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BULLET TRAIN TO DELIVERANCE

'My father shot my mother and then himself because her Alzheimer's was too advanced for anyone to think she was competent to make a decision.'

By Jay Niver, FEN Editor

A murder-suicide usually makes news. But when that tragedy involves an elderly, devoted couple – and one or both of them have debilitating dementia or a terminal disease – it grabs few headlines.

Authorities, family, friends, and courts recognize that the victims planned and chose their exit because they didn't have (or know) another way.

Richard and Alma Shaver decided upon such a death. But theirs made news across the country after the Sunday *New York Times* ran [a major feature](#) last Dec. 29.

To FEN volunteer Janet Grossman, it was new names for an old story. She knew it all too well: Her parents chose the same gruesome way out on May 3, 2012.

The murder-suicide of Joanne and Robert Grossman (Joan and Bob) was never reported beyond the candid, moving obituary their daughter placed in their local paper – and the perfunctory story that ran “because it was a

criminal case,” Janet said. “They don't cover suicides.”

The details were unknown to all but the close friends and family to whom Bob wrote a letter, explaining their choice two days before he pulled the trigger: first for his wife of more than 60 years; then for himself.

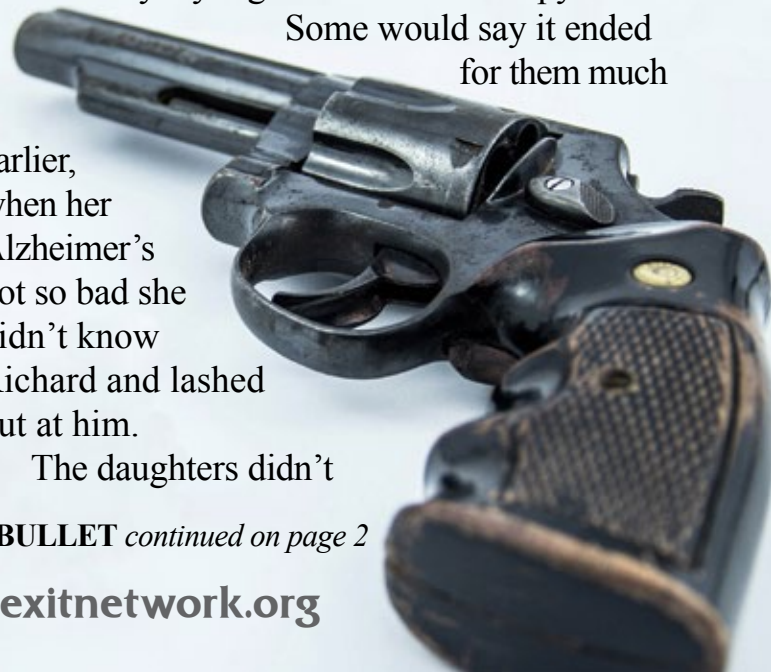
The Shavers, too, had a long and storybook marriage. Alma was 80 and he was 79. It ended for them on a warm, Sunday afternoon last June as they lay together on their canopy bed.

Some would say it ended for them much

earlier, when her Alzheimer's got so bad she didn't know Richard and lashed out at him.

The daughters didn't

BULLET continued on page 2



know of their parents' plan, but came to accept it.

Janet Grossman and her sister knew exactly what their father planned for Joanne and himself.

"He did it with her agreement at the time, and with our full knowledge and support," Janet recalled almost eight years later. "We had a lot of discussion of why other methods wouldn't work."

Ironically, the couple was active in numerous right-to-die groups including the Hemlock Society, "but I don't think they knew about FEN," Janet said. "Then it was too late anyway ...

"My father shot my mother and then himself



Richard and Alma Shaver on their wedding day

because her Alzheimer's was too advanced for

BULLET *continued on next page*

A murder-suicide that didn't make news

By Robert Grossman
May 1, 2012

This describes the process by which we decided to terminate our lives in the manner we selected. It was correct for us.

Joanne has Alzheimer's dementia, which causes humans to degenerate into bed-bound or wheelchair-bound creatures needing 24-hour supervision and control. Joanne observed this during the 18-month final existence of a male clad only in diapers who grunted the same noise, regardless of any stimulus.

Joanne said then, and has repeated over the years, that she never wanted to be in that condition. I agree.

That man was my father.

Joanne visited weekly a 90+-year-old woman with dementia who usually sat silent the entire time. But occasionally she would open up and complain about the horrible conditions, stating that she wished she were dead.

That was my mother.

The professional caregivers agreed that people had to make decisions on what level of care they wanted before they were trapped in the system. Arizona, unlike Oregon, does not allow residents to make such decisions.

I could not permit Joanne to be placed in a situation beyond our control. Many places we examined had magnificent entries, but as the dementia



Janet, Joanne and Robert Grossman

Read another powerful declaration on page 7, from a FEN member who made her final exit last December.

worsened, (it) degraded the facilities to beds from which sightless eyes could examine the ceiling.

I thought that I could provide the physical support needed, but congestive heart failure makes that impossible. I do not have the strength to take care of both of us.

Going to assisted living is a partial step toward giving up control of one's life. Since March 1946, we wandered many places such as the Danube through Vienna, Budapest, Gradsco, and Malia, where it forms the delta; Inca trails in Peru; the restored Great Wall in Beijing and the unrestored eroded blocks 1,250 km to the west; backpacking rim to rim to rim of the Grand Canyon; eight days canoeing the Rio Grande around Big Bend National Park; scuba diving over the Barrier Reef.

We are now together on our final journey, as we should be.

We regret leaving it to others to clear out our *casita*, but it was impossible to empty it without giving a clue that we were ending our lives now, as the least bad of options.

