

## *President's Letter*

Dear members and friends,

Much has transpired since the last issue of the Beacon. At the October 2008 board meeting, I tendered my resignation, effective May 1, 2009. I have served as your president since January, 2002. It has been a busy, rewarding and often-frustrating seven years.

In 1987 I participated in the organization of a chapter in Boca Raton. During 1993, I worked with chapter leaders to form the state organization which became known as the Hemlock Society of Florida. I served as the first vice-president of the group. In 1997, I took a sabbatical to plan for my retirement and relocation to Melbourne. In 1998, after settling into my new home, I returned to the service of the state chapter as Chairperson of the Bylaws Committee. In 2002, I was

elected to serve as president. I have enjoyed working with Hemlock of Florida and want to thank all of you who have helped me. The time has come for me to move on, but I shall continue to be involved with this organization because I consider it a cause worth supporting.

At the January 2009 Hemlock of Florida board meeting, it was voted to merge with Final Exit Network of Florida. This new entity would be Hemlock Society of Florida, an affiliate of the national organization of Final Exit Network. Unfortunate circumstances have put this action on an indefinite hold.

As I am certain you have seen in recent news articles, four members of Final Exit Network have been arrested on several charges. Those arrested were the former president of Final Exit Network, Ted Goodwin, along with Dr.

Larry Egbert, exit guide Claire Blehr and regional coordinator Nick Sheridan. The arrests were made by the Georgia Bureau of Investigation. The four are charged with assisting in a suicide, tampering with evidence and racketeering under the RICO law. As a result of these arrests, all assets of Final Exit Net-

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# Hemlock Society of Florida, Inc.

## Beacon Newsletter

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## HEMLOCK SOCIETY OF FLORIDA, INC.

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work, Final Exit Network of Florida and the World Federation of Right to Die Societies have been frozen. No date has been set for the trial as the investigation continues.

Following this letter you will find a letter from the current president of Final Exit Network, Jerry Dincin, to members of that organization informing them of the situation.

Many conversations on changing laws to allow physician aid-in-dying are taking place around the globe—be it through national forums for discussion, court cases, or through legislation. I think people around the world are realizing that their end-of-life care is important and they want to control their final days.

Several months ago the Hemlock Foundation of Florida received notification that we would be receiving a bequest from a former Sarasota member. At the March meeting of the Board of Directors our attorney, Robert Rivas, presented the Foundation with the check for a very generous donation. We are most grateful for this gift.

As I depart as president I wish the new leaders much success and ask that you continue to support them and the Hemlock Society and Foundation of Florida. I shall continue to support these organizations and the right-to-die movement.

*Donna*

## Letter to Final Exit Network Members From the President, Jerry Dincin

March 8, 2009

If you have been watching or reading the news you know that the Georgia Bureau of Investigation (GBI) has mounted an outrageous assault on us by arresting former President Ted Goodwin, Larry Egbert, our Medical Director, and two volunteers in a sting operation. All four have

been charged with assisting in a suicide along with other charges, but the basic reason for the arrests is to shut down Final Exit Network. To bolster their charges the GBI has frozen our bank accounts so as to make it almost impossible to communicate with our members or carry on our normal work. The "Georgia Four" have even been charged under RICO, the racketeering act, a vaguely worded law that enables the Georgia authorities to freeze all bank accounts. By doing so they are making it very difficult for us to mount a strong defense.

As of now all four have been released on bail but forbidden further communication with Network members.

The purpose of this letter is to give you the facts, as we know them, and to ask for your help and support. Based on an exit in June of 2008 involving Ted Goodwin and Claire Blehr for member John Celmer, who had suffered from cancer of the jaw resulting in a good part of his jaw being removed, the Georgia Bureau of Investigation set up a sting operation resulting in the arrests.

Although the oncologist who treated Celmer stated that he was "cancer free and recovering nicely," Mr. Celmer clearly did not share this opinion. Based on a complaint by Celmer's widow who, at Celmer's request, had not been told of the planned exit, the sting operation was set up using a Georgia police officer posing as a civilian. He first joined the Network. A

few months later he used fraudulent documents, including a phony medical letter from the police medical director to support his request, and asked to be admitted to the Exit Guide program. The letter from the police doctor falsely stated that the poser suffered from pancreatic cancer. Using the information supplied he was accepted in the Exit Guide program. Later he asked for Exit Guide services and was contacted and visited by Claire and Ted.

