The Whole Truth About Terri Schiavo
By Josh Brahm, Director of Education

There has been a lot of confusion and divisiveness within our country, and the pro-life community as a whole, about Terri Schiavo. Because of this I've immersed myself in research on the issue, and what I've found is truly horrifying. Under the surface are facts that the mass media never talked about, if they didn't lie about it. This article will expose some of the details that should have come out from the beginning. These details would have completely changed public opinion on the issue, and would have likely saved her life.

Terri Schiavo collapsed in 1990 at the age of 26, and oxygen was cut off to her brain for at least several minutes. The cause of the collapse is disputed. Michael Schiavo, Terri's husband, blames a cardiac arrest induced by a potassium imbalance associated with bulimia. Terri’s parents, the Schindlers, suspect he tried to strangle her, as Terri had suffered a neck injury when she was admitted to the hospital. A later total-body bone scan performed on Terri while she was in the hospital showed what are known as “hot spots” suggestive of multiple fractures.

Though severely brain damaged, Terri Schiavo was never in a vegetative state. She breathed on her own, and she maintained a heart beat and blood pressure on her own. While her vision was impaired, she could see and move her limbs. All Terri needed was a feeding tube connected to her stomach to sustain her life.

What is interesting is that Michael’s story kept changing. Two years after Terri collapsed, Michael Schiavo filed a malpractice suit against Terri’s physicians. Schiavo successfully argued they should have treated her potassium imbalance before it resulted in cardiac arrest. Michael was seeking $20 million to cover the cost of Terri’s future medical and neurological care, estimating her life expectancy was 50 years. He made no mention of Terri wishing to die in this situation, and conversely pleaded for the opportunity to personally take care of his wife at home for the rest of his life. Schiavo told the jury he was studying nursing because he wanted “to learn more about how to take care of Terri.” Upon asking how he felt about being married to Terri, giving her condition, Michael said, “I feel wonderful. She’s my wife and I wouldn’t trade her for the world. I believe in my wedding vows. I believe in the vows I took with my wife through sickness, in health, for richer or poor. I married my wife because I love her and I want to spend the rest of my life with her. I’m going to do that.” Michael won the suit with a $1.3 million settlement. $700,000 went to a trust fund for Terri’s care, and $600,000 went straight to Michael, to compensate for his loss.

Less than eight months after receiving the money, Michael Schiavo tried to stop Terri’s medication for an infection. Bob Schindler said, “She would have died but the nursing home overruled him and treated her. Then he put a ‘Do Not Resuscitate’ order in her medical chart. “When the hospice staff challenged the order’s legality, Schiavo backed off from it.

Five years later, Michael argued for the first time that Terri would have wanted to die under these conditions, shocking her family. The Schindlers argued that as a devout Roman Catholic, Terri believed in the sanctity of life. One of Terri’s girlfriends concurred. In court testimony, Diane Meyer shared her recollection of a conversation with Terri after watching the 1982 television movie about Karen Ann Quinlan. Meyer said Terri told her she did not agree with the well-known decision by Quinlan’s parents to take their comatose daughter off the respirator. Meyer remembers Terri wondering aloud how doctors and lawyers could possibly know what Quinlan was feeling or what she would want. “When there’s life,” Terri had told her, “there’s hope.”

One of the biggest questions in the Terri Schiavo case, was whether she was in persistent vegetative state, or PVS. The Schindlers begged the judge to visit Terri, but he refused. Perhaps if he had, he would have noticed that not only was Terri awake, but she was aware of her surroundings. Terri’s sister, Suzanne Vitadamo, appeared live on “The Oprah Winfrey Show” and described Terri’s actions as “purposeful.” “When you go in and say ‘hi’ to Terri, Terri will in a sense do her best to say ‘hi’ to you. Or there’s a lot of times where if you tell Terri you’re going to leave, she’ll cry. She doesn’t want you to leave. So her reactions are very purposeful.” Bobby Schindler told Oprah “there’s a real misconception” about Terri’s medical condition.

Encouraged by the physicians’ affidavits, but thwarted by the restricted access to Terri imposed by Michael Schiavo, the Schindlers conducted a covert rehabilitation program from November 2002 through February 2003. World Net Daily (WND) exclusively reported Terri Schiavo received daily, hour-long "tough-love" therapy sessions over cellphone with staff members of a therapeutic company, Galaxy Wave Group.

“In December of 2002, I confronted Ms. Schiavo with the ‘truth’ and told her that unless she helped me in returning her from the comatose state that she was in that she was going to die a horrid death,” company president, Joe Champion wrote in a sworn affidavit. “I explained in detail that they would remove the single tube that was providing her nutrition and she would
slowly die of starvation. At this point, it was reported by her father that she sat up in bed and became teary eyed."

Her therapist said, "The bottom line is she is not vegetative, the way the husband and the side the court has gone with want to portray her." "She definitely has some brain damage and severe problems, but she is not a vegetable."

By the way, whatever happened to the money Michael Schiavo was rewarded for Terri’s care? World Net Daily reported that more than half of the money earmarked for Terri Schiavo’s medical care was spent on Michael Schiavo’s eight-year legal battle to end her life, despite attorneys’ public statements to the contrary. Schiavo attorney George Felos was reimbursed for fees totaling $358,434. Michael Schiavo’s other attorney, Deborah Bushnell, was paid $80,309. Near the end of the battle over Schiavo’s life, only about $50,000 remained of Terri’s medical-care fund. While exhausting Terri’s money for the purpose of killing her, not one red cent could be found by Schiavo to enhance the quality of her life after receipt of the malpractice award.

