



Created and produced by ten time Michigan Emmy award recipient  
Executive Producer Keith Famie

An in-depth look at how we face the dying process. The 13-part, 30-minute episodes will  
cover a wide range of issues, complete with real life stories.

Co-Executive Producer Thomas Rau

Co-Executive Producer Russell Ebeid



2013 – 2014/2015 Production  
Estimated date of completion – Fall 2015

The end of life has been the subject of philosophers, religious leaders, scientists and theologians for thousands of years. In fact, there is not anyone who has not faced with death at some point in their life.

We learn about death through loved ones in our own lives. But, who has learned how to embrace the dying process the best? How does dying differ from a long-term illness to an abrupt stopping of one's life? Can we truly embrace dying? Where do we go? Do we go anywhere?

How do animals, such as the majestic elephant, approach the process of dying and grieving?

Ten-time Emmy winning director/producer Keith Famie and the Visionalist Entertainment Productions team will set out on this quest for answers. From the Buddhist monks of Nepal to masai warriors of Kenya to the local cancer ward or hospice center, how can we learn to embrace dying better?

*The Embrace of Dying*, how we deal with the end of life, will bring together theologians, doctors, scientists, philosophers, hospice workers making it a film every human being will need to see.

You can view the website at [www.embraceofaging.com](http://www.embraceofaging.com).

# Featured Individuals

## **MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS**

- Monkia J. Leja, MD; Clinical Assistant Professor, Internal Medicine – University of Michigan Health System - Ann Arbor, MI
- Paul Friedman, MD; Division of Cardiovascular Disease, Mayo Clinic – Rochester, MN
- Sanjiv Josh, MD; Director of ProMedica, Ebeid Hospice Residence at Flower Hospital - Toledo, OH
- Robert Canas, MD; 96-year old family physician – Durand, MI
- Ken Doka, MD; Professor of Gerontology, Graduate School of The College of New Rochelle - New Rochelle, NY
- Kevin Mains, Clinical psychologist, Albuquerque, New Mexico

## **AUTHORS**

- Zorba Paster, MD; co-author of “The Longevity Code: Your Prescription for a Longer, Sweeter Life;” personal physician to the Dali Lama
- Raymond Moody, MD; author of “Life After Life,” and “Reunions: Visionary Encounters with Departed Loved Ones;” credited with coining the term “near death experiences or NDE”
- Eben Alexander, MD; Chairman and Chief Science Officer for Eternea; author of “Proof of Heaven: A Neurosurgeon’s Journey into the Afterlife”
- Mary C. Neal, MD; orthopedic surgeon and author of “To Heaven and Back”
- William Buhlman; author/spiritual teacher, Monroe Institute
- Sue Brayne; British author of “D is for Dying”
- Ken Dychtwald, founding President and CEO of Age Wave, Emeryville, CA

## **INDIVIDUALS**

- Maire Kent; 24-year old sarcoma cancer patient
- (Ret.) MSG Jeff Rector; Casualty Assistance Coordinator for United States Army Reserves in Michigan
- Suzane Northrop; Nationally known medium and author of “A Medium’s Cookbook: Recipes for the Soul”
- William Peters, MFT; therapist at the Family Institute - Santa Barbara, CA
- Linda Fitch; Shaman practitioner; former Dean of the Healing the Light Body School, Afterlife Awareness Conference – St. Louis, MO
- JD Challenger; Native American celebrated artist - Jackson Hole, WY
- Rabbi E. B. “Bunny” Freedman; Executive Director, Jewish Hospice & Chaplaincy Network - West Bloomfield, MI
- David Goss; Historian – Salem, MA
- Susan DameGreene; Historian – Salem, MA
- Laurie Cabot; Official Witch of Salem – Salem, MA
- George Wurtzel; blind carpenter – Minneapolis, MN
- David Techner; Funeral Director, Ira Kaufman Chapel – Southfield, MI

