



An Interview with the Author Jeffrey Cole

Jeffrey, what was your purpose when you wrote *Returning Home*?

There were several reasons that I decided to write *Returning Home*. My wife and I had such profound life-changing experiences during the final few weeks of my father-in-law's life and I felt very strongly that our experiences needed to be shared. My hope is that our story will provide reassurance that death is only a temporary separation and can be an incredibly wonderful experience. It is also my hope that comfort will be brought to anyone faced with saying good-bye to someone close to them, and that comfort will be brought to those who are facing death.

Tell us the premise of the book.

Returning Home shares the evolution of a man coming to terms with his life before it ended, the strength of the bond between a father and daughter, and the enlightenment and insight that came from unexpected and magnificent spiritual experiences.

Returning Home is a deeply personal true story about the final four weeks of my father-in-law's life and the profound transformation that occurred in him, in my wife and in me as he made his transition to the other side. From all that we observed and experienced, it was clear to my wife and me that his death was the transition of his spirit from his body to the spiritual realm.

The three of us shared an amazing few weeks as my father-in-law worked through his life, ultimately achieving a peace and serenity that allowed him to make that transition. In his final days, my wife and I witnessed interactions that were beyond anything we had experienced in this life.

When I realized the significance of all that was occurring to and around us, I spent more time observing and experiencing, keeping notes that I knew needed to be shared.

How has this experience affected you and your wife?

When I think about the impacts on our lives, I break those impacts into two parts. First, as a result of the experiences with my father-in-law, my wife and I view our lives quite differently than we did prior to my father-in-law's death. We both understand that one of our reasons for being here is to become more enlightened, to gain more insight. We also understand that we were given incredible gifts during those final weeks with my father-in-law that were intended to be shared to help others touched by death. The magnitude of those experiences is not lost on either of us.

The other impact is being able to provide peace to people experiencing grief and loss. This has been extremely heartwarming, and certainly a confirmation that our story needed to be shared.

What type of transformation did your father-in-law go through?

My father-in-law underwent two significant and noticeable transformations in the final weeks of his life. Before becoming ill, he was quiet and polite, but had a generally negative approach to life. During his adult life, much of his family's attention was focused on him and his needs. When he became ill, he got angry and bitter, and was extremely unpleasant to be around for any length of time.

His first transformation came during the final weeks of his life when he grasped that his time left in this life was drawing to a close. My wife and I watched him evolve into a more sensitive, more gentle and more vulnerable man than he had ever been. With that more positive approach to life, he was able to embrace all of the changes that occurred around and to him.

His second transformation occurred as he became more connected to the spiritual world. It was at that time that he transformed into a teacher of sorts for my wife and me, working very methodically to share some of what he was experiencing. I barely recognized him in the final days of his life. He generally still looked the same, although he did begin to look more youthful shortly before he died. But it was his personality and his attitude that I didn't recognize. He made sure that he didn't make his final transition until after my wife and I had gained the understanding and enlightenment that we were given through him.

Were you able to cope better with the loss after having these experiences with your father-in-law?

Being with my father-in-law during his final few weeks was an incredibly beautiful experience for my wife and me, and neither of us would have traded it for anything. Although my wife certainly experienced grief after his death, it was a vastly different kind of grief than either of us had ever experienced before. She mostly missed talking with him and seeing him. But she and I were both exhilarated by really understanding the magnificence of his transition.

The experiences that led to our greater enlightenment have not only helped us to better deal with loss, but they have also completely changed our outlook on life. We try to always remember why we're all here instead of worrying about all of the things that we're all confronted with day to day.

Did it change your faith at all?

Faith is certainly something different for everyone. These experiences most certainly strengthened my faith, as well as helped me to understand the value of finding purpose and meaning in life.

