

Public Comments Concerning the Prosecution of Final Exit Network, Inc., et. al.

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Doreen Dunn was a caring and loving wife and mother, who was an accomplished musician and deeply loved by her husband and two children, when she suffered complications from a medical procedure in 1996 which left her with intractable pain that had drained her strength and stamina for over ten years. She did not, however, suffer from a terminal illness. Indictments returned last Friday by the Dakota County Grand Jury which became public earlier this afternoon now allege that she eventually decided to end her life with the advice, encouragement or assistance of an organization known as the Final Exit Network. She hid this fact from her family and when her body was found on May 30, 2007 by her husband, it appeared to him, the Dakota County Medical Examiner, and the Apple Valley Police Department that her death was from natural causes. Doreen Dunn was 57 years old at the time of her death.

The facts surrounding this case are part of an extremely thorough investigation by both Minnesota and Georgia law enforcement agencies. We are grateful their extensive efforts. I specifically wish to publicly thank Apple Valley Police Investigator Michael Pritzlaff who did the bulk of this investigative work here in Minnesota.

This investigation revealed the following facts:

On May 30th, 2007 at approximately 6:30 p.m., Doreen Dunn's husband arrived home and discovered his wife deceased on the sofa in the living room of their residence. Upon finding his deceased wife, he immediately called the police department. An Apple Valley Police officer responded to the Dunn residence and confirmed the death of Doreen Dunn, whose date of birth was March 6, 1950.

Doreen Dunn had been suffering for several years with chronic pain and had been very depressed. Doreen Dunn's medical condition had a significant impact on her daily life. The Dakota County Medical Examiner's office performed an autopsy on Doreen Dunn and initially determined the cause of death was "atherosclerotic coronary artery disease" and ruled the death as being "natural."

In the fall of 2009, the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension was contacted by the Georgia Bureau of Investigation and informed that documents recovered during a Georgia death investigation revealed that Doreen Dunn of Apple Valley, Minnesota may have committed suicide after consulting with an organization known as the Final Exit Network. After some preliminary investigation work was done on the case by the BCA, the investigation into this matter was assumed by the Apple Valley Police Department.

It was learned that on February 25, 2009, as part of its investigation into a death in Georgia, the Georgia Bureau of Investigation and local law enforcement authorities executed multiple search warrants on the offices, residences, storage facilities, and vehicles of persons associated with Final Exit Network. During the execution of the search warrants, investigators recovered correspondence, emails, corporate records, financial records, membership information, training manuals and other documents related to the activities of Final Exit Network.

All of the investigative reports and documents seized during Georgia's investigation were forwarded to the Apple Valley Police Department. From review of the reports and documents it was learned that Final Exit Network is a corporate organization that provides counseling and other services to persons considering ending their life because they are suffering from irreversible medical conditions which are either likely to be fatal or which adversely impact the person to the extent that the person's quality of life is unacceptable to them.

Persons interested in becoming a member of Final Exit Network and receiving counseling and other services must pay a fifty dollar membership fee and contact the organization through an answering service which forwards the person's contact information to a "Case Coordinator". The Case Coordinator assigns the case to a "First Responder" who in turn will conduct a telephone interview of the person to gather information to determine the person's eligibility to become a member of Final Exit Network. The First

Responder forwards information obtained in the interview to the Case Coordinator who then reviews the information. If necessary, the Case Coordinator will verify that the person has paid the membership fee and contact the person to gather additional information. A written statement, including documentation on a physician's letterhead explaining the person's medical condition, is also received from the person explaining the reasons behind the decision to end their life.

The Case Coordinator forwards the information pertaining to the person applying for membership to Final Exit Network to the "Medical Director" of the organization who makes the final decision as to whether or not the member will be "accepted". If the person is accepted as a member of Final Exit Network, the Case Coordinator will assign a "Senior Exit Guide" and an "Exit Guide" to the case. The Exit Guide will then contact the member by phone and conduct a personal visit to review the member's specific reasons for wanting to end their life through suicide and their plans and progress to accomplish this goal. This preliminary visit typically includes a practice of the method of death decided upon. In its materials, Final Exit Network informs members that helium asphyxiation is the preferred method for committing suicide.