Some people want to extend their lives to the last possible second. Others, like us, put quality of life as more important than its duration.

An obituary that wasn't in the *Times*

Robert Grossman, born April 10, 1924 in Chicago, died by self-inflicted gunshot on May 3, 2012. His wife Joan ... died on May 4 from the previous night's gunshot by Bob.

At 88 and 85, they had been married for nearly 64 years and continued to love each other deeply.

She had Alzheimer's disease and was no longer able to care for herself. He had congestive heart failure and felt unable to care for both of them any longer ...

Bob and Joanne had always said they would kill themselves rather than end up as his parents had ... it was done by mutual consent and out of great love for each other.

Bob and Joanne married just after their graduation from Penn State in 1948 with degrees in industrial engineering and journalism ... He was a navigator in the Army Air Corps/Air Force, then worked in various engineering jobs until he ended up in the nuclear industry and finally retired from the U.S. Dept. of Energy in Maryland. He was Chief Safety Officer for the first nuclear Merchant Marine vessel, the *Savannah*, and developed many technologies used in the nuclear industry.

She was a journalist and then a stay-at-home mother for their two daughters until the youngest was in high school, when she first did home- and substitute teaching, then became a technical editor.

In 1964, she started the first racially integrated Camp Fire Girls group in Montgomery County, MD, and the family dealt with neighbors throwing rocks at the black girls outside the family home, as well as some threats by telephone ... In 1964 they further scandalized the neighbors by packing camping gear and their 7- and 11-year-old daughters into a canoe with an outboard motor and canoeing up the still-filling Lake

In 1964, she started the first racially integrated Camp Fire Girls group ...

Powell to Rainbow Bridge, which at that time required a three-mile walk from the water.

The couple became very involved in white-water canoeing with their younger daughter in the late 1960s ... By 1970, Joanne and her younger daughter had fallen in love with backpacking and did this every chance they got. Bob felt he'd carried enough packs in the military, but would often go along out of love.

He became a private pilot to avoid the long drives to visit his mother in N.Y., and greatly enjoyed flying around the U.S.

Bob and Joanne were always very concerned for the environment, and they

designed their house ... with many energy efficiencies that were very uncommon in 1963 ... They were always freethinkers who tried to teach their daughters to think for themselves, and they regularly told their children they did not believe in "conspicuous consumption."

They retired to Prescott, AZ, in 1980, designing the first passive solar house on Solar Heights Drive. They became passionately involved with the ... Arizona Archeological Society, as well as being active with Prescott Creeks, the Sierra Club, and Citizens Water Advocacy Group.

They were very involved with the Prescott Unitarian Universalist Fellowship from the time of their arrival in town, while also meeting with the Humanists.

Joanne had been a long-time volunteer with Planned Parenthood and was the prime mover for creation of Prescott Planned Parenthood. During their last year, they were volunteer dog-walkers for the Humane Society.

Despite their great concern for saving and improving the world, Bob and Joanne could also both be supremely silly, and they loved to laugh.

The preceding story was excerpted from the obituary originally printed in the Prescott Daily Courier.

BULLET *continued from prior page*

anyone to think she was competent to make a decision.

"Mom had a long history of throwing up anything she took, so pills wouldn't work," Janet said. She said her dad "had the stuff to do helium and would have preferred to do it in their house, but he thought it would be harder to re-rent the unit."

The double-deliverance would take place off-site "to avoid trauma," Janet said, "but they couldn't go around hauling helium tanks. He decided that the best solution was the gun, and he knew how to use it."

Bob Grossman was meticulous in his planning. He chose a parking lot a short walk away and spread a sheet to make clean-up easier. He phoned 911 and told them, "You'll hear two shots ..."

But getting to that point wasn't seamless. Joanne was trapped in the depths of Alzheimer's dementia – just as she never wanted to be. As Janet explained, "She never recognized that she had it ..."

"My parents had come for dinner the night before they were going to die, and I knew my dad was going to do it at 8 o'clock. But 8:30 that night he called and said, 'We didn't do it, your mother didn't agree.'"

"Two days later, he wrote the statement (on opposite page). Mom read it, and then she agreed – that's how she *got it*."

Daughter Janet said their end was more than a rational, though imperfect, release for a loving, devoted couple. Her father, she said, "definitely wanted to make a statement. They were passionate about changing things they thought were wrong."

'I'm perplexed by the idea that my future self, in a state of dementia, might settle into happy acceptance of my condition.'

Dementia poses RTD crisis

FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MARY EWERT



Mary Ewert

Our society likes happy endings. We are encouraged to envision the infirm – including those suffering with dementia – receiving round-the-clock, gentle care from loving family members.

The patient, wrapped in the warm cocoon of loved ones, radiates enjoyment in a life without memory or recognition.

Those of us who have been close to friends and family suffering with dementia know that there are gaping holes in this pleasant scene: agitated patients, exhausted family members, and a medical profession that zips in and out with wise counsel but little practical support.

I'm glad for those whose experiences dealing with dementia fit the standard "happy-ending" mold. For myself, I'm unprepared to take a chance that a happy outcome will be mine.

Those of us who do not want to experience a prolonged, memory-free lifespan upset society's happy narrative. The nettlesome question becomes how to provide deliverance to a person who doesn't remember approving that course.

I admit to the distinctive difference between a will that remains effective even when the person who executed it loses the ability to consent, and an

Advance Directive asking for deliverance after losing the wherewithal to agree.

A will disposing of assets involves items, not a person, but providing deliverance for someone with dementia involves physical action with a patient. Nevertheless, I sense a thirst among many of those who have been touched by dementia – or fear being reduced by it – for a rational approach to avoid a prolonged period of dementia.