Although not in the affidavit supporting the charges, it was stated in news reports quoting the police that Ted and Claire were "holding down Celmer to prevent his removing the hood after the gas was turned on." Obviously Ted and Claire deny this. It is contrary to what is even necessary since scientific reports have shown that the subject is unconscious within an average of 10 seconds after the gas is turned on. Any motion of the extremities, if they occur, are involuntary and certainly not an effort to remove the hood, as was charged.

First: Please write a letter to any of the newspapers you read, stating your outrage at these arrests. Tell them that we are not racketeers but volunteers only trying to help people who are so miserable they no longer want to live.

Second: If you wish, contribute to the **Legal Defense Fund** Derek Humphry has established. You can do it on line by going to:

[www.finalexitlibertyfund.org/index.html](http://www.finalexitlibertyfund.org/index.html)

Or send a check to:

Final Exit Liberty Fund

c/o ERGO,

24829 Norris Lane

Junction City, OR USA 97448

Your support is critical at this time if we are to be able to continue to help those who so desperately depend on us.

We will carry on and be stronger once we survive this assault!

For the Board

Jerry Dincin, President

## Around the World

The following note was received from Faye Girsh, Editor of the World Federation of Right to Die Societies newsletter:

Friends,

For almost 30 years people in our movement have found themselves in trouble with legal authorities. Some have had prolonged court cases; a few have spent time in prison, most have been "busted" for their compassionate efforts to end suffering. Now, again, four of our volunteers have been arrested for providing support for a peaceful death. I would like to collect stories from all of you who have been a subject of law enforcement to understand how these prosecutions have affected your lives and your work and what we can all learn from these incidents. I would like to call the edited book Perse-

cution of Compassion, self-publishing, and donating any proceeds to the World Federation. If you have such a story, please contact me. Thank you.

Faye Girsh

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**Australia** - A recent article by Lisa Pryor in the Brisbane Times gives some good comments on a debate on euthanasia that she attended. Apparently there were a few elderly attendees who shouted down the opponents when the participants in the debate mentioned "...what a defenseless, timid group the elderly are." One debater said that the elderly want to die because they feel unloved. When another debater suggested that children would force euthanasia on their parents to get an inheritance, one gentleman in the audience stood up and said, "Respect us!"

Ms. Pryor stated, "As the child of voluntary euthanasia supporters myself, I know that loving my parents and respecting their wishes could one day mean helping them to die. The cop-out would be to ignore their pleas, buck them up with affection and let them die slowly. By taking the more difficult path, I will risk a long jail sentence. This is why the illegality of euthanasia should be a concern for all of us, even the young and healthy, because the adult children of the terminally ill may well be at the greatest risk of being jailed under the laws as they stand." (*The Brisbane Times*)



**Canada** - Andre Dion has asked the Quebec Minister of Health to help him die in dignity. Mr. Dion, according to his doctors, is suffering from cancer and has but a few months to live. He is urging the Minister and the Quebec Parliament to pass a physician aid-in-dying law. Although the Minister is sympathetic, there is really nothing he can do. (*The Canadian Broadcasting Corp.*)

**India** - The Supreme Court in New Delhi will examine whether terminally-ill persons have the right to die with dignity. The petitioner in this case stated, "...When a person afflicted with a terminal disease has reached a point of no return, then he or she should be given the right to refuse being put on a life support system." (*The Hindi newspaper*)

**Ireland** - Padraid O'Moran, writing in the Dublin Herald says that a debate on voluntary euthanasia is long overdue. During March, the Hospice Foundation will sponsor an End-of-Life Forum to open a national discussion on death and dying in Ireland. The Forum will center on palliative care but Mr. O'Moran believes that only a few would choose voluntary euthanasia if there was a law similar to that of the Netherlands where there is considerable respect for human life. He hopes that in the near future a national conversation on the topic can be discussed in a "calm and reasoned manner". (*Herald.ie in Dublin*)

**Italy** - Death didn't come easy for the family of Eluana Englaro. She had been in a permanent vegetative state since 1992 when she was in an automobile accident. Her father has been battling with the

courts, legislature and the Catholic church for the past nine years. Italy's highest court ruled that the feeding tube could be removed and Eluana be allowed to die. The facility which had been caring for her refused to remove the feeding tube and Mr. Englaro was forced to find another health care facility that would help his daughter to die. Eluana died on February 9 but the battle was not yet over. There was an investigation of 14 people on suspicion of homicide. The reason for the investigation, cited by a prosecutor, was "very many complaints from citizens". Fortunately, the autopsy found no sign of foul play and there were no arrests. (*The International Herald Tribune, Associated Press, Agence France Press, The Guardian in London, The Economist, AKI-Adnkronos International*)

*Editor's Note:* May the Englaro family finally find peace in knowing they did everything possible for their daughter.

