

About the Back Cover:

In Memoriam. Elizabeth Gips, 1922-2001

By David Jay Brown



Photo by David Jay Brown

On the back cover of this Bulletin is a photograph that I took of my dear friend Elizabeth Gips (1922-2001) shortly after she died. Elizabeth was a beloved radio personality and author, whose radio show *Changes* aired in Northern California for over twenty years.

Elizabeth's body was prepared for burial by our good friend Valerie Corral, cofounder of WAMM, who joins us in this special issue. This beautiful form of burial preparation was not inspired by any particular cultural tradition, but, rather has been framed by many mythologies, and is something that Valerie herself developed over the years—as she has had the good fortune to be instructed by her friends and family as she sat with more than 100 people who have died with her at their side. Valerie tenderly cares for, and is attentive to honoring the “body temple” that housed the spirits of her friends that have passed on. Valerie cleans, anoints, and dresses the bodies that she prepares, and adorns them with flowers, silk, favorite clothes or textiles, scented oils, sacred objects, heavenly blessings (which have often been instructed by the dead person's friends and their loved ones), and mostly love.

When I interviewed Elizabeth in 1994 for my book *Voices from the Edge*, I asked her what she thought happens to consciousness after death. Elizabeth replied, “Oh, joy! How wonderful! Wow! Look at this, I'm home again! *(laughter)* What do I think happens when you die? Man, I don't know. If anyone tells you they know what happens after you die, don't believe them! I get scared of not going to die, that's really frightening to me. My brain isn't afraid to die, but my body doesn't want to. I really love my life.”

“I think that the human birthright is joy, and that the only thing that keeps us from that is fear.”

—Elizabeth Gips