FEN is responding to that need. You will read more about our efforts in future editions of this magazine, on [our website](#), [Facebook page](#), and [The Good Death Society Blog](#).

From a very personal point of view, I'm perplexed by the idea that my future self, in a state of dementia, might settle into happy acceptance of my condition. If that is the case, I am asked, would I really want someone to provide me deliverance?

At this point in time, my answer is yes. I know what I know in my current, competent state. When I make decisions now, I accept that some will have good results; some not so good. But they are my decisions, and I take responsibility for them. An Advance Directive, made while I am competent, falls into the category of a decision personally made – perhaps regretted, *but nevertheless mine*.

If I am willing to take on that responsibility, why should society second-guess my choice?

In this winter edition of the FEN magazine, we offer food for thought about how society allows us to prepare – or prevents us from preparing – for end of life in a state of dementia. I hope our readers find much upon which to reflect. I welcome your comments to mary@finalexitnetwork.org.

In closing, a rousing thanks to the dedicated FEN supporters who responded to our Annual Appeal. It was a great success! Our wonderful supporters are the engine that keeps FEN moving forward. Know that you are deeply appreciated.

Need a speaker?

The FEN Speakers Bureau, under the guidance of Bill Schoolman, is successfully connecting with Humanist and Unitarian groups around the country, spreading news about the right-to-die cause, Medical Aid in Dying (MAiD), and our vital role.

If your church, civic group, or other organization would enjoy a FEN presentation, email (finalexitnetworkcontact@gmail.com) or call us (866-654-9156) and we'll hook you up with Bill. Plenty of spring dates are available.

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❧ VISION ❧

Any competent person unbearably suffering an intractable medical condition has the option to die legally and peacefully.

❧ MISSION ❧

Educate qualified individuals in practical, peaceful ways to end their lives, offer a compassionate bedside presence, and defend their right to choose.



Saying 'Thanks' with a bequest

By Brian Ruder, FEN President

Nora (not her real name) inherited a neurological disease and watched her mother and sister die horrible deaths from it. She saw all the suffering they both endured and was determined not to go that way.

Nora discovered Final Exit Network and submitted an application in late 2018. When she was approved, she was ecstatic to know that she was back in control of her life.

She decided her death would be in early 2019, which gave her time for goodbyes. Her family supported her decision but was, of course, sad to lose her love and friendship.

During her first Exit Guide visit, Nora was educated about all aspects of the process. She was told that FEN guides would come back for her death if she wanted.

Nora did have them return, along with her family. She was ready to die on her own terms, and her passing was very peaceful.

Nora was not a member of Final Exit Network when she died. At no time during either visit was there a discussion of money or membership. Guides are trained not to mention those things, to avoid any suspicion that there is a charge for FEN services.

Six months after she died, a FEN coordinator got a call from Nora's husband. He said she had left part of her IRA to Final Exit Network. He gave the coordinator a number to call to claim the money, and a few weeks later, FEN received a significant bequest.

Nora had made FEN a beneficiary of her IRA, which did not require a lawyer or any change to her will or estate plan. All she had to do was put FEN's name and tax ID – and how much she wanted to leave to FEN – on her IRA beneficiary form, which she could do online.

This can be done for most financial products, not just IRAs. *It is an easy, wonderful way to support Final Exit Network and the work we gratefully do for people like Nora.*

Sally leaves her ‘Hallmark’

By Jay Niver, FEN Editor

With an M.D. in psychiatry (Temple University, 1976), one might figure Dr. Sally Hall to be highly intelligent, reserved and distinguished.

One would be right about the smarts. Anyone who published a paper on “Unresponsiveness of Catatonic Symptoms to Naloxone” didn’t coast through college on Cliffs Notes.

One would also be correct about “distinguished,” but not because of what she wrote for professional journals.

Hall has distinguished herself for years in a vastly more important and intimate way: by volunteering as a FEN Exit Guide and serving on the Medical Evaluation Committee.

Decades of work as a psychiatrist allow her to click with clients seeking to exit. “I think it helps make a major emotional connection,” Hall said. “I’ve never worked with people or patients who are more grateful.”

Getting a client’s loved ones on board is essential, and involving family members “is one of the things I feel strongly about,” she added. Family feelings can be “all over the map,” from denial or opposition to total, loving support – but the vast majority of family dynamics “are easily ‘pro’ or can be worked out.”

There are rare exceptions: “One of the most difficult was a client who needed to talk to his sisters who were ‘born-again.’ When they learned of his plan, they called the police, and he was put in a psychiatric hospital against his will,” she recounted.

Dr. Hall calls herself “a liberal humanist who feels very strongly about human and social issues.” That may stem from her undergraduate years at UC-Berkeley (B.A. Sociology, 1965), not a bastion of conservative thought and mores.

“I’ve been a long-standing member of the Hemlock Society,” she said, and living in San Diego connected her with a right-to-die force named Faye Girsh (“probably 20 years ago,” Hall guessed). “I kind of got radicalized at Berkeley, and Faye’s ideas and dedication to the right-to-die movement had a big impact on me.”

Hall retired, sort of, a few years ago when she stopped accepting new patients in the private practice she started in 1981. But she wasn’t about to buy a



Sally Hall and friends

rocking chair.

Besides FEN activities, she’s active in the Democratic Party, plays tennis “almost daily,” and travels a lot, though not through Club Med. She eschews garden spots for places like Siberia, North Korea, Afghanistan, and Yemen.

She and Girsh stay involved in the Hemlock Society of San Diego (which didn’t change its name when the national organization suffered an identity crisis).