**Luxembourg** - Last year, Luxembourg became embroiled in a constitutional crisis when Grand Duke Henri refused to sign the euthanasia bill into law. The crisis led to his power being curtailed and laws no longer need to be signed by him.

This year, following a very heated debate, Luxembourg parliament passed euthanasia legislation. The vote was a close one—30-26 with all of the Christian Socialist party opposing the bill. One of the drafters of the bill, Socialist Lydia Err, stated, "This bill is not a permit to kill. It's not a law for the parents or doctors but for the patient, and the patient alone, to decide if he wants to put an end to his suffering."

*Editor's Note:* Luxembourg is the third country in Europe to pass such legislation. The others are Belgium and the Netherlands.

**Netherlands** - The Netherlands has legalized the Do Not Resuscitate tag, which was produced by the Right To Die Society. The tag has a photograph and name of the wearer and states the wearer's wish not to be resuscitated. Questions arise from the ambulance workers who state that once resuscitation is begun and they find that the patient has a do-not-resuscitate order, they meet a dilemma on whether to continue or to stop the procedure. (*Radio Netherlands-Michael Blass*)

**Poland** - A mother has asked for the right to die for her son who has been in a persistent vegetative state for 24 years. Her son contracted measles when he was 16 years old and, following a rare complication, his brain ceased to work except for the brain stem which allows him to breathe and his heart to beat. She is basing her request on the Englaro case in Italy. Doctors say the chance of the son's recovery is nil. (*The News PI*)

**Portugal** - Leading members of the Socialist Party, including the president, have called for an open public discussion on legalizing euthanasia and that it could merit a national referendum. The president, 83 year-old Almeida Santos, told journalists, "I think the right to life implies the right to die, above all when not dying means terrible suffering." (*Portugal News Online*)

**Qatar** - Renowned Islamic scholar, Yusuf al-Qaradawi, has reported that Sharia law does not permit forcing prisoners sentenced to death to donate their organs. The law also does not permit euthanasia or mercy killing of an individual who is terminally ill and there is no hope of recovery. A doctor who administers any drug at the request of a patient to end his/her life will have committed a deadly sin and shall be punished. However, if several doctors are unanimous in determining that an individual is brain dead, it is permissible to remove life support. (*The Gulf Times, Doha, Qatar*)

**Russia** - The Russian Orthodox Church has denounced euthanasia. Father Georgy Ryabykh said, "Suggestions to legalize euthanasia drive us away from freedom." He believes that advocates of euthanasia push a person to commit suicide, while today there works a principle of "voluntary choice" on the question. According to Fr. Georgy, when the Church doesn't accept euthanasia and considers it a form of suicide, it expresses greater respect to human freedom than some human rights advocates, who demand a legislative permission for this action. (*from InterFax news*)

**South Korea** - A high court recently ruled that a comatose 73-year-old woman could have the respirator and feeding tube removed acknowledging a patient's right to "die with dignity." The hospital had 15 days to appeal and has moved forward with the appeal to the Supreme Court. An attorney stated, "Death with dignity is different from euthanasia since the latter is an active way of stopping life by injecting

lethal doses of medicines, while the former lets the patient die 'naturally' without any artificial treatment." The government has decided to subsidize hospice services to help patients prepare for death without "meaningless and excessive" treatment. (*The Korea Times*)

**United Kingdom** - A coroner in Manchester has asked for a ban of the book Final Exit, by Derek Humphry. A man in that community ended his life and noted in his copy of the book that, "This book didn't encourage me to kill myself. But it stopped me doing it in a way which was dangerous to others: e.g., in front of a train." Apparently the man had been under psychiatric care and had twice earlier tried to end his life by jumping from a bridge. A spokesperson for Dignity in Dying stated they would have no objection to banning the book. (*The Manchester Evening News*)

*Note: Derek Humphry commented that this type of censorship was conducted by Hitler and Stalin and he doubted that England would censor the book. He noted that, in the past, Dying in Dignity sold hundreds of copies of Final Exit.*

