

Testimony of Ellison Banks Findly, 105 Girard Avenue, Hartford, CT 06105

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My husband, John Frederick Pfeil, was diagnosed in late February 2005 with Stage IV Melanoma that had spread to the brain. Over the course of the next nine months, he underwent several surgeries to remove tumors in his brain, and submitted to a number of chemotherapy and radiation treatments at both the Hartford and John Dempsey hospitals. While chemo and radiation had some effect, as did the addition of a thalidomide treatment and daily doses of turmeric that we had urged upon the doctors, Fred finally succumbed to the cancer on November 29, 2005 – the cancer having spread, in the course of his illness, first to his lungs, then to his lymph system, and finally to his whole body. At the time of his diagnosis he was given two to four months to live. With the added therapies, good exercise and diet, and his strong will to live, he surpassed everyone's expectations and lived nine months after the diagnosis. In fact, several of his surgeons in seeing him in the hallways of the hospitals often said to him in surprise: "What! you're still here!"

Throughout Fred's illness, he experienced tremendous pain, sleeping disorders, nausea, loss of appetite, and depression. His main doctor prescribed a number of pain medications and sleeping aids, but nothing really worked. A good friend performed energy work on him at home almost every other day. This helped, primarily by putting him to sleep for a few hours, but it did nothing to provide relief from the other problems he was experiencing. Someone then suggested using marijuana. Fred was willing to try it, despite the fact that he would be engaging in unlawful behavior. The use of marijuana finally provided the relief that he so badly needed.

Once he began, Fred smoked marijuana almost every night. He put a small amount in a pipe and took two tokes, and this was enough to ease his all-over body pain and to give him a good night's sleep. He also found that smoking marijuana had a positive effect on his nausea and appetite. With the onset of his illness, Fred felt nauseous and vomited quite often. This subsided almost to nothing with the use of marijuana. A man of great appetite and a lover of good food, Fred (before his illness) ate often and in substantial quantity. Under the spell of the cancer, Fred's appetite diminished substantially, but returned almost to his pre-illness level with the daily use of marijuana.

Fred was a practicing Buddhist, who meditated every morning, ran a group meditation as well as a class in meditation once a week, and gave weekend retreats at our house four times a year. With the onset of his illness he used his Buddhist practice to focus on Buddhist understandings of impermanence, suffering, and non-attachment. He began evening recitations of a chant on loving-kindness that our small Buddhist community still uses in his memory. In spite of this fulsome and committed practice, Fred was not able to live at peace in the face of his impending demise. At age 56, he was dying, well before his time, and with so much unresolved, and with so much left to do. This "condition" the hospice nurses called "terminal anxiety," and Fred was well into it. On the surface it looked like depression, and I can attest that, after he started using marijuana, this "depression" eased. And with the easing of the depression, Fred was able to give much more attention to those many, many people who came to the house and to the hospital to say goodbye. Thus, not only was his own life enhanced by the marijuana, but the lives of so many of his family, colleagues, and friends as well.

All of Fred's conditions were known to me, his wife, in great detail during his illness, and

I was his "intimate" in many ways. He could not wipe himself after the toilet, for example, and when I said "bend over just a little more" he usually responded by saying "well, this is just another form of intimacy, you know." The same is true of the effects of his using marijuana. I was by his side as often as I could be during the early stages of the illness, and hardly ever left him during the last few months. Thus, I knew full well how the marijuana eased his decline and passing, and am immensely grateful that such an herb exists that can so enhance the well-being of someone who is passing on.