Dr. Hall knows the challenges and pitfalls that surround dementia, Advance Directives, and Medical Aid in Dying. “We have such a bad track record with dementia compared to Canada and some European countries,” she said.

It’s something that may hit close to home: “My father got dementia when he was 72 ... He was one of eight children, and five of them developed the disease,” said Hall.

GOODBYE — WITH GRATITUDE

By Judith Tannenbaum
Late FEN Member

When the FEN coordinator called to tell me my application had been approved, she said, “Your only task now is to enjoy every moment.”

Yes!

I’ve lived long enough with a great deal of pain, mostly from structural and nervous system problems – some of which I was born with, and some that developed over my eight decades. Physical therapists and pain clinics taught me a lot, and I was a good patient. I kept moving, did all my exercises, practiced relaxation techniques and deep breathing, and made good use of hypnosis and visualization.

I worked despite migraines, and crawling across floors when my back was in constant spasm. Also, I learned how to notice the world’s beauty, even in intense pain.

For the past 17 years, I’ve been the one primarily responsible for my now 100-year-old mother. Mom hasn’t been in much pain, but she’s blind, bed-bound, and unable to do almost anything for herself.

Her choice has been to keep living, and I’ve done what I could to provide for that choice. I’ve also known, very acutely, that her decision is far from mine.

So, when it became clear about a year ago that my chronic problems had gotten to the point where I could no longer do much of what I had been doing, I began to consider exit options. And when, a few months later, I was in an accident followed by both a difficult recovery and a post-surgery syndrome that greatly added to my pain, I spent lots of time lying on the floor – the only spot and position I could tolerate – watching the pictures in my mind.

I didn’t love the pain, but did love how memories floated in and out, first illuminating my life – and then letting go of it.

Life and death. Two distinct states. And also not.

The image I keep seeing is a fallen redwood tree, its apparently dead trunk teeming with life: lichen,



Judith Tannenbaum and her daughter, Sara

insects, and so much more.

When a tree falls, more light beams through the forest canopy, allowing younger trees to grow more easily. Sometimes, there’s a “fairy ring,” a whole new generation of trees sprouted from the roots of a cut or fallen redwood.

The distinction between life and death – my little life and the flow of *Life* – is fainter and fainter, more and more mysterious.

***The distinction between life and death –
my little life and the flow of Life – is fainter
and fainter, more and more mysterious.***

Now, less than two weeks before the exit I have planned, deep gratitude is my most consistent condition.

- Gratitude for FEN and the exit it shows me, which means I don’t have to live years more in severe pain and limitation.
- Gratitude for the people in my life, beginning with my beautiful daughter and extending out to so many loved ones.
- Gratitude for the trees and flowers and sunlight and shadow I pass each day on my slow, slow walks.
- Gratitude for the work I’ve done, the places I’ve seen, the music I’ve loved, and the books and films that opened my eyes and my heart.
- Gratitude for all I know and can’t comprehend.
- Gratitude even for the inevitable suffering and pain of being human, especially as we try to stand upright amidst the huge planetary grief we all share.

As I prepare for my last moments, I bow in gratitude for my life and in gratitude for my death.

Editor’s note: The preceding piece was written shortly before the author died early in December 2019, and it is shared courtesy of her daughter.

Forty years ago, Lee's own mother ... desperately begged to die.

'A good death' – a wish come true

By Judy Cohen, daughter of Lee Vizer

My mom, Lee Vizer, talked for years about wanting “a good death.”

Of course, we in her family teased her mercilessly about this. After all, death-by-choice is not your average topic of conversation. Besides, who else wears FEN buttons to the market, carries right-to-die fliers in her handbag “just in case the topic comes up,” or lets people know at family gatherings, social situations, or casual bump-intos in the park that they can choose a humane death?

Thankfully, Mom laughed with great delight at all the good-natured teasing.

We didn't know it would turn out that she meant it, that in the end, she actually did have the strength and courage needed to walk all that talk and exit on her own terms.

Forty years ago, Lee's own mother, in terrible pain, desperately begged to die. Every day my mother watched helplessly, knowing that legally she could not offer relief or spare her mother this torture.

She vowed then that her own end would be different.

Lee became a fighter for the right of those with terminal diagnoses to die with choice, compassion, and dignity. She studied, learned, and eventually became a passionate FEN board member and newsletter editor.

Until the end, though, we (Lee's family) were not sure that she could actually do what needed to be done to take her exit with intention.

First, because she'd been diagnosed with Lewy Body Disease, an especially terrible form of dementia with no cure, which ends in a cruel, miserable, prolonged death.

With any dementia, the window for exit by choice – not too early, when life is still good, and not too late, when one can no longer think straight – is critical, and also tricky.

Lee became a fighter for the right of those with terminal diagnoses to die with choice, compassion, and dignity.

Amazingly, Mom timed her exit perfectly.

Second, as Lee reported, it's strange to “have no tomorrows”: to remember she can eat dessert without worry about getting fat, to not have to break in the new shoes, to not make plans for down the road.

We weren't sure she had the courage to make “no tomorrows” a reality. And then she showed us just how much integrity and strength she really had.

She was calm, she was organized, she was content. She left with complete peace and unwavering certainty that this was best for her and family.

Did we support this action of hers? Well, how can you love

someone and not support their wish to not suffer?

Of course, we wished her death hadn't been necessary. But the alternative of living with Lewy Body was truly horrendous, not something one would wish on any loved one – let alone someone like my mom, who had been so clear for so long that she would not be able to bear that kind of ending.

So yes, we loved Mom enough to support her in this wish. Though, of course, we miss her terribly.

A good death. She got it, on her own terms.

Lee's remaining family – big sister Gerry, identical twin Ellie, son Barry, and wife Yvonne and I – are left awed, full of admiration, and full of love.