# Featured Individuals

## **INDIVIDUALS (con't.)**

- John E. Desmond, Funeral Director, A.J. Desmond & Sons Funeral Directors, Troy, MI
- Pat Lynch, Funeral Director, Lynch & Sons Funeral Directors, Brighton, MI
- Dottie Deremo; Retired CEO of Hospice of Michigan
- Marisol Jimenez; local resident of Corpus Christi, TX
- David Ethinger, co-founder, Cryonics Institute
- Robert Canas, 96-year old doctor/painter, Durand, MI
- Todd Borek, Funeral Director, Borek Jennings Funeral Home, Brighton, MI
- Robert Canas, MD; 96-year old family physician – Durand, MI
- Richard Harris, art collector, Chicago, IL
- Ian Dungavell, CEO, Highgate Cemetery, London, England, U.K.
- Jelena Bekvalac, Curator of Osteology department, Museum of London, U.K.
- Andrew Leverton, 8<sup>th</sup> generation funeral director, London, England, U.K.
- Mike, taxi driver, London, England, U.K.
- Miguel, tourist guide, Paris, France
- Audrey Pelacino, organizer of the Death Café, New York City, NY
- Vee Riley, Breast cancer patient

# Episode 1

## Hollywood and Dying – The History of Death



In this first episode, we delve into what history has taught us about dying and how Hollywood has turned the final moments of a person's life into a multi-billion dollar industry.



The 1960's was a major turning point in American history. The infusion of music, free speech, the Vietnam war, drugs and the sexual revolution shaped the mindset of an entirely new generation.

Now these baby boomers are in their early 60's & 70's, bringing with them the philosophy and their life lessons as they face mortality. Where do we go? Why do we go? Questioning Everything from religious beliefs to factual studies.



Author William Buhlman takes us on a journey back through time, reflecting on the 1960s; an era that gave us so much change. How does this radical thinking now affects how we embrace dying today?

## Episode 2

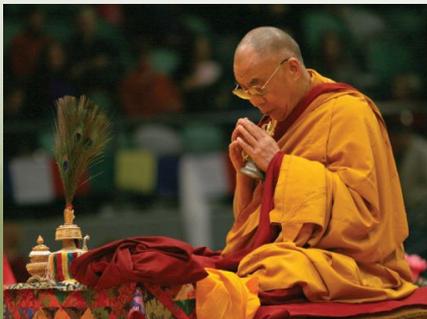
# Rites of Passage

Dr. Zorba Paster, personal physician to the Dalai Lama, along with Ken Dychtwald, founder of Age Wave offer thoughts and ponder the kind of questions that have haunted man from the beginning of time.

Also in this episode, we spend a day filming the life Funeral Director David Techner accompanying him as he attends a funeral director's conference.



What is the history of the casket? Where did it originate? We go behind the scenes in one of the nation's largest casket building factories. We also delve into the history of the urn as well as the practice of cremation.



## Episode 3

# The Funeral Process / Military Funeral

Prominent funeral directors will help us understand the history of the eulogy: why we grieve and how it helps family and friends of the deceased. These same professionals will enlighten us about the various cultural differences of how we say good-bye to a loved one.



### The Military Honors Funeral

In America, we have a creed: **“No Man Left Behind.”** Somehow thirteen veterans from our military were abandoned at the county morgue in Detroit.

A well-respected group of funeral directors, all from different religious faiths, came together to ensure that these men have the proper military burial. The thirteen hearse procession, complete with Patriot Guard and State police escort, arrived at Great Lakes National Cemetery in Holly, MI. Each branch of the military was on hand to partake in the formal flag folding ceremony as hundreds witnessed.

MSG Jeff Rector, (Ret.) Casualty Assistance Coordinator of the U.S. Army, explains in detail the philosophy behind the formal military funeral.



## Episode 4

### Cultural Rituals / Celebration of Life

Day of the Dead, or Dia de los Muertos, is a holy day and celebration dating back hundreds of years. Although marked throughout Latin America, it is most strongly associated with Mexico, where the tradition originated. The Hispanic communities in America believe that from October 31-November 2, the dead are awakened from their eternal sleep to share celebrations with their loved ones. Families erect elaborate alters in their homes and provide food, drink and activities of the kind the dead enjoyed in life as an homage to the memory.

To further understand Day of the Dead traditions, we travel to Corpus Christi, Texas and step into the life of Marisol Jimenez and her family as they partake in one of the largest day of the dead celebrations in America.

We travel to New Orleans to experience this cultural celebration of the passing of a loved one and the life they lived.



