

A DOCUMENTARY FILM BY ELYSE NEIMAN SEITER



# RIDING HOME

AN UNFLINCHING PORTRAIT OF LIVING—AND LOVING—AT THE EDGE OF LIFE.

MINDFUL FILMS PRESENTS RIDING HOME FEATURING CARYL RICHARDSON MUSIC BY JEAN FALICIEU EDITOR LORI MCCARTHY  
CINEMATOGRAPHY BY FANNY TEXIER & GEORGES YAZBEK DIRECTED BY ELYSE NEIMAN SEITER

PREMIERING FALL 2026



# ABOUT "RIDING HOME"

## **Logline:**

An unflinching portrait of living—and loving—at the edge of life.

## **Synopsis:**

Most of us treat death like a secret we aren't supposed to tell. Caryl is done keeping secrets. As a Vermont horse trainer living on borrowed time, Caryl isn't just preparing to die— she's teaching everyone around her how to survive it. *Riding Home* strips away the sterile, clinical curtains of the American "end of life" experience. By inviting her friends and family into the uncomfortable, messy, and beautiful reality of her final months and days, Caryl proves that the most healing thing we can do is talk about the one thing we're all afraid to mention. Through intimate cinéma vérité storytelling, the film seeks not only to document one woman's final journey, but to contribute to a broader cultural shift: toward facing death with presence, courage, and collective care.





## Topic Summary:

Riding Home is a deeply human story about what happens when one person refuses to hide from death—and how that decision changes everyone around her.

In a culture that often avoids conversations about mortality, Caryl's openness creates a powerful ripple effect. As she faces the end of her life with honesty, humor, and determination, her family and chosen family are forced to confront their own fears, grief, and love in real time. The film captures not just the experience of dying, but the emotional landscape of those who remain: the caregivers, partners, children, and friends who must learn how to witness, support, and eventually let go.

By inviting the people closest to her into the process of dying—rather than shielding them from it—Caryl offers a radically different vision of what end-of-life can look like: communal rather than isolated, honest rather than hidden.

Through intimate cinéma vérité filmmaking, Riding Home explores universal themes of love, caregiving, resilience, grief, and the complicated beauty of saying goodbye. The film asks a question that touches every life: What happens when we stop pretending death isn't coming, and start facing it together?

# ABOUT THIS STORY

Riding Home begins when we meet Caryl, a vibrant 65-year-old horse trainer in Vermont who has been given less than six months to live.

As the months unfold, we watch her physical strength gradually decline- first a limp, then a cane, then a walker and oxygen mask- while her spirit, humor, and determination remain fiercely intact. Her horses provide a daily source of meaning and identity, anchoring her to the life she loves even as her body begins to fail.

But this story is not only about Caryl.

It is also about the people orbiting her: the husband who has become her primary caregiver, the children who return home to help, the elderly mother who is in denial, and the friends who must learn how to show up in the face of an approaching loss.

Caryl's openness about dying transforms the relationships around her. By refusing to hide the realities of her illness, she invites the people she loves into an honest and sometimes uncomfortable process of preparation, reflection, and connection. Conversations that might otherwise never happen begin to unfold- about grief, love, family history, and what it means to say goodbye.

Among the most powerful threads in the film is the story of Caryl and Jim's adopted children, Steph and Drew, who lost their biological mother (Caryl's youngest sister) to suicide when they were teenagers. Caryl hopes that by involving them in her end-of-life process, they may find a different way of experiencing loss—one that includes openness, presence, and healing. The film ultimately follows Caryl through the final chapter of her life and beyond, capturing how the people who love her begin to navigate the world she leaves behind.




# CARYL

Caryl Richardson is 65 years old and is living with stage 4 cancer (soft tissue sarcoma). Caryl adores her three horses, and is facing the end of her life by focusing on quality over quantity. Caryl is whip smart, articulate and funny, and wants to talk about the end of her life as a matter-of-fact situation, and not one to be avoided. We see Caryl design her own glass urn for her ashes, make an exit plan for her horses, taste fancy cakes for her "Dead or alive" birthday party, and travel to California to say goodbye to her parents, despite her ailing health. Through Caryl's unflinching look at her own death, we can engage with this often untouchable topic.

A man with short, graying hair, glasses, and a goatee is seated in a red chair. He is wearing a dark blue jacket over a red shirt and a striped scarf. Behind him is a large bookshelf filled with books. The lighting is warm and focused on the man.