And we are so very grateful to FEN. You enabled my mom to exit in peace and comfort. There is no way to appropriately thank you for the enormity of that beautiful, kind gift.

Editor's note: Long-time FEN board member and newsletter editor Lee Vizer died with dignity last Nov. 2, a month shy of her 88th birthday.



Daughter Judy and Lee Vizer

'I always loved to be in Lee's presence because she was funny and upbeat. She even could say things that would double me over in laughter!'

REMEMBERING A FEN STALWART

Lee Vizer • 1931-2019

Linda Banez

Death is abstract – until it's not.

I had many conversations with Lee – about her sister and my lack of one – and, being women and about the same age, we talked about hair (a lot).

When I learned of her death, I knew those conversations were over, but it wasn't until a few days ago, when a TV commentator's use of a word sent me to my well-worn *Merriam-Webster's* and I was still confused. Then I thought, "I'll email Lee – she'll know."

And then I realized – no, I won't email Lee. I can't. Suddenly, her death was very real. And so was my loss.

Huck DeVenzio

Lee was a welcome predecessor.

Her talents as an editor were visible by reading the magazine. What may be unnoticed and under-appreciated are her attributes as an ex-editor.

I followed her as editor ... when she retired from that position. She was helpful, available for advice, didn't try to impose her views. She wrote a guide to the editorship, which I passed along to my successor – so Lee's help lives on.

Ann Mandelstamm

I remember Lee as an unfailingly cheerful and positive person who adored her identical twin sister, Ellie, and who said repeatedly that they were almost two separate people who thought and felt as one ...

I can see the truth of Lee's love for her sister ... Lee was also dedicated to her children and to Final



Laughter came easily to Lee Vizer

Exit Network for sure. She worked on the newsletter diligently for years, all on her own time. She never failed to project enthusiasm and support ...

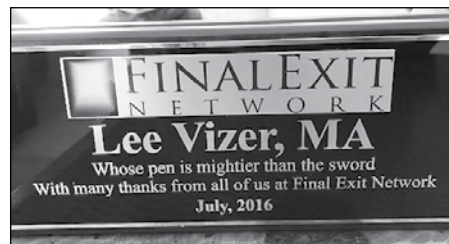
I always loved to be in Lee's presence because she was funny and upbeat. She even could say things that would double me over in laughter! ... Even when life was difficult, she had something interesting to say ...

Pamela Bankert

In 2014 I decided to fly to Chicago for the Right-to-Die

conference ... (I) had the good fortune to meet Lee Vizer. We sat and talked for hours in the hotel lobby about her adventures and my adventures. Other folks came and went, but we kept talking ...

Lee was my first introduction to a real live FEN person! Her warmth, kindness and encouraging words have stayed with me all this time.



The preceding comments are only some of the thanks, admiration, and love expressed by FEN colleagues including Faye Girsh, who was quoted in our fall FEN magazine when we ran a brief article on Lee's passing.

In that story, we wrongly attributed passages from her obituary, which was written entirely by her daughter, Judy Cohen. We regret the error.

– Jay Niver, editor

Good Endings Book Club



Common Sense Suicide: The Final Right

by Doris Portwood

Reviewed by Derek Humphry

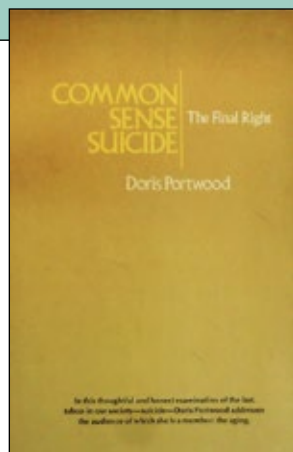
I was pleasantly surprised recently when I heard two colleagues talking about Doris's book. First published in 1978 in New York, it was well before its time.

The philosophy inherent in this book was groundbreaking: 'balance-sheet suicide' – that if one's life was so beset with painful, distressing medical problems, it might be sensible to end it.

I met Doris that year at a world euthanasia conference in San Francisco, expecting her book to be talked about and on display, but it was never mentioned, and she was not asked to speak – the subject was taboo in those days. But she knew about my recent book, *Jean's Way*, and we became friends.

What Doris told me then was interesting and had implications for the future: She and a small group of women were regularly meeting privately in New York to discuss ways of ending life peacefully and non-violently. It called itself "The Committee for Commonsense Suicide."

They rotated meetings to each other's homes and kept their group's existence secret. At the end of each session, a member was asked to come to the next meeting fully briefed on an aspect of self-deliverance – the law, best drugs, family questions, and so on.



The logic behind their secrecy was based on self-deliverance being virtually unmentionable in the 1970s, plus New York had brought several prosecutions against family members for helping a terminally ill loved one to a gentle end.

Subsequently, I attended several of these meetings, coming to realize how vital they were to the better understanding of assisted dying with all its complexities. But I reckoned that in California, where I lived, the prevailing social atmosphere was more liberal, and there had never been prosecutions.

Thus, in 1980 I launched the Hemlock Society USA – and that's another story. It was that group in New York that had made me decide it was needed.

Doris got sick of the harsh winters in New York and retired to Portland, Oregon, in the 1990s. We kept in touch. By 1996, her Parkinson's disease had caused her to fall a lot, on one occasion alarmingly into a busy roadway. Next day she called me and other friends to say goodbye.

In the presence of two friends, Doris ground 60 Seconal into plum jam, had a farewell Scotch, and died. Her suicide note said in part: "At 82 I have a progressively down-hill disease. I must opt for a decision before my mental capabilities are further eroded."