Once the member sets a final date and location for the suicide, the Exit Guides will meet the member at the location and be present with the member during the suicide. Upon request, Exit Guides will hold the member's hands "for comfort" during the suicide. Upon verifying the member has died, the Exit Guides will leave the location, taking with them all evidence that a suicide has occurred unless previously instructed otherwise by the member. Once the Exit Guides have determined the member has died, they will proceed to gather equipment used in the suicide. They will also collect all materials referencing any connection with Final Exit Network. If requested by the member, Exit Guides will also remove all other items indicating a suicide had occurred. Exit Guides subsequently dispose of these materials in a trash bin some distance away from the location of the suicide.

During the execution of the search warrants on February 25, 2009, investigating officers located documentation indicating that Doreen Dunn became a member of Final Exit Network in January of 2007. Additional documents were recovered indicating that Thomas Goodwin, Roberta Massey, Jerry Dincin and Lawrence Egbert were aware that Doreen Dunn had become a member of Final Exit Network and was considering ending her life through suicide. The documents also indicated that Goodwin, Massey, Dincin and Egbert had discussed Dunn's suicide plan prior to May 30, 2007. Documents were also recovered indicating that Dincin and Egbert were present inside Dunn's residence at the time of her death on May 30, 2007 and that she had died from helium asphyxiation. According to the Dakota County Medical Examiner, death by helium asphyxiation results from the helium replacing oxygen in the body and cannot be detected in a subsequent autopsy.

On various documents Thomas "Ted" Goodwin and Jerry Dincin are listed as members of Final Exit Network Board of Directors. On these same documents Lawrence Egbert is listed as the Medical Director and Roberta Massey is listed as a Case Coordinator. All four individuals are also listed as either a Senior Exit Guide or an Exit Guide.

Upon being informed of the documents pertaining to Doreen Dunn and her contact with Final Exit Network, the Apple Valley Police Department reopened an investigation into her death. A search was performed on airline records for Jerry Dincin and Lawrence Egbert. From this search, it was learned that Jerry Dincin did travel to Minnesota on the morning of May 24, 2007 and also on May 30, 2007, the date of Doreen Dunn's death. Airline records also indicated that Lawrence Egbert traveled to Minnesota on May 30, 2007.

The Apple Valley Police Department also identified the telephone numbers assigned to the person or residence of Doreen Dunn, Roberta Massey, and Jerry Dincin. As part of their investigation, searches were done on the phone records related to these telephone numbers. It was confirmed that telephone connections were made between the telephone numbers assigned to Doreen Dunn, Roberta Massey, and Jerry Dincin.

The Apple Valley Police Department also obtained a search warrant for car rental records from Enterprise Car Rental Agency near the Minneapolis airport for May 30, 2007. From this search, it was learned that Jerry Dincin was listed on a car rental document from Enterprise Car Rental as having rented from the agency. According to the documentation, the car was rented the morning of May 30, 2007 and returned later that afternoon. Handwritten on the car rental document was a note listing the address of Doreen Dunn's Apple Valley residence as the point of destination. Mileage readings recorded on the document were also found to be consistent with the rental car having been driven from the rental agency to Doreen Dunn's Apple Valley residence and returning to Enterprise Car Rental.

When the Apple Valley Police Department knocked on the door of the Dunn residence in the spring of 2010 to inform Doreen Dunn's husband that evidence had been uncovered leading to the belief that she had not died from natural causes, but rather from a suicide aided by the Final Exit Network, Mr. Dunn and his children were put through the difficult task of having to once again relive the terrible trauma of the death of their loved one. It is easy to imagine how disturbing such an occurrence would be. And this family's trauma continues to this day as this investigation and now prosecution of those charged in aiding in, and covering up, Doreen Dunn's death is yet to be completed.

Minnesota currently has a law that prohibits anyone from aiding another person in committing suicide. Doing so is a felony. Final Exit Network claims laws of this nature are unconstitutional. However, the laws enacted by the Minnesota Legislature are presumed to be constitutional until such time as the appellate courts of our state rule otherwise.

