the present day. From being totally disabled, we see her transformation into an award winning US Transplant Games athlete through determination and self-discovery after transplant.

Through her personal journal writings and correspondence, much of this book offers unique insights to the feelings she goes through in preparing for and finally receiving her transplant. Family members' and friends' writings give us the insight into how those close to a patient deal with their fears and exhilaration throughout the experience. Her letters to the donor family are shared along with a narrative of the final actual face to face emotional meeting with them. Letters from the donor family recount details of their 15 year old son, Christopher, and his tragic accident, adding yet another dimension to this reading. Included is a very unique reflection by the nurse who cared for him on that last night of his life, gifting Gaea's with her new young heart. Later that same nurse describes watching the two families meeting for the first time and how that impacts her own life in caring for patients in the ER. I'll leave it to you to try and figure out how this special sharing from that nurse was possible.

Gaea offers us the inspiration of becoming a medal winning swimmer in the US and World Games, a feat she never anticipated but are we surprised in those letters to learn her donor not only loved life but was also so fond of swimming?

As Gaea says, ***Dying to Live*** is about facing challenges, not just her own heart transplant, but about "encouraging each of us to see that we all face our own challenges in trying to experience an abundant life, filled with gratitude, no matter the odds."

What can you do post transplant? Through this sharing of Gaea's accomplishments, hopefully you too will be inspired to see that the possibilities are limitless if we but believe and take action to support such dreams and goals. "Thank you Gaea, for sharing

your heart with us all! See you at the next Transplant Games, either from the cheering sidelines or swimming in the pool lane next to you!"

PS: Don't miss on page 46 enjoying Gaea's lovely picture at the rehab exercise room, broadly smiling with "simply feeling the miracle of my new life . . ."

Note: **Dying to Live** can be purchased on-line at <http://www.GaeaShaw.com>

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**Brief bio:**

Jim Gleason, a heart recipient since Oct. '94, retired from Unisys Corporation in 2005, is a nationally recognized public speaker and author. His book, **A Gift from the Heart**, is offered free in thanks to his donor family and can be obtained by contacting him at GLEASONJIM@AOL.COM.