\* \* \* \* \*

Melanie Reid in *The Times* (London) has written a very timely article on dementia and the toll it will take of the sufferer and the caregiver. She states that more than a million Brits will have dementia by 2025, two-thirds of them women. The proportion of people affected doubles every five years of life. The cost of care will be unimaginable. She says, "Forget a cure; it won't happen for those of us reading this

newspaper today." Jade Goody is planning to go publicly. Sir Terry Pratchett, with early stage Alzheimer's, is campaigning on television and broadcaster John Suchet is talking about his wife who is "lost" to the disease. The General Medical Council is meeting to discuss the topic of end-of-life decisions and might recommend that early-stage dementia sufferers and the terminally ill be given the right to exit peacefully. (*The Times - London*)

\* \* \* \* \*

Debbie Purdy, who suffers from multiple sclerosis, has been asking the courts if her husband would be prosecuted for assisting in her death by accompanying her to Dignitas in Switzerland. The appeal judge rejected her claim stating that there was ample material already available to her legal advisers to assess how likely a prosecution would be. In other cases, if a family member accompanied a relative to Dignitas and returned to England, they were not prosecuted. Following the decision, Ms. Purdy said, "...Omar would be unlikely to be prosecuted if he was to accompany me abroad for an assisted death, and we are therefore one step closer to the clarification I need." (*The Times - London*)

\* \* \* \* \*

The General Medical Council (GMC) and the Association of Anaesthetists of Great Britain are both issuing draft guidelines advising on how to handle decisions at the end of life, including the withholding of life support or resuscitation of terminally ill

patients. The hope is that patients will be better informed to make the end-of-life care decision. The article stated that legal precedents suggest that doctors, not patients, have the final say on life extending treatment. The guidance from the GMC advises doctors that the patients' wishes take precedence. The guide also suggests that all options should be discussed with the patient. The guidance states, "Serious or persistent failure to follow this guidance will put your registration at risk." (In other words, they could lose their license to practice medicine.)

## United States

**California:** June Hartley has been charged with assisting the death of her brother. The prosecutors said James Hartley, a blues musician, was suicidal following several strokes three years ago. He lost much of his mobility, speech, eyesight and hearing. Due to his disabilities the police questioned how he was able to get a helium tank and inhale the gas by himself. If convicted, Ms. Hartley could serve up to three years for assisted suicide and another three years on the charge of gross bodily injury to her brother. (*The Stockton Record-Stockton, CA*)

**Hawaii:** The Hawaii House Judiciary chairman, Jon Riki Karamatsu said he will not hear the bill that would allow terminally ill adults to get a lethal dose of medication to end their lives. Advocates have not pushed strongly for the bill this year

but it may be open for consideration in the future. (*Associated Press*)

**Montana—The Third State to Have Physician Aid-in-Dying:** A District Court judge ruled in favor of a man who sued the state for not allowing him to receive end-of-life treatment stating it is his right in the constitution. The ruling specified three requirements: the patient receiving treatment must be mentally competent, terminally ill and the physician's involvement must be limited to prescribing medication that brings about death. Representative Dick Barrett (D-Missoula) prepared a bill which would have better-defined guidelines for physician aid-in-dying, but decided to drop the bill since he felt there was not time for legislators to fully study the bill prior to a vote. Catherine Tucker of Compassion and Choices stated that legislation is not necessarily needed since the ruling is well-defined. The ruling has been challenged and the Montana Supreme Court will most likely hear the case. (*The Bozeman Daily Chronicle*)

**New Hampshire:** The New Hampshire House of Representatives Judiciary Committee is reviewing a Death with Dignity bill which has been proposed by Rep. Charles Weed-D. (*The Portsmouth Herald News*)

**Oregon:** A study by the Oregon Health & Science University found that patients requesting physician aid-in-dying did so because of worry about future suffering.



The survey covered 29 factors on what influenced their request for aid in dying. The most prevalent issues were: wanting to control the circumstances of their death, concerns about future poor quality of life, future pain, future ability to care for oneself, loss of independence and desire to die at home. As a result of these findings it was determined that health-care providers focus on relating future symptom control and improving the patient's sense of control. (*Science Daily-March 2009*)

**Pennsylvania:** Senator Daylin Leach (D-Montgomery Count) has sponsored an Oregon-type bill on physician aid-in-dying. The bill is in the Judiciary Committee but the chairman is opposed to the bill and says he “doesn’t know whether the whole Senate would support it.” The bill is supported by Sen. Lisa Boscola (D-Northampton) who has long supported aid-in-dying legislation. (*The Allentown Morning Call-Allentown, PA*)