Minnesota also has a law that prohibits anyone from tampering with a death scene with the purpose of removing or concealing evidence from a coroner or medical examiner. A violation of this law is a gross misdemeanor.

The following charges have been brought through indictment in this case by the Dakota County Grand Jury:

1. **Final Exit Network, Inc. (A Georgia Corporation)**
 - Assisting Another To Commit Suicide – a felony
 - Assisting Another To Commit Suicide (Aiding or Abetting) – a felony
 - Interference With A Death Scene – a gross misdemeanor
 - Interference With A Death Scene (Aiding or Abetting) – a gross misdemeanor
2. **Lawrence Deems Egbert, age 84 of Baltimore, Maryland**
 - Assisting Another To Commit Suicide – a felony
 - Assisting Another To Commit Suicide (Aiding or Abetting) – a felony
 - Interference With A Death Scene – a gross misdemeanor
 - Interference With A Death Scene (Aiding or Abetting) – a gross misdemeanor
3. **Jerry D. Dincin, age 81 of Highland Park, Illinois**
 - Assisting Another To Commit Suicide – a felony
 - Assisting Another To Commit Suicide (Aiding or Abetting) – a felony
 - Interference With A Death Scene – a gross misdemeanor
 - Interference With A Death Scene (Aiding or Abetting) – a gross misdemeanor
4. **Roberta L. Massey, age 66 of Bear, Delaware**
 - Assisting Another To Commit Suicide – a felony
 - Assisting Another To Commit Suicide (Aiding or Abetting) – a felony
 - Interference With A Death Scene (Aiding or Abetting) – a gross misdemeanor
5. **Thomas Edmund Goodwin, a/k/a/ "Ted" Goodwin, age 65 of Punta Gorda, Florida**
 - Assisting Another To Commit Suicide (Aiding or Abetting) – a felony
 - Interference With A Death Scene (Aiding or Abetting) – a gross misdemeanor

This investigation and prosecution is not a politically motivated attack on the right-to-die movement as the Final Exit Network is already claiming it to be on its website. Rather, it is an effort to bring to justice a corporation and several of its officers and volunteers who we are alleging advised, encouraged or assisted Doreen Dunn in the taking of her own life on May 30, 2007 in violation of Minnesota law.

If the people of our state wish to authorize assisted suicide, this should be done through clearly defined laws enacted by the Minnesota Legislature with proper restrictions and requirements to insure the protection of a terminally ill patient and the direct involvement of the patient's physician and immediate family. Oregon is an example of a state which has enacted such legislation.

Oregon's "Death With Dignity Act" which became effective in 1998:

- 1) applies only to terminally ill patients with incurable and irreversible diseases which are medically confirmed to produce death within 6 months.
- 2) requires all medically assisted deaths to be done under the direct supervision of a physician and in the presence of witnesses, including family members;
- 3) requires that the patient wishing to die is deemed capable to make this decision by the attending and consulting physicians and a psychiatrist or psychologist (which insures that the patient has the mental capacity to make and communicate health care decisions to health care providers and is not suffering from a psychological disorder or depression).
- 4) mandates counseling prior to acceptance of the decision of a patient, to voluntarily die; and
- 5) mandates detailed documentation and record keeping pertaining to authorized physician assisted deaths by the state's Department of Health to avoid abuses occurring.

Based upon the information obtained by law enforcement in this investigation, the efforts of the Final Exit Network include none of these protections. In many cases, Final Exit Network's "Exit Guides" who are present at the time of the suicide, come and go undetected and take with them all evidence of the true nature of the death, thereby deceiving not only our law enforcement officials and medical examiners, but even more importantly, deceiving the spouse and children whom the deceased has left behind.

Until such time as the Minnesota Legislature enacts a law permitting and defining when and how assisting in a suicide may lawfully occur, I believe that it is my duty and responsibility to enforce our existing laws by bringing to justice those responsible for advising, encouraging or assisting individuals in taking their own lives prematurely and covering up the true nature of what has occurred by removing evidence from the scenes of such deaths.

That is what I am seeking to do in this case and I do so with the full support and encouragement of Doreen Dunn's family and with the confirmation of the Dakota County Grand Jury which returned these indictments.

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