## Episode 5

### Salem, Massachusetts / Detroit Police Formal Goodbye

October 30th and the week leading up to Halloween is big business in Salem, Massachusetts. Known everywhere as the site of the Salem Witch Trials of 1692, we were able to interview some of the modern-day witches, or wiccans, who call Salem home.

Also, in this episode, Professor David Goss takes us on a tour of one of America's oldest gravesites in Salem.

Can they really talk to the dead? Susan DameGreene thinks so, and as a certified Deep Memory Process Practitioner at the Salem Center for Past Life Regression, she teaches us about the techniques she uses to 'step back into the life' someone lived before the life they know now.



#### Police Brotherhood, Detroit, MI

A beloved Detroit Police officer dies while on duty. We witness a touching ceremony of family, friends, and community as they lay to rest one of Detroit's finest.



## Episode 6

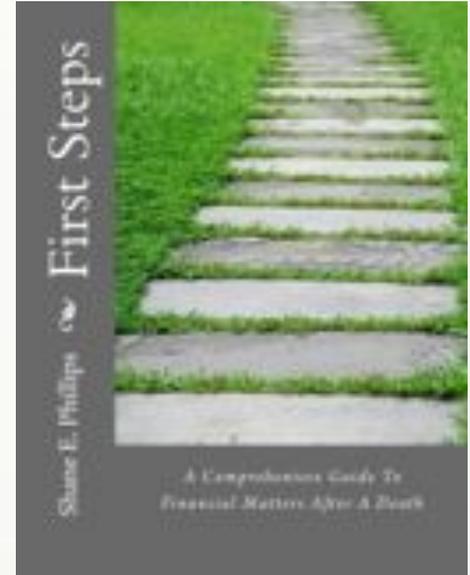
# Letting Go of our Terminally Ill / Financial Planning for the Dead

In this episode we explain how historically we have helped the sick to pass on. We look at healthcare in America and what it means to **“Do Not Resuscitate.”**

Funeral Director Todd Borek teaches children how to cope with the process of dying for the first time through a special class.



Shane Phillips teaches us what we all should know about end of life planning from funeral planning to estate laws and probate issues. It doesn't matter if you're elderly and planning your departure or if you lose someone you love quickly. This is a must-see for everyone.



Funeral Director David Techner offers his thoughts on how to help children to understand death and dying. David is nationally recognized author of the book 'A Candle for Grandpa.'



### Planning a Good Death

What does this mean? In the case of Vee Riley, a breast cancer patient from Sun Valley, it means you're going to decorate your cremation box with all of your personal and meaningful thoughts. When she was finished, she called it "Vee's Chariot."

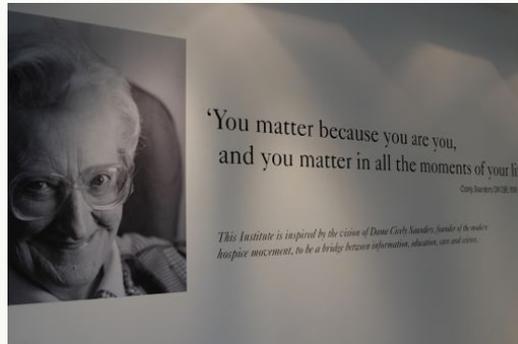


# Episode 7

## History of Hospice

We travel to London, U.K. with Dottie Deremo, retired CEO of Hospice of Michigan. One of the nation's most respected hospice care organizations, Dottie toured the historical St. Christopher's Hospital where it all started, offering insight into Dame Cicely Saunders' vision at the Dame Cicely Saunders Institution.

Dame Cicely Saunders was an ordinary nurse working in London hospitals when she became frustrated with how terminally ill patients were cared for towards the end of their lives. As a result, she founded what is considered to be the birth of the modern-day hospice movement.



We travel with Maire Kent through her final hours, as Michigan hospice care takes over until, at last, she leaves this world.



In Toledo, OH there is a wonderful and prominent hospice center that was recently created.

The Ebeid Hospice Residence offers patients and family members a private, tranquil setting. The director allows us the opportunity to learn about their philosophy.

## Episode 8

### Dr. Death

Agree or disagree? Jack Kevorkian forced a dialog of discussion in this country. In this episode our medical professionals, spirit leaders, and hospice directors offer their thoughts.