"Common Sense Suicide" sold modestly but could not find a paperback publisher. So, Doris gave the rights to Hemlock, which printed it for several years, distributed by another avant-garde publisher, Grove Press. It can be obtained nowadays among used books at Amazon Books.

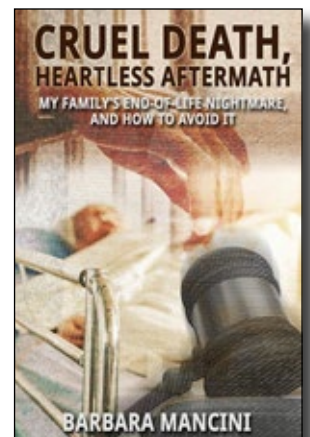
Cruel Death, Heartless Aftermath

**My Family's End-of-Life Nightmare,
and How to Avoid It**
by Barbara Mancini

Reviewed by Karla Brandt

In 2013, Barbara Mancini was an emergency room nurse. She was also her 93-year-old father Joe Yourshaw's health-care proxy.

Barbara was looking after him one afternoon in her parents' Pottsville, PA, home.



CRUEL DEATH continued on next page

eBook edition of *Final Exit* is available online

This new version of the famous guide *Final Exit* has been called a suicide handbook, yet careful readers will find that it is powerfully addressed to terminally and hopelessly ill adults who have fought for life and no longer wish to suffer.

It is the thinking person's bible for self-deliverance and medically assisted dying, to achieve a peaceful end within the family when pain has become unbearable.

When first published in 1991, it was a *New York Times* best-seller for 18 weeks. Now it is updated in eBook format for 2020 end-of-life choices.

"This fourth edition encapsulates all we've learned since the first edition, including the methods of self-deliverance using inert gas and newer drugs, amply illustrated," said author Derek Humphry.

Death with dignity requires more than knowledge

of drugs and gases. This book outlines family involvement, laws on helping another to die, insurance, hospice, and Advance Directives.

Death by voluntarily stopping eating and drinking (VSED) is included as an option for personal euthanasia.

Humphry is an award-winning author who in 1975 helped his first wife, suffering advanced cancer, die at her choosing. He wrote about it in the classic *Jean's Way*. He formed the Hemlock Society (1980-2003) to modernize laws and attitudes about end-of-life choices, and he is one of the founders of Final Exit Network.

Final Exit argues there is no need for another Jack Kevorkian because personal, thoughtful final options are now available, and Medical Aid in Dying (MAiD) is legal in nine states.

Download online and save the latest *Final Exit*.

CRUEL DEATH *continued from prior page*

At Joe's request, she handed him his prescribed pain medicine – liquid morphine in a bottle – and he drank an unknown amount, although he never showed any ill effects from it. When the hospice nurse stopped in a couple hours later, Mancini told her about it. The nurse called the police, and despite Mancini's protests, an ambulance carted Joe off to the hospital – something he had said many times and written in his Advance Directive that he did not want.

Barbara was arrested and charged with assisting a suicide, and her father died in agony in the hospital five days later after a series of painful and degrading treatments.

During the year after Joe's death, Barbara found herself in a labyrinth of lies, incompetence, abuse of power, political ambition, bias, and ignorance. Once the press was informed, support for Mancini came from media around the world and from people everywhere who were outraged.

Despite this, Pennsylvania authorities pursued the case against her until it was heard in court by a judge who saw the inconsistencies, falsehoods, and illogic in the state's argument. The charges were dismissed one year to the day after her father's death.

The book offers much more than this harrowing story. In the final chapters, Mancini covers a wide range of death-related topics. Useful appendices on Advance Directives, how to choose a hospice, and end-of-life pain management round out this excellent book.

'A simple act of compassion on my part led my father to a medically intensive, horribly painful death in the hospital – and left me an accused felon. If this could happen to me, it could happen to anyone.'

I have two minor quibbles. The first is that I would have liked Mancini's perspective on how health-care proxies can protect both themselves and the people who appoint them. The second is that almost all references Mancini provides in her many footnotes are web addresses. Following up on Mancini's many sources will become more difficult as time goes by and web pages move or are taken down.



**Barbara and Joe Mancini
at her wedding in 1998**

The bottom line: Mancini's book is riveting and illuminating, written in a wonderfully straightforward, clear style, without one iota of self-pity. I greatly admire not only the fortitude it took to survive that ordeal, but also the stamina required to relive that year in order to write the book.

End of Life

By Nick Marsh

First published in the [Veterinary Times](#)

**If you could see (as I have seen) –
the final, desperate gasps of life,
worn and deathly sheen,
but clinging to the last.**

**If you could taste the bitter breaths
from lungs beyond repair
and feel the thud of useless blood
and meet that empty stare;**

**My friend, you would not speak
with such high zeal of sanctity,
and playing God and talk of slippery slopes
no matter what beleaguered flesh can feel
and no matter what it hopes.**



Nick Marsh and his kids ride a Christmas train

Veterinarian and writer/blogger Nick Marsh explains how his End of Life poem came about.

I wanted to write something about human euthanasia, and how I feel about the current state of end-of-life care.

I first took a clinical and logical approach, but this time I wanted to capture my emotional response – my feelings about what will happen to many of us as we approach the point where our bodies no longer function enough to support our lives.

I discovered a poem bubbling up in my head – a rare occurrence for me. I wrote it down for posterity, and now it's your problem.

Author Marsh qualified as a veterinary surgeon as the millennium dawned. Years in general practice gave him an interesting perspective on suffering and end-of-life issues, and he eventually became concerned that many of his patients had more peaceful deaths than his human friends and relatives.