JIM

Jim Robinson has devoted his life to caring for Caryl in this final stage of her life. Before her cancer struck, Jim didn't know what his role was in his marriage, but now it's clear-- to care for Caryl. What that looks like is managing their home and her horses, so that she can spend the little energy she has on doing the things she loves. Caryl and Jim have a special connection, and look at each other with such deep respect and care. Caryl's disease has really worn Jim down, and he is deeply grateful for the help he now gets from his son, Drew, and his weekly tea "therapy" sessions with his dear friend and neighbor, John.



Steph is Caryl's daughter, formerly her niece who Caryl and Jim adopted as an adult. Steph has recently moved to Vermont to be closer to Caryl during this time, and has started working at John's farm as the residency manager. When Steph was 19 years old, her own mother committed suicide, so Caryl hopes that involving Steph with the end of her life will be a healing balm to her own trauma of losing her mother so tragically and suddenly. Steph is joyful, upbeat, and present, but struggles when Caryl addresses her own death directly. Steph wants to be there fully, but openly expresses how painful it is for her to lose another mom before she turns 40.

STEPH



DREW

Caryl's son Drew moved in with her after her trip to California to see her parents for one last time. Drew has taken over the majority of the horse duties, which has freed Jim up to stay on top of the cooking. Drew can openly express how traumatic his own mother's suicide was, and wants to be able to help Caryl and Jim as much as he can but the transition to Vermont has been a lot for him.

# TRAILER

**Riding Home TRAILER**  
Mindful Films

02:26

vimeo

# DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT



Elyse & Caryl In California, February 2024

## ELYSE NEIMAN SEITER

As a seasoned TV producer/director specializing in unscripted content, I'm drawn to authentic narratives of resilience amidst adversity. My best self is when I am in the field documenting these stories, because I can see how bearing witness to and holding space for my subjects makes them feel seen, heard, and validated. My own cancer crisis in my mid-30's gave me a first-hand look at how challenges give you a choice: to be broken, or broken open. I became passionate about documenting these moments for others, particularly end-of-life stories, because of their potential to reveal wisdom about what is truly important.

In "Riding Home," Caryl confronts her mortality with remarkable courage, using it as a catalyst for living a more intentional life. With her vibrant personality and irreverent humor, Caryl offers a fresh perspective on end-of-life experiences, and inspires renewed appreciation for the beauty found in both the joys and sorrows of existence. I hope this film provides much-needed narrative medicine to us all.

# CREATIVE TEAM

ELYSE NEIMAN SEITER / DIRECTOR



Elyse is an Emmy-award winning director and producer with over 20+ years of professional experience developing, producing, directing, editing and delivering both long and short form TV series, films, and digital projects. She has freelanced for MTV, HGTV, TLC, Food Network, and ran her own boutique production company for several years. In 2023, Elyse completed a year-long intensive at The NY Zen Center on contemplative care and end-of-life. She founded Mindful Films because she believes that filmmaking during difficult times can be a form of therapeutic healing and narrative medicine.



FANNY TEXIER / CINEMATOGRAPHER

Fanny is an award-winning cinematographer, director, and editor born in Paris and based in Brooklyn. She is interested in untold stories about women and those underrepresented in traditional media. As a freelance video journalist, Fanny has worked for outlets including The New Yorker, BBC, The New York Post, AJ+, and Vice News. She has filmed and edited documentaries for platforms and partners including HBO, Netflix, VICE on Showtime, BET, Facebook Watch, Google and Adobe. Fanny has also worked with well known artists for projects featuring Lady Gaga, Nas, and Teyana Taylor.

GEORGES YAZBEK/  
CINEMATOGRAPHER



Georges is a Beirut-born, New York City-based cinematographer and photographer with nearly two decades of experience in documentary and television storytelling. He has worked on projects including True Life, MTV Made, and MTV Diary, and produced over 80 episodes of docu-reality television for Discovery Inc. He is the founder of Narrative Square, a consultancy focused on narrative strategy for researchers, founders, and thought leaders. His work has received two Emmy Awards, a Dubai Lynx, and three Prix de la Photographie awards.