As we turn back the clock of time on one of America's most talked about social subjects, a family member of Jack's "Number 3" patient looks back on the weeks and days leading up to his aunt's final moments.

Love him or hate him, many say Dr. Kevorkian was the reason the hospice movement caught on in America. Others call Jack a murderer.

Let's revisit this story as his friend and legal counsel, Geoffrey Fieger, discusses those turbulent days.



## Episode 9

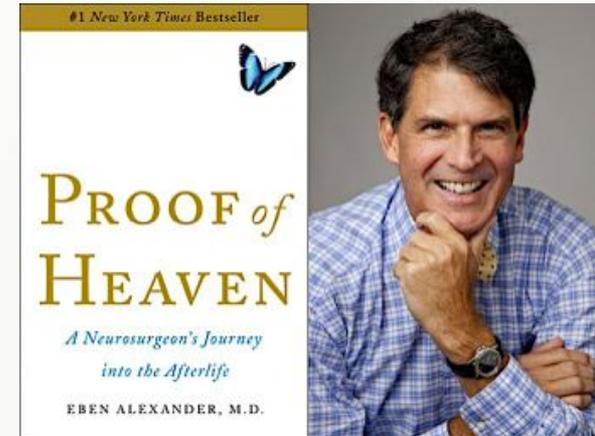
# Life After Death

Is it possible to die and be brought back to life? Over the years and more than ever, there has been recent stories and books written of the afterlife by individuals who believe they have experienced it first hand.

We meet two internationally-renowned authors, “Proof of Heaven,” And “To Heaven and Back” whose experiences have created Worldwide conversations. Is there somewhere after we die?



Dr. Raymond Moody, author of ‘Glimpses of Eternity,’ and ‘Life After Life’ goes into great detail on this subject and his beliefs.



Dr. Mary Neal of Jackson Hole, WY and author of ‘To Heaven and Back’ recounts in an emotional and touching interview the moments leading up to her death and how they have continued to direct her life, even today.



# Episode 10

## Historical Cemeteries / Professor of Osteology

### Jim Morrison

Highgate Cemetery in London is one of the world's oldest and most respected resting places for the deceased. Director Ian Dungavell gives us a tour, explaining the reason why it was named 'Highgate.' Later, we meet up with funeral director Andrew Leverton whose family's passion of caring for the dead dates back to eight generations.



Museum of London Osteologist Jelena Bekvalac's warehouse holds the largest collection of skeletal remains in the world. Dr. Bekvalac explains why she often feels closer to these people instead of her own family.

Miguel, a tour guide in Paris takes us to the gravesite of the late singer/songwriter Jim Morrison where hundreds of people visit each year. But why is this? What is the attraction? What are they hoping to gain from this experience?

# Episode 11

## In Memory Of

Rich Rau's Annual Bicycle Ride in Virginia was created in memory of Rich Rau; Mikie's Minutes was created in memory of Sgt. Michael Ingram, Jr. We spend time with both families, learning how these events, bringing together the community of both friends and supporters, has helped them all.



Clinical psychologist Kevin Mains talks us through the grieving process .



In a touching and impromptu interview, a taxi driver in London talks openly about the personal devastation of losing a child...his daughter.



In Paris, we show a caricature artist stepping out of his daily routine to visit his grandfather in the local cemetery. Once there, he illustrates his memories of his grandfather and reflects upon his life.

# Episode 12

## Restart the Heart / Death Cafe

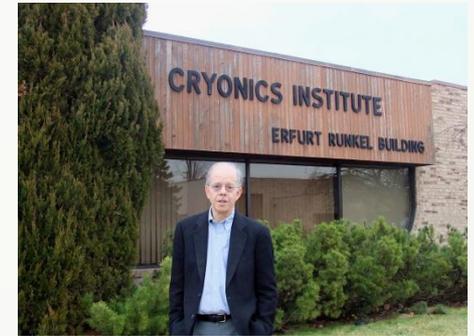


What does it mean to really die and be brought back to life? Dr. Paul Friedman of the cardiovascular center at the Mayo Clinic takes us through the process and shows how far medical advancements have come, allowing for someone to be considered clinically dead, yet be brought back to life.