Based in Exeter, in Devon in the U.K., he now works as a clinical pathologist in a veterinary lab and writes a regular blog for the Veterinary Times. He has had several novels published in diverse genres including science fiction, fantasy, horror,

FEN thanks DeVenzio for newsletter, board service

Former FEN magazine editor and Advisory Board member Huck DeVenzio has stepped down from his duties.

“It is with great reluctance that we recently accepted Huck’s resignation,” wrote Janis Landis and FEN Board President Brian Ruder. “We know his commitment is strong as ever, but medical issues require him to back away from active involvement.”

Landis recalled: “I remember so clearly the Outreach Committee that was our first joint project. Huck’s writing ability and communication skills were readily apparent to me. When our newsletter needed a

new editor, I knew immediately where to look.

“I also remember clearly my relief when he agreed! Working with Julia Hanway, he transformed our publication into a professional magazine, greatly improving our ability to reach and educate members.

“Though Huck won’t be actively involved, his work with communications media has left a lasting legacy at FEN. His droll sense of humor and enthusiasm have a permanent place in my heart,” Landis said.

“On behalf of Brian Ruder and all the board and advisory members, I extend my thanks and best wishes to Huck,” she added.

ELDER RESCUE

FEN support takes many forms

No script works for all

By Ann Mandelstamm, Exit Coordinator

Applications for Exit Guide services come to Final Exit Network from two sources: the answering service and website emails.

From there, they move to coordinators, who live coast to coast and are the first FEN volunteers to speak to potential clients. Some of these callers will eventually apply for Guide services; others will not, or cannot qualify. Perhaps they are too close to death or too infirm to carry out needed actions. Still, even these people may get valuable help from the coordinators, directly or indirectly through their families.

FEN coordinators take great comfort in talking to these individuals and their families, helping them find a path through the maze of end-of-life decisions.

Two such families illustrate that even when it is too late for Guide services, it may be just the right moment for other experienced guidance.

“Francis” was a soft-spoken gentleman, 95, quite ill and completely unable to care for himself. He had lived an astonishing life as a professor, a husband, and a strong legal, cultural and political advocate for Native American tribes.

Those days were now behind him. A widower, he lived in a second-floor apartment confined to a wheelchair, with three shifts of caretakers, two of whom were extremely religious.

He called FEN for help, but did not use a computer, had little to no privacy, and no way to obtain the materials he needed without assistance. From our conversations, I learned that one married couple remained dependable and devoted friends, but lived six months on the other side of the country.

Francis agreed to ask the wife to call me, to see if together we might come up with a solution. She was sympathetic to his plight and shared most of his views.

Within 10 days, she found a residential hospice

that would accept him with his doctor’s recommendation. She flew across country to his bedside and accompanied him by ambulance to the hospice, which had agreed that terminal sedation was an option, as he had stopped eating and drinking two days before.

She remained with him for three more days, until he died peacefully, made comfortable with medications for sleep, pain, and anxiety.

Francis was beyond sending medical records or applying for Exit Guide services, but he was relieved of his suffering through a generous and loving friend and Final Exit Network’s problem-solving.

Similar rescue came to a lovely woman who was dynamic and interesting at 97. She swam daily until she had a bad fall, fracturing ribs and needing hospitalization for pain, trauma, and confusion. Soon sent from the hospital to rehab, she did not improve, constantly asking for help to die.

She had lived a full, complete life and said she was “done.” A daughter called us to see what her options might be.

She was moved to an adult daughter’s home, where she voluntarily stopped eating and drinking, content with some control over her own death. Family members gathered at her bedside to assure her of their love, and others unable to travel Skyped with her, recalling funny stories from childhood and surrounding her with good humor, gratitude, and love.

She also had comfort care from hospice nurses and others. As she wished, her death came within a week in a nurturing and familiar setting.

These are just two cases of people who could not follow the FEN traditional path of applying for Exit Guide services, but who were nevertheless helped by talking to FEN coordinators.

There are many ways we can help to rescue elders.

This is FEN

Final Exit Network, through its Exit Guide program, is the only national organization that provides support for suffering, terminally ill adults, as Hemlock Society's Caring Friends once did.

Is that important? See below (and page 7).

(name & name)

1-30-20

Words simply can not express how grateful (name) and I are to help us at such a monumental moment in our lives. You are the angels we have been praying for for months. Thank you for making this moment to become a beautiful experience for us. This is our last moment we will have on this earth together and you have giving (name) his dignity, you have giving us both a calmness and allowed us to do this together on our own terms in the privacy of our home where we have lived together for over 20 years.

The two of you will now have another angel looking over you and I have now become a permanent member of your organization. I will continue to support what you do thru donations. What you do it so crucial to people like me. I will never forget what you have given (name) and I. Thank you from the bottom of my heart
(name)

Dear (name),

I wanted to write my thanks to you before time runs out. You've smoothed the way for me greatly and my Guide is following suit.

I feel very blessed by the Universe! Something I want to capture and share with you and FEN is the great sense of peace I feel now that I'm closing whole areas of what has been a fulfilling life. It feels right to be closing out belongings, past accomplishments, to linger over pictures before I discard them, and to be able to take time while I'm still well enough to rest in my gratitude for everyone and everything.

Under ordinary circumstances, I think one would be too ill or stressed to have this luxury of time for reflection and appreciation. I guessed that you might have mentioned me to Tom - or maybe it was my Guide who did - he wrote me a kind letter on FEN stationery. He was on the medical team who talked to my husband, so knew my story back to late 2015.

I'm so glad I started the process back in the fall, as my tumor is relentless in its progression, and I emphasize how important starting is. Once begun, you in the organization have made it all move forward so smoothly.

I thank you deeply for your commitment, kindness and caring and wish you a long and happy life.

Love from ...