**Washington—The Second State to Have Physician Aid-in-Dying:** The Washington Death with Dignity Initiative-1000 was approved by the voters during last November’s elections. Initiative-1000 passed with nearly 58 percent of the votes. It became effective on March 5, 2009. There seems to be some reluctance of hospitals and hospices to participate in the program and many are opting out. Advocates of the Death with Dignity Act are concerned that in some parts of the state the only health care is with Catholic facili-

ties that decided not to participate, leaving patients in their jurisdiction with no option for physician aid-in-dying other than going to another part of the state. (*The Seattle Times*)

*All articles are from World right to die news.org and source noted after each article.*

## BOOK REVIEW

by Donna Klamm

**“Good Life, Good Death,  
Memoir of a writer who became a  
euthanasia advocate”  
by Derek Humphry**

This is a charming book about a prominent individual in the right-to-die movement. He has unfolded his life story as though he was sitting in your living room having a chat with you. It is an easy and delightful read. Derek Humphry is, first and foremost, a newspaper man. Secondly, he is the author of several books, including one which received the Martin Luther King Memorial Prize in 1972. He’s been at this writing “gig” for over a half-century after landing his first job at the London office of the Yorkshire Post. This memoir covers his entire life, relating incidents of his family, the years during World War II and moving to the United States in the 1970s. Derek is a prolific writer who certainly has a “way with words” in describing his life and its adventures. It is a most enjoyable book that will give you a bit of insight into this very interesting man.

## IN MEMORIAM

**Nancy Robinson** - Nancy Robinson was one of the early advocates of the Florida right-to-die community. She was instrumental in starting and leading a very successful chapter of the Hemlock Society in Orlando. She also participated in the organization of the state-wide Hemlock Society of Florida. Due to health complications she moved to Georgia to be closer to her family. She died in late summer of last year.

## DONORS

We would like to recognize individuals and organizations that have donated to the Hemlock Society of Florida and the Hemlock Foundation of Florida. Your financial support is critical to the operation of these organizations and is greatly appreciated.

REMINDER: If you want your donation to be deductible from your income tax, your check must be made payable to the Hemlock Foundation of Florida, Inc. Your dues and donations to the Hemlock Society of Florida, Inc. are not tax deductible.

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## MEETINGS

**Jacksonville**

**April 25, 2009**

**June 20, 2009**

All meetings at 10:30 a.m. at the Murray Hill Branch Library

918 Edgewood Avenue South  
904-384-2665

For meeting information/  
directions call Lamar at  
904-388-7860

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## CHECK YOUR LABEL

Please check the mailing label on this newsletter to determine your membership renewal date. If there is no month and year on the label, you are not a paid member. Please see the next page for Membership Application.

## Community Contacts

If there is no contact listed for your area, please phone  
1-800-849-9349 (Hemlock Society of Florida)

### BREVARD COUNTY

Donna Klamm ..... 1-800-849-9349  
HemlockFL@aol.com

### BROWARD COUNTY

Mary Bennett Hudson ..... 561-477-7423

### ESCAMBIA AND SANTA ROSA COUNTIES

Barbara Sommers ..... 850-432-8462

### JACKSONVILLE/ST. AUGUSTINE

Lamar Strother ..... 904-388-7860

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rheete@earthlink.net

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### PALM BEACH COUNTY

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Anna Pardo ..... 727-512-1540

### TALLAHASSEE AREA

Robert Rivas ..... 850-412-0306 (daytime)  
RobRivas@aol.com

## Hemlock Society of Florida, Inc.

### MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Membership dues are **\$20 per person per year**

- New Member Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Make check payable to Hemlock Society of Florida, Inc.)
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(Make check payable to Hemlock Society of Florida, Inc.)
- Additional Donation Amount \_\_\_\_\_  
(If you would like a tax credit for this donation, make check payable to Hemlock Foundation of Florida, Inc.)
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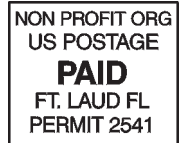
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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

**Spring-Summer 2009**

## *Mission Statement*

*Dedicated to improving the quality of dying through education and advocacy, thereby empowering all citizens to make and carry out their own end-of-life decisions. We affirm the individual's dignity and free will throughout life, including the freedom to hasten death under certain circumstances.*

*Pass this newsletter on to your physician as well as interested friends who may want to join us.  
If you would like additional copies please send request to  
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*If you no longer wish to receive this newsletter,  
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