

## Terry Graham

### **RIGHT-TO-DIE SUICIDE BID THWARTED**

*The Toronto Sun Sat 03 Jun 2000 New 4 by JASON BOTCHFORD, Toronto Sun*

The next doctor that terminally ill patient Terry Graham wants to see is one who will help him take his life.

Graham's son, Terry Jr., 33, pulled him out of Peel Memorial Hospital yesterday and refused further medical treatment for the 65-year-old Brampton man who had tried to overdose on painkillers at home overnight.

He was found limp in the morning with empty morphine bottles at his side by his wife and caregiver Doreen, who called for an ambulance after learning she could be charged if she didn't seek immediate medical help.

Hospital staff worked to clear Graham's system but his son tried to put a stop to the treatments. Family members said staff didn't stop treating Graham until the media was called.

"No one seems to understand or take it seriously that this man wants to take his own life," Doreen said yesterday. "To him, doctors are useless. Their hands are tied and all they can do is tell him that they can make his death a little less painful. He doesn't want any more doctors to help him."

Graham suffers from a rare degenerative muscle disease that has left him blind, an amputee and reduced his strapping 230-pound frame to less than 100 pounds. Doreen said he gets worse each day. "It's not that he's depressed about it, he just wants to die," she said.

At Graham's request, Terry Jr. has been fighting for the right to a doctor-assisted suicide by lobbying government officials and setting up his own website.

## Experts Respond

### **A Response from Concerned Pain and Symptom Experts with Regard to the Care of Terry Graham**

**Dr. John Swift M.B., B.S., C.C.F.P., A.B.H.P.M., F.C.F.P.**

- Director of Palliative Care Units at London Health Sciences Centre and Parkwood Hospital in London, Ontario; also Community Palliative Care Consultant
- Past President O.M.A. section of Palliative Care.
- Associate Professor Department of Family Medicine University of Western Ontario

**Jean Echlin, Reg.N., M.Sc.N., Nursing Consultant in Palliative Care, London, Ontario**

- Past Chair, London Palliative Care Committee
- Formerly Executive Director, The Hospice of Windsor Inc. Windsor, Ontario

**Dr. L.L. deVeber M.D., F.R.C.P.(C)**

- Professor Emeritus Paediatrics and Oncology, University of Western Ontario
- Former Director Paediatric Oncology Children's Hospital of Western Ontario

After reviewing the media reports concerning Terry Graham, who is suffering from Mitochondrial Myopathy and Diabetes we feel impelled to respond.

We feel a great deal of compassion and sympathy for Mr. Graham's condition and with our many years of experience we have specific concerns relating to his care. Our concerns are as follows:

- Why does Mr. Graham have uncontrollable pain and who is responsible for his pain management?
- Why is his only listed pain medication morphine, when it is known to be inadequate for controlling pain from Diabetic Neuropathy and Mitochondrial Myopathy?
- Is there adequate home care and emotional support for Mr. Graham and his family?
- Why has the statement been made that Palliative Care is not available to Mr. Graham because he has more than 6 months to live when this is not true in Ontario?
- These conditions are often associated with depression. How much of Mr. Graham's request for assisted death is related to this, and is it being treated?

We are very concerned with the misinformation being disseminated to the public in the media. Therefore we would be willing to meet with any media personnel relating to the issues in Terry Graham's case.

We are also willing to support Mr. Graham by helping him to find individuals with expertise in pain and symptom management.

For interviews or further information please call Dr. John Swift at: (519) 685-8307 Pager #3172.

Dr. Swift has been successfully caring for 3 patients in the last two months with Mitochondrial Myopathy.

Dr. deVeber (519) 675-1708 and Jean Echlin (519) 668-7394 are also available for interviews.

Toronto Sun April 2002

#### **GROUP CALLS FOR RIGHT TO DIE**

*The Toronto Sun*

*Sun 02 Apr 2000*

*News*

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*By Greg MacDonald, Toronto Sun*

Physician-assisted suicides are a reality that law-makers are afraid to face, says an advocate for the legal right to die.

"It's happening every day in this country," says Cynthia St. John, executive director for Dying with Dignity, an organization calling for the legalization of doctor-assisted euthanasia.

"That's a message to our government that there are people who want a doctor-assisted suicide and we need to regulate it."

Suicide is not a crime in Canada but helping someone end their life is. The issue became prominent several years ago when MP Svend Robinson was present when Sue Rodriguez killed herself.

While St. John said she is grateful to doctors who help patients die with dignity, "there are no safeguards to ensure the vulnerable are protected."