One of the questions that I receive most often from people before they read *Returning Home* is whether it's a religious book, a spiritual book or both. I addressed that in the last chapter: "I had been so careful to not attach any religious connection to our experiences because religion had always felt hypocritical and intolerant to me. I didn't want our experience of love and enlightenment to be confused with fire and brimstone. But what we experienced was spiritual, and it was religious at the same time. It was about love, forgiveness, kindness, faith and how we treat people. It was about God. It was about all of the things that religion and spirituality should always be about. It was about all of the things that our daily lives should always be about."

We received a rare gift of confirmation that there is a much greater existence than the physical world that we're so comfortable in and familiar with. We've come to understand that we all must find our meaning and purpose. We all must work to become enlightened and evolved. My wife and I focus on that enlightenment and evolution every day.

What could you say to those who have a gravely ill loved one?

Those who are or will be experiencing loss and grief are the people that this book is most intended for. They are the ones who often need to hear inspiring stories of loss that will help them remember that death is only a temporary separation.

We all handle loss and grief in different ways, and it is my hope that by knowing and remembering that what awaits us all will be the most incredible experience of our lives, saying good-bye to a loved one becomes less painful.

Would someone with a terminal illness benefit from *Returning Home*?

Yes, while the experiences that I shared in *Returning Home* were unique, the overall message that we received that death is simply a transition should certainly bring comfort to those about to embark upon that journey.

While I hope that I have many more years in this life, I'm filled with great anticipation about what awaits me. I just hope that I am able to depart this life with the same grace and dignity that my father-in-law did.

What was your father-in-law able to reveal to you about dying?

There were so many revelations that helped my wife and me better understand death and the process of moving on. As I described in *Returning Home*, my father-in-law talked numerous times about the "work" that he had undertaken while in the nursing home. My wife and I spent much time by his side watching him, and it became apparent that his work involved reconciling his life before he was ready to take that final step.

My father-in-law helped us understand that making that transition can be a beautiful and serene experience when those who have gone before us return to show us the way. Through all that we observed, there were no doubts for my wife or me that my father-in-law's deceased wife came back to help his spirit leave his body.

What insights did you gain from this experience?

My wife and I have both become more aware of all that occurs around us because one of the most significant things we learned was that messages are presented to us all continuously throughout each day. This physical world and the spiritual world are not nearly as separate as I had once believed, and if we remain aware of all that occurs around and to us, more communication can occur than we ever imagined possible. We can get more direction and more confirmation if we remain alert and work to stay connected.

In one respect, I'm referring to what many of us refer to as coincidences. I no longer believe in coincidences. When something occurs in my life that makes me pause to reflect, I pause longer to consider whether it's something that I'm supposed to be understanding or considering or doing. Sometimes they're simply confirmations that we're on the right path and sometimes they're nudges to keep us from veering off of our path.

Do you live differently today than before you went through this journey?

I try to live my life differently today as a result of our experiences, although I know that I'm not always successful. This is from the final chapter: "Our time here is brief, yet there's much to be accomplished before we move on. I spend much less time on wasted emotions like anger and hate. I work harder to avoid hurting other people's feelings, and I apologize when I realize that I fail and hurt them anyway. I express my appreciation and love for people in my life, and I try to reach out to those who hurt."

"I know that there has been much that I'll better understand when it comes time for my own transition. I know that I'll learn about times when I was unaware of the pain that I caused others. I'll learn about times when I failed to make the right choices."

Who is this book for?

The audience is as diverse as the experiences that people have in their own lives with death and grief. I believe that the vast majority of us want to maintain the hope that we'll be reunited with our loved ones from this life on the other side. We all experience grief and sorrow, and I believe we all want to find ways to ease that sorrow in our lives. From the feedback that I have received from readers, *Returning Home* helps provide hope, or in some cases to just strengthen it.

Returning Home is for anyone who wants to read a touching true story that can leave them with the same inner peace about death and separation that my wife and I achieved. It's for anyone who seeks affirmation about experiences that they have had losing people close to them, and it's for anyone who is searching for something to ease their grief.

As I've noted on the home page of my Web site, books find people. People don't find books. *Returning Home* seems to continue to find its way into the hands of the people who need it most.

For more information on *Returning Home*, go to www.jeffreycole.com