THE BACK PAGE

A COMPENDIUM OF RIGHT-TO-DIE WORLD NEWS COMPILED BY KARLA BRANDT

United States

As of mid-February, Medical Aid in Dying (MAiD) bills had been introduced in this year's legislative sessions in Georgia, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Maryland, New York, Utah, and Virginia.

Canada

- Ten days after it was posted, a government online survey on assisted dying had received almost 230,000 responses. A 2016 survey on legalizing marijuana got 30,000 responses, according to CBC News.

- In mid-January, Quebec's government put on hold a plan to legalize assisted dying for people with mental illnesses. Health Minister Danielle McCann said, "We need to have a social consensus around this question." On January 30, an expert panel convened by the government recommended that the MAiD law should not exclude those whose only illness is mental.

- In Ontario, the newly opened Nipissing Serenity Hospice's decision not to allow MAiD in its facility was criticized by four physicians who called it "unconscionable." In British Columbia, a non-profit hospice near Vancouver has also refused to allow MAiD despite the provincial government's requirement that it do so; no resolution had been reached by press time.

Australia

Tasmania: Parliament will debate the End-of-Life Choices Bill in August. Forums on it will be held around the state this spring.

Western Australia: Parliament passed a MAiD bill in December, becoming Australia's second state to do so. The bill was debated for some 105 hours in the Legislative Council.

Taiwan

In November, a "dignified end of life" bill was submitted to the legislature. The *Taipei Times* published an editorial supporting the legislation.

Belgium

Three doctors were acquitted of manslaughter charges for administering MAiD to Tine Nys in 2010. Earlier, it was revealed that a lawyer for Nys's parents had sat on the committee that approved Nys's request for a medically assisted death.

France

A court in Rheims acquitted the doctor who shut off life support equipment for Vincent Lambert. Lambert had been in a vegetative state since 2008.

Italy

Activist Marco Cappato was acquitted by an Italian court of the charge of assisting suicide. Cappato had given a ride to his friend Fabiano Antoniani to a Swiss clinic, where Antoniani ended his life.

England

- Lord Chancellor Robert Buckland, Justice Secretary, will ask the Ministry of Justice to review the evidence for and against assisted dying. The announcement was made a few days after a debate on assisted dying was held in Westminster Hall, during which supporters called for an inquiry into the effects of the ban on MAiD.

- Two lawsuits had losses: A court refused to allow a hearing on Paul Lamb's contention that the illegality of assisted dying violates his human rights. Lamb is almost fully paralyzed from the neck down. Also rejected was Phil Newby's request that judges consider evidence from places where MAiD is legal in considering if the U.K. ban violates his rights. He has motor neurone disease.

Portugal

On February 20, Portugal's parliament was scheduled to debate decriminalizing MAiD. A similar law failed to pass two years ago.

Humphry retires from ERGO news digest

After 26 years running the ERGO Listserv World News Digest, Derek Humphry retired Feb. 1 as its monitor.

"I started this free news digest in 1994 and have nursed it almost every day since, building a world-wide subscriber list for purely right-to-die news and views," Humphry wrote in signing off.

"At 89, it is time to pass the list to the people best qualified to manage it: Final Exit Network, which I consider the successor to the Hemlock Society (1980-2003)."

FEN Editor Jay Niver said: "Words can't express how much we owe Derek for all the news he's spread over all these years. We've got a tough act to follow."

DEMIMENTIA

- *The Shavers, too, had a long and storybook marriage ...
It ended for them on a warm, Sunday afternoon last June
as they lay together on their canopy bed.* Page 1
- *Some people want to extend their lives to the last possible second.
Others, like us, put quality of life as more important than its duration.* 2
- *Those of us who do not want to experience a prolonged, memory-free
lifespan upset society's happy narrative.* 4
- *Now, less than two weeks before the exit I have planned,
deep gratitude is my most consistent condition.* 7
- *You enabled my mom to exit in peace and comfort. There is no way
to appropriately thank you for the enormity of that beautiful, kind gift.* 8
- *At Joe's request, she handed him his prescribed pain medicine –
liquid morphine in a bottle – and he drank an unknown amount ...* 11
- *This is our last moment we will have on this earth together ...* 14
- *Something I want to capture and share with you and FEN is the great
sense of peace I feel now that I'm closing whole areas of what has been
a fulfilling life.* 14

This magazine is rife with heart-rending stories of loving but suffering adults who chose autonomous self-deliverance instead of a slow, horrific demise. Some sought FEN for support; others used a gun.

The *New York Times* told the story of Robert and Alma Shavers' murder-suicide and cut off reader comments when they soared past 1,200. We tell the story of FEN's Janet Grossman, whose parents chose the same option in 2012.

Dementia, the inexorable erosion of mental faculties, is behind most of these tragic circumstances – especially with the rise in Alzheimer's.

The problem with current American MAiD (medical aid in dying) laws is that every one requires the requesting patient to be of sound mind. Grossman calls that "the elephant in the room when we talk about dementia ...

"We all think we'll know when it hits and be able to take action while we're still competent. Certainly, that's what my mom expected. For my whole life she said she wanted to be told if she ever had Alzheimer's, and she was told many times. She just never understood that."

Some think Advance Directives, spelling out exactly what can or can't be done for an diseased, aging patient, are the answer. But are they honored – or ignored – *and maybe not legally binding?*

FEN is devising an alternative. It will involve a supplemental Advanced Directive solely focused on dementia care instructions and may help see that all such directives remain in force even when the patient is no longer competent.

Watch for more information and details in the spring FEN magazine.

**"Nobody can be blamed for using a gun when simple methods
of self-deliverance are so difficult to obtain." – Faye Girsh**