#### **'ON STAGE'**

St. John, who said she has some knowledge of Terry Graham's condition and the Brampton man's wish for a doctor-assisted suicide, said any mentally competent adult who has a terminal illness should have the right to choose the time and manner of their death.

"The dying process is one stage of life...because we make so many decisions about our lives, we should control that part of our lives as well," she said.

"It's about autonomy and self-control...and it's hard to believe we deny people that right."

She also said many terminally ill patients receive disgracefully inadequate care.

"We are not looking after the dying in this country and that's pathetic," she said.

She called for sweeping changes to the palliative-care system

"We are a society that fears death, but there are two sure things in life...death and taxes, and we better make plans for both," she said.

## Assisted Suicide

### **Hansard Apr 4, 2000**

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby-Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, six years ago, Sue Rodriguez died after a long and courageous struggle with ALS, Lou Gehrig's disease.

Sue also fought another valiant battle before parliament and into the Supreme Court of Canada for a change to the criminal code provisions on physician assisted dying for terminally ill persons.

Even with the best of palliative care, too many Canadians are forced to suffer pain, anguish, indignity or pharmaceutical oblivion in their final days. Doctors must reject the eloquent plea of people like Terry Graham of Brampton or of Dr. Cohn Woolf of Toronto to allow them to die with dignity at the time they choose. Some, like Halifax orchestra conductor, Georg Tintner, jump from their balcony in despair.

I call today on the Liberal government to show compassion and humanity and listen to the eloquent call of Terry Graham, dying of mitochondrial myopathy, who recently said, "I'm just waiting to die. I'd just as soon shoot myself. It's quicker."

I urge our government: Listen to the voices of three quarters of Canadians, amend this cruel and inhumane law now.

## End Misery

### **FIGHTING FOR A CHANCE TO END HIS LIFE OF MISERY**

#### **Terry Graham dreams of death with dignity, but his life is the real nightmare**

*April 2, 2000*

*By Michelle Mandel - Toronto Sun*

Terry Graham wants to die. In his dreams, he is throwing himself off the balcony of his Brampton apartment. In the nightmare that is his waking life, he knows he is trapped in a body too weak to make the attempt.

His disease is killing him. And his disease won't let him hasten the horrible process along.

Terry Graham needs help to die.

It's that simple, really, and that complex.

The 65-year-old father of three needs the help of a physician to end his misery, to free him from his hopeless future of further pain and endless suffering, but doctor after doctor has listened to his plea with horror. And then fear.

For the right to die is against the law.

Terminally ill Terry Graham just wants to die: 'It's my life. And this is not a life.'

Graham wants to change that. He asked his youngest son, Terry, to enlist MP Svend Robinson to champion his cause in Parliament, just as the NDP politician did - unsuccessfully - for Sue Rodriguez.

And he has decided to make his case here because he believes that if the Canadian public understood the hopeless desperation endured by so many of the terminally ill, they would support his call.

"Why should my life be subjected to the whim of some a--hole, excuse my language, in Parliament," he asks angrily. "It's none of their business. It's the one thing that has nothing to do with them. It's my life. And this is not a life."

He sits in his prison that is his small bedroom surrounded by the four walls he's seldom escaped in the last six year. On one wall are his citations and certificates for the years he coached

amateur soccer in Brampton. Photos of his three grandchildren decorate another. His shelves are lined with all the books the avid Shakespeare lover can no longer read and all the videos he can barely see.

Advanced diabetes has left him nearly blind and cost him his left leg.

While mitochondrial myopathy is draining him of everything else he has left.

His sweat suit hangs limply on his wasted frame. But his eyes are still fierce - with anger and frustration. This is not how he planned to live. This is not how he planned to die.

It was in 1992 that he noticed his left eyelid had started to droop and he no longer had the energy he'd always had.

"I used to run a lot," he recalls with the lovely English accent he retains from his Nottingham birthplace. "I used to run five miles every night. All of a sudden, it felt like I wasn't running anymore. It was a heavy shuffle."

He would see 69 doctors in his quest to discover what ailed him. Eventually, he was told he suffered from mitochondrial myopathy, an exceedingly rare degenerative muscle disease that afflicts only a handful of Canadians. "He starts babbling on about what it is and I just ask, 'How do we fix it?'," Graham recalls. "He told me to come back in 100 years and maybe they'll have a cure for it."

