

IN MEMORY OF SUSAN YOACHUM

**HON. NANCY PELOSI**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, June 23, 1999*

Ms. PELOSI. Mr. Speaker, yesterday I called to the attention of our colleagues the wonderful life and courageous death of Susan Yoachum. No one could better memorialize our loss than Susan's husband Michael Carlson, whose statement I am commending to our colleagues today.

[From the San Francisco Chronicle, June 22, 1999]

GRACE IN THE FACE OF FEAR—SUSAN YOACHUM MET HER DEATH FROM CANCER AS A HERO

(By Michael Carlson)

It was a public event when my wife, Susan Yoachum, died of breast cancer a year ago today. As political editor of *The Chronicle* and as a television commenter, she had become a familiar name and face. Her funeral was covered on television, San Francisco Mayor Willie Brown ordered city flags to fly at half-staff, and the White House sent a letter of condolence.

Susan's struggle with breast cancer had been no less public.

She had spoken and written movingly about her ordeal. She wanted to put a human face on a disease that is the No. 1 killer of American women ages 25-55. She hoped that by personalizing breast cancer, more might be done to prevent and cure it. And she wanted to spread the word that early detection—through monthly self-exams and regular mammograms—can increase a woman's chance of survival.

My mourning was less public. And I was more private about my reaction to Susan's illness.

Recently, I decided to speak out about Susan and her fight with cancer at the invitation of The Breast Cancer Fund, a research, advocacy and patient-support charity that honored Susan at its annual "Heroes Tribute."

The idea of heroes and the nature of courage are topics that I have thought about a lot since Susan died.

The dictionary defines a hero as a person admired for their courage.

I admire Susan for the courage she showed in facing her own death. What she taught me about courage could be the first chapter of my own self-help book, "All I Need to Know About Living I Learned From How My Wife Chose to Die."

In addition to everything else she is and was to me, Susan is my personal hero.

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She did not consider herself courageous and would have been bewildered at being called a hero. Two days after realizing her cancer had spread, Susan recorded a conversation with her sister-in-law in her journal: "Patti said last night that she told her friends that I was brave. It sounds so noble and grand that I loved the sound of it at once. Yet I don't feel brave." Susan told me she didn't feel brave because cancer and death scared her so much.

When she was first diagnosed with cancer in 1991, Susan wrote about her fear: "I have met younger women with breast cancer and older women with breast cancer. Some are

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mothers; some are grandmothers; some are executives; some are artists. They are black, white, Asian, Hispanic, rich, poor, bitter, hopeful—but there is one thing that all of us are, and that is sacred."

Susan was more blunt six years later when her cancer spread. "I'm scared out of my wits," she wrote in 1997. "It's the kind of fear that makes your blood run cold, the sort of fear that floods in when you lose sight of a child in a crowd."

Why do I call such a frightened person courageous?

Courage has nothing to do with being fearless.

"Usually we think that brave people have no fear. The truth is they are intimate with fear," writes Pema Chodron in "When Things Fall Apart." Courageous people are those who persevere in spite of and in the face of their deepest fears.

Susan was intimate with fear. Despite that, from 1991 and until her death in 1998, she lived her life with remarkable energy and spirit. She did more than just persevere. She celebrated life. She faced her illness by living as if each day was a gift. She believed that life was to be enjoyed today, now, before time ran out.

Susan enjoyed her life immensely and brought happiness to those around her. She fought for those things she thought important, including raising awareness about breast cancer. She continued to write about politics for as long as she could because she thought it was important and because it brought her joy. And Susan had fun. In her words, she inhaled life.

That took courage.

Although Susan did not consider herself courageous, she understood what she was doing and wrote about it: "How many times in therapy-kissed California have we heard that the only things we can control are our own responses to what befalls us?" Susan's response to her fear was "to make peace with life and death" and "to make some peace with the cancer." "It is going to be with me every day," she wrote. "If living with cancer every single day is the price of living . . . it is worth it. I'll pay it."

I've been paying it. I will continue to pay it."

Susan believed that having cancer demanded "that you try to grab all that you can from life—even more than you thought was there, even more than you thought you could."

"Breast cancer is a wake-up call: to cherish the laughter of children, to savor the fragrance of flowers and to feel the majesty of the ocean," Susan wrote. When you feel like you're on the cutting edge of life, the sky looks a little more blue, sunsets look a little more red, and the people you love seem a little more dear."

I now have met numerous women with breast cancer who know exactly what Susan meant. Those women have looked their own demons in the eye and have found the courage to celebrate life.

I admire their courage.

They are, as Susan was, heroes living among us.

*June 23, 1999*

IN CELEBRATION OF MS. KATHERINE DUNHAM'S 90TH BIRTHDAY

**HON. WILLIAM (BILL) CLAY**

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, June 23, 1999*

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to celebrate the 90th birthday of Ms. Katherine Dunham of East St. Louis, Illinois. Besides being recognized as a Kennedy Center Honoree, as well as the recipient of over seventy international awards, Ms. Dunham has consistently used her abundance of talent and creative energy to enhance the fine arts and humanities in America and worldwide. While well known for her contributions in the areas of dance, poetry, musical composition, and choreography, Ms. Dunham has also worked to advance the causes of human rights and world peace. However, it can be argued that her greatest accomplishments have come through her 31 years of tireless educational efforts in behalf of the residents and especially the children of East St. Louis, Illinois.

Born in Chicago, Illinois, Ms. Dunham has distinguished herself in both academic and artistic venues. A graduate