Among the neglect and abuse complaints of the Schindlers is that Michael Schiavo:

- Did not allow therapy or rehabilitation since late 1992, despite medical records indicating Terri was responsive.
- Prevented swallowing tests or swallowing therapy since 1993, despite medical testimony that Terri could be taught to eat.
- Placed Terri in hospice in 2000, despite the fact that she was not terminally ill.
- Refused to allow Terri to leave her room. She had not been outside since 2000.
- Refused to allow Terri to practice her Catholic faith by attending weekly mass.
- Ordered Terri’s shades down at all times.
- Ordered doctors not to treat Terri when she had a life threatening infection in 1993 and 1995.
- Removed family pictures from Terri’s room, denied flowers from family and friends, denied certain CDs to be played for Terri, and refused to allow her to listen to music with headphones.
- Refused to release medical information to her parents since 1993, despite a court order requiring him to do so.
- Limited the visitors list, requiring they must first be approved by him and removes visitors at his own discretion.

"Michael claims he loves Terri, and he has said it on numerous occasions, but he treats her in a way I don’t think most of us would treat our own pets,” Bobby Schindler told World Net Daily.

Bob Schindler likens his daughter’s confinement at hospice to being in jail. “She has literally been in prison for four years. She’s not permitted to go outside. She has no stimulation.”

As WND reported, Carla Sauer Iyer, a registered nurse who cared for Terri at the nursing home where she resided from April 1995 until August of 1996, stated in a sworn affidavit that Terri used to talk to her as much as she could and frequently used what sounded like the word “pain.” She also interpreted Terri’s vocalizing at times as crying “help me.” She was fired after notifying the police about the case. Iyer stated Michael Schiavo used to make comments such as, "When is she going to die?,” "Has she died yet?” and "When is that b--ch gonna die?"

After numerous court battles, Michael Schiavo won, and in March of 2005, Terri’s feeding tube was removed from her stomach, and she began to starve to death. This execution was gravely immoral, fundamentally unjust, and a gross violation of Natural Law. Nutrition and hydration are not extraordinary, life-saving measures! Pope John Paul II stated, "Nutrition through a feeding tube is a natural means of preserving life, not a medical act. In short, eating and drinking are common to every living human being. Death by starvation or dehydration is, in fact, the only possible outcome as a result of their withdrawal. In this sense it ends up becoming, if done knowingly and willingly, true and proper euthanasia by omission." “Terri Schiavo was doomed to a not only painful, but torturous death. Dr. David Stevens, who represents about 17,000 physicians, explained what happens with starvation:

"As dehydration begins, there is extreme thirst, dry mouth and thick saliva. The patient becomes dizzy, faint and unable to stand or sit; has severe cramping in the arms and legs as the sodium and potassium concentrations in the body goes up as fluids go down. In misery, the patient tries to cry but there are no tears. By now the skin and lips are cracking and the tongue is swollen. The hands and feet become cold as the remaining fluids in the circulatory system are shunted to the vital organs in an attempt to stay alive. The person has severe headaches as their brain shrinks from lack of fluids. This proceeds to coma before death occurs. The final event as the blood pressure becomes almost undetectable is a major heart arrhythmia that stops the heart from pumping.”

Mel Gibson, the Hollywood star who directed "The Passion of the Christ," said that the case of Terri Schiavo was a modern-day crucifixion with a pro-death agenda driving it. "It's just completely wrong to deprive this poor woman of food and water," Gibson said on Sean Hannity’s national radio show. "It's a prolonged and cruel execution." He added, "You do this to an animal, they'll lock you up, but this is a human being we're doing this to."
On March 31, 2005, Terri died, after 14 days without food or water. Her body was immediately autopsied. Here are a few items to note from the autopsy:

- Terri had a strong heart.
- Terri demonstrated a very strong will to live.
- Terri was not terminal.
- Terri was brain-injured. NOT brain-dead.
- When Terri died, she had the inability to swallow. This was due to muscle atrophy. That's what happens when someone is denied therapy for 12 years: the muscles atrophy.
- While Terri was visually impaired after her brain injury, she was completely blind by the time she died. This was due to the starvation.

Responding to the autopsy report, Terri's parents said: "Terri's case was NOT an end-of-life case. Terri's case was about ending a disabled person's life."

Consider the mysterious timeline of the day Terri collapsed:

- According to Michael Schiavo, Terri collapsed at 4:30 AM. Mr. Schiavo said this on Larry King Live and he also re-confirmed it to the IME during his investigation.
- 911 was called at 5:40 AM. Emergency services arrived at 5:52 AM. Thus, there is a very troubling 70-minute gap where oxygen wasn't making it to Terri's brain, a situation where seconds are important.
- Even more troubling, the autopsy essentially ruled out bulimia and heart attack as causes for Terri's condition. No one knows what was the cause for Terri's brain injury. All we know is that it wasn't what Michael Schiavo continually said it was.

Adding insult to injury, Michael Schiavo had a grave marker placed on the cremated remains of his wife Terri Schiavo that lists her death as Feb. 25, 1990 -- more than 15 years before she died of court-ordered dehydration. In an apparent message from Michael Schiavo himself, the grave marker also says "I kept my promise," referring to his insistence that his severely brain-injured wife didn't want to be kept alive by "artificial" means.

Did you hear any of these facts from the liberal media? Absolutely not. We heard that Terri was a vegetable, that she wanted to die, and that the courts were sticking their nose in this poor husband's personal business. However, the fight was not about whether a brain-dead woman should be taken off of life-support machines. The fight was about whether a disabled woman should be starved to death by her husband, who was living with another woman and together they had two children ages 2 1/2 and 1.

Now you know the rest of the story.

To learn more about Terri's story, and the Terri Schindler-Schiavo Foundation, visit [www.terrisfight.org](http://www.terrisfight.org).