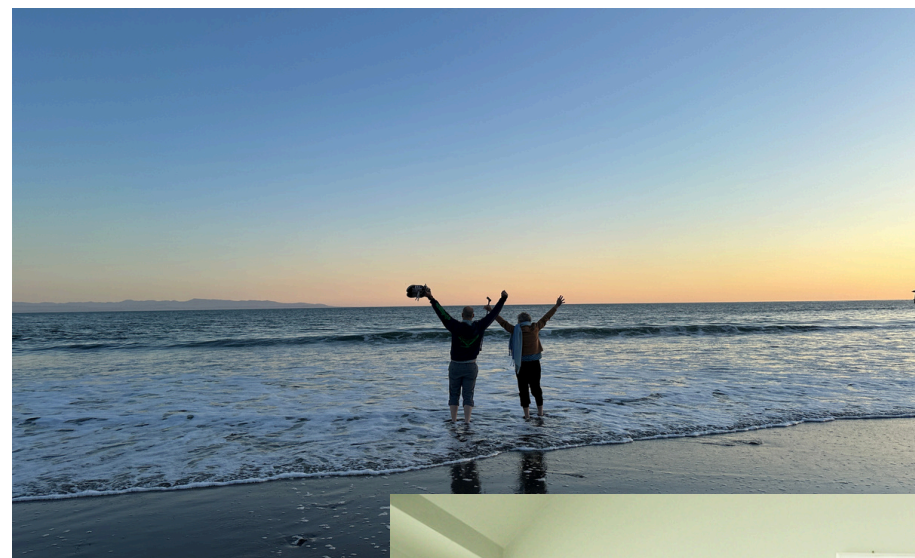
LORI MCARTHY / EDITOR



Lori is a documentary editor with over a decade of experience, having edited unscripted content for doc-style TV series, as well as short-form and feature-length documentary and narrative films. Most recently, she edited two documentaries that premiered on opening night at major film festivals: *Waiting to Continue* (2023) and *Great Ponds* (2024). Lori studied documentary filmmaking at the Gulf Islands Film and Television School in British Columbia, completed the Activist Media Production Program at the Z Media Institute in Woods Hole, Massachusetts, and earned her BA in Documentary Film and Cultural Studies from The New School University. She is drawn to character-driven documentary storytelling that fosters empathy, raises awareness, and inspires action around issues of social justice. Lori currently lives in Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts.

# LOOK & FEEL

Our film is being shot in 4K on the Canon C300 Mark III. We are going for a sublime, steady, and nostalgic feeling, intentional about what is in the frame at all times.



# PRODUCTION TIMELINE



OCT-NOV  
2023

Pre-production,  
Scouting trip

JAN-MAY  
2024

Production in VT,  
Trip to CA (Feb)

APRIL, MAY  
2025

Production in VT

SEPT 2024-  
SEPT 2025

Post-Production (on  
and off, depending  
on Funding)

MARCH-MAY  
2026

Apply to film  
festivals

# MARKETING + DISTRIBUTION PLAN



## FILM GOALS FOR RIDING HOME:

- Once completed, we Intend to apply to a number of domestic and International film festivals and find our world premiere home.
- We Intend to win awards and accolades!
- We Intend to find licensing partners like public television (PBS), streaming platforms (Netflix, Hulu, Disney+), broadcasters (POV, CNN, NBC, HBO, ESPN), theatrical distributors (NEON, A24), and more.
- We plan to find educational distribution for the film in settings such as hospices, cancer centers, death and dying summits, death doula trainings.



# INTENDED AUDIENCE

The intended audience for *Riding Home* includes individuals navigating terminal illness, caregiving, or grief, as well as viewers drawn to intimate human stories about resilience, family, and the meaning of a life.

More broadly, the film speaks to anyone who has ever loved someone they might one day lose— which is to say, everyone.

By witnessing Caryl's honesty and the reactions of those around her, audiences are invited to reflect on their own relationships with mortality and to consider how openness and presence might transform the way we support one another through life's most difficult transitions.

Ultimately, *Riding Home* aims to help normalize conversations about death and dying, encouraging viewers to approach the end of life not with silence or avoidance, but with honesty, compassion, and connection. Caryl living out loud about dying invites audiences to reconsider their preconceptions about terminal illness and the end of life.



# HOPE & DREAMS



- To help change and challenge our cultural language and attitude towards death and dying
- To change the conversation around end-of-life, and push for more options such as Medical Aid in Dying
- To make death and dying more accessible and engaging
- To wake people up to see the ordinary as extraordinary and live with more gratitude, presence, and appreciation for the here and now

CONTACT ME



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