The Death Café phenomenon was created by a psychologist years ago in Paris. Now this type of gathering is a worldwide movement. We spend the night at a Death Café gathering in NYC with a group of people who have deep, open discussions about death and dying.

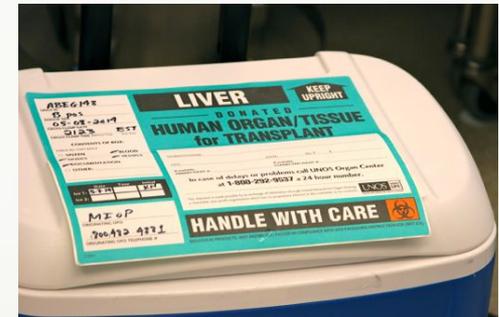
We go behind the scenes into the Cryonics Institute to learn the process of being frozen with the hopes of being brought back to life one day.



# Episode 13

## Gift of Life Michigan

We step into the operating room as Jimmy Williams, a donor, offers up his vital organs. Liver, kidneys, pancreas, heart, skin, bones and eyes were donated to various people so they can continue to live their lives.



We learn about the Gift of Life Michigan donor program, wherein one life ends, another can get a second chance to live a full life. We will meet two of these recipients who talk to us about what their donor meant to them who gave his heart and eyes and what this means to them and their families.

**Closing thoughts** – Our featured individuals and professionals offer their thoughts, not only on the process of dying, but also on the importance of learning how to accept death and dying and how that will enable people to live a fuller, richer life.

# VISIONALIST ENTERTAINMENT PRODUCTIONS

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[www.v-prod.com](http://www.v-prod.com)

**Ten-time** Emmy Award winning Visionalist Entertainment Productions was established in 1997 by Executive Producer/Director Keith Famie who created a series of adventurous cooking shows in exotic locations around the globe for various network-affiliate television stations. Produced both in short news format segments and hour-long documentaries, Famie quickly developed his own unique style of film production.

In 2000, Famie was selected as a cast member of the CBS reality series "Survivor: The Australian Outback," where Keith was one of the final three contestants.

Since these early years, Famie and his VEP team have produced a wide range of primetime programs ranging from an all guys trip to Russia with the Detroit Red Wings alumni team, to the touching series, "Our Story Of" about immigrants coming to America.

In 2013, Famie introduced the first in a series of films that focused on men and women as we age. "The Embrace of Aging" is a multi-episode series that debuted on Detroit Public Television. In the fall of 2014, DPTV will start airing a 13-part series on women and aging.

## EMMY AWARD WINNERS

### Taste of Taiwan (2006)

On-Camera Talent-Keith Famie

### Our Italian Story (2006)

Human Interest Special & Best Director

### Our Polish Story (2007)

Best Cultural Documentary

Best Human Interest Program Special

### Our Arab American Story (2007)

Societal Concerns Program Special

### Our India Story (2008)

Best Documentary Cultural

### Detroit: Our Greatest Generation (2009)

Editor/Program

### Our Vietnam Generation (2011)

Documentary Historical

## DOCUMENTARIES

**Detroit: Our Greatest Generation** A film about our WWII veterans: a tribute to our 'Greatest Generation.'

**Our Vietnam Generation** A film dedicated to the unsung heroes, and survivors of the Vietnam War.

**Can You See How I See?** An intimate and moving film that explores the world of the blind; a daily way of life unfamiliar to most

**One Soldier's Story** A PBS film about Sgt. Michael Ingram, Jr. and the legacy he left behind.

### 2014

Visionalist Entertainment Productions is scheduled to have completed a 13-part series called "The Embrace of Dying," how we deal with the end of life.

**Maire's Journey**, an extraordinarily touching feature documentary about the wishes of a deceased cancer patient.

**Visionalist Entertainment Productions also produces Emmy-quality, short stories for corporate and individual clients.**

## EMMY AWARD NOMINEES

### Can You See How I See? (2011)

Best Human-Interest Documentary Film

### One Soldier's Story (2011)

Best Topical Documentary

### The Embrace of Aging, the male perspective of growing old (2014)

Health/Science - Program/Special

Director-Post Production/Keith Famie

Editor-Program (non news)/Joe Grant

