

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

In 1997, my father, James R. Dick, died of prostate cancer. During the last months of his life, he was under the care of a hospice program in his own home in Tucson, AZ.

Having never experienced hospice before, my eyes were opened to what is perhaps the most humane social organization in the civilized world. While the emotional side of losing my Dad was still incredibly difficult, having 24/7 personalized health care in a familiar environment provided a safe and caring embrace in which our family could share the last days of my Dad's life, rather than his death.

In 2001, I embarked on a unique film project in association with HBO/Cinemax and the hospice program at Kaiser Permanente Hospital in Los Angeles. We gave video cameras to patients and their families to record the last months, weeks, days, and hours of their lives. In addition, small crews filmed not only the families, but also the experiences of the nurses, doctors, and social workers who attended to them, as they encountered the full range of end of life issues.

My goal was to not only show the compassion of hospice, but also the combustibility of powerful emotions and family dynamics that come to a head during this period. Having gone through it with my Dad, I saw firsthand that dying did not bring about instant family closure. In fact, Dad's death was complicated and conflicted—a mixture of laughter, tears, anger, gratitude and regret that was as rich as life itself.

For some of the families in this film, the use of our cameras provided a heartfelt remembrance. For others, they became tools to express the frustration of watching a loved one slip away, sometimes prematurely. And for one family, the use of the camera provided courage, and a platform, to coax an 'I love you' that had never been uttered before.

In THE END, you will see the last experiences on earth of five fascinating people and their equally unique families, all under the care of a dedicated hospice program. While someone else's death is not an event many of us would choose to watch, I hope that this film is both therapeutic for those of us who have lived through it, and inspiring for all of us who will face this prospect one day - both in our loved ones' lives, as well as our own.

I dedicate this film to the memory of my father.

Kirby Dick