He was once an electronic technician for Lytton industries, but coaching soccer was his love. Now he's confined to a wheelchair, barely able to make out the soccer players on his TV. As his muscles further deteriorate the doctors say, he will lose the strength to even pivot himself into his chair.

Ultimately, he'll be completely bedridden. He will lose his ability to swallow. "They say eventually I'll stop breathing or I'll choke to death. I don't want to die like that, you see. I'd rather go off the balcony."

With no muscles to cushion his nerves, he is in desperate pain and relies on morphine patches and a derivative of morphine. But he can never take enough to completely dull his agony because it affects his mind. And what he clings to most right now is still - intact ability to reason.

However, he knows that, too, will soon succumb to his disease. He just doesn't know when.

His disease is so rare that doctors can't even offer him a timetable to his misery.

"Mr. Graham's prognosis is hopeless," Dr. Clive Wulwik wrote in a letter to Graham's insurance company. "He suffers from an incurable degenerative disease...It is impossible to ascribe a time period to his deterioration."

"I'm just waiting to die," Graham says miserably. "I'd just as soon shoot myself. It's quicker."

His wife, Doreen, listens quietly by his side. They would be celebrating their 44th anniversary this day if life had been different. Instead, he has chosen the occasion to make his public bid for the right to doctor-assisted suicide.

It is a decision his wife and the rest of his family support - though with difficulty and pain.

"It's his life," his sweet wife says later. "It's not what I would do. It's not what I condone. But it's certainly better than shooting himself or knifing himself. I had to get rid of all those implements. That's not dying with dignity."

He has told his family that he would never ask them to help him die. It would not be fair. But he has asked them to do the lobbying he cannot.

His son, "young Terry," will write the letters to MPs and search the Internet for help. "For him to get to this stage now and go public is a sign that this is his last resort," his youngest son says. "I think he's getting really desperate because he can see his mind is going and he's very scared.

"It's not easy for us but we're trying to abide by his wishes and his wish is to tell as many people as he can about his desperation."

Doreen Graham's eyes fill with tears. "The other day, he said to me, 'You wouldn't let a dog live like this. You'd put it out of its misery.'"

Already diagnosed with his fatal disease, Graham had hoped Sue Rodriguez would succeed in her quest to change the law. But after losing her three court battles for the right to doctor-assisted suicide, her body -ravaged by Lou Gehrig's Disease - could wait no more. With the help of an unidentified doctor and her friend, Svend Robinson, at her side, Rodriguez took her life in 1994.

For awhile, the debate raged in this country and Graham hoped her legacy would be the right to die enshrined in law.

"There was a big hullabaloo for a few days and then people lost interest," he says, vowing now to revive her fight. "Nobody's really interested because no one expects to die a crummy death. Nobody expects to die like I'm going to die."

So for a moment, he asks, imagine this end. Imagine a thief in your body who steals a little bit more each day. Imagine that soon it will be your limited vision that is taken and that even your sole activity of watching television one inch from the screen will be stolen from you as well.

Imagine, he asks, living your entire life being fiercely independent and athletic. And no being confined to your bed, waiting for someone to change your soiled pyjamas.

"I can't get up and walk to the bathroom. I can't walk out that front door. I'm absolutely a prisoner in this place."

In this apartment. In this body.

His eyes rest on your own. "I've reached the end of my tether," he pleads. "Just let me go."

## Svend Robinson

### **MP Calls for 'Compassion and Humanity'**

*Wednesday, April 5, 2000*

*By Romana King, Toronto Sun*

Canadians should have the right to die when they choose, New Democrat MP Svend Robinson said yesterday in the House of Commons.

Robinson called on the Liberal government to show "compassion and humanity" by amending a law that makes it illegal for anyone, including doctors, to assist in suicide.

Robinson's statement was prompted by the recent fight of a Brampton man for doctor-assisted suicide.

Terry Graham's fight for the right to die with dignity was made public after an interview in the Sunday Sun.

Since 1992, Graham has suffered from mitochondrial myopathy.

## RELENTLESS PAIN

Now legally blind, he uses a wheelchair when he is strong enough to get out of bed and relies on morphine to ease the relentless pain.

"The doctors say there's no cure and all they can do is try to make him comfortable, but he's not comfortable," his wife Doreen said.

Robinson first became involved in the right-to-die battle during Sue Rodriguez's unsuccessful 1993 battle for doctor-assisted suicide. The British Columbia woman, who suffered from Lou Gehrig's disease, fought her case in vain all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada. Finally, in February 1994, she committed suicide with the help of an unidentified physician. Robinson was present.

## Dying With Dignity

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