

# The 24 Hour Association To Be Or Not To Be....Prepared!

by Natalie Hardy

Absolutely nothing had prepared me for the moment of my husband, Derrick's, death here in San Miguel a few years ago. Not the prior three years of his illness; nor the doctor's pronouncement that his diagnosis of Lou Gerhig's disease was "guaranteed" to kill him; not my close contact as primary caregiver; nor the visible physical disintegration of his functions and body. While he became ever weaker, we always believed in some "midnight hour pardon", some last ditch miracle, something so this thing called "death" was put on hold. On May 20, 2004 at about 5:00 p.m., shortly after feeding him, the nurse said that Derrick was not responding. I looked at her uncomprehending. I stood there feeling stunned and immobile, not wanting to understand what she was saying. The fact, nonetheless, was that he had passed away.

At that moment I shifted into a surreal frame of mind. This could not be happening. I could not take it in. The nurse called her brother who was a friend of mine. He came with another of our best friends. They started making phone calls, to the doctor, to the Red Cross paramedics, and to THE 24 HOUR ASSOCIATION. I stood around vaguely hearing and seeing what was going on. More and more people filled the house and they seemed to know what to do. The paramedics moved away. The funeral director arrived. I remember looking at him with confusion. He made clear what his responsibilities were. My husband's corpse was removed from our home.

I was in shock and passively let these activities take place in the house. My closest friend stayed the night saying I should not be left alone. The next morning Bonnie Bisnett, who was then the Executive Secretary THE 24 HOUR ASSOCIATION called me and asked how I was doing. She explained the activity of the night before and asked what else she could do. Family had been notified. Friends were staying with me. Bit by bit I would take in fully the preceding 24 hours of events. What I knew for sure was that the best thing Derrick and I had done to prepare for this traumatic moment of need was to join THE 24 HOUR ASSOCIATION. We had planned ahead and been members of this special support group long before Derrick's death. In retrospect, I cannot imagine going through that night and the next few days without the guidance and professional direction of this fine support group. Indeed, my gratitude knows no bounds, and now, a few years later, I serve as a Board Member with 24 HOURS.

THE 24 HOUR ASSOCIATION is not-forprofit, and legally registered as a Mexican asociacion civil. It began in 1965 when a certain Admiral Alex Charlton, U.S.N., sent out a memo to the foreign community: "As most of you know, Mexican law requires burial within 24 hours of death. This presents immediate problems which cannot await the arrival of executors no matter how carefully pre-arranged. (Click on "[HISTORY](#)" button and continue reading the article "A Little History".)