

Goodbye, good, cold friend

It was something we wanted and needed to do. Something we knew would be best in the long run, but that didn't make it any easier. We said "goodbye" to a good, cold friend.

Two weeks have passed, and things are different now. It sounds different at our house. It feels different at our house. When they took our cold friend away, it left a strange, silent hole. When they were loading our cold friend into the truck, my 6-year-old asked if he could say "goodbye" one more time.

"How could you do it?" you ask? Well, when the electric bill for \$328 came in the mail, we knew it was time . . . time to replace our 31-year-old air-conditioning unit.

Over the years, we had lovingly cared for it by replacing the duct tape that held the front panel on. We regularly emptied the bucket that stood under its condensation pipe in the basement. When it would stop, we would turn it off, give it a break and turn it back on

again when it was refreshed and had defrosted itself.

When we smelled smoke from the downstairs unit, we just called "the man" to come mend it. Whenever it tripped the switches in the electrical panel, we kept turning them back on to provide it with the electrical nourishment it needed to keep running.

In the process of removing our good, cold friend, we discovered that our heater was just that . . . a heater, not a heat pump. I am told that our winter electric bills will be significantly lower because the old way of heating is just plain old inefficient.

Looking back on it, we probably could have paid for our new unit with just the money we would have saved on our electric bill. But it is hard to actually make the decision to spend so much money on a house.



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Homework

Keeping a home maintained can be expensive, but repairing damage caused by lack of maintenance can cost even more. This is true when deciding to do things like replacing the roof, filling driveway cracks, keeping the deck well-waterproofed and maintaining a good coat of paint on the home's exterior.

Putting in a new heating and cooling unit, as we did, cost us just over \$4,000. If I were to put my house on the market today, I would not be able to increase the asking price of my house by \$4,000. After all, the buyer expects the house to have an air-conditioning system and wants that system to be functional, whether it is 31 years old or 31 days old: I am, however, more likely to get an offer for an amount closer to my asking price if I have maintained the systems in my home and replaced them when necessary. A well-maintained home speaks

volumes to a potential buyer.

The roof is next. Then we'll have to either paint or put new siding on the house to keep our home in good condition. We will hate to have to pay for these updates, but I know we will enjoy them after the sting of mailing the invoice fades. And, when we sell one day, we will be glad we did it.

Our good, cold friend sits silently somewhere, enjoying a much-deserved rest, after a long, long life. But we have the opportunity to get to know a new friend who has come to live with us and to bring us comfort over the next several years. Welcome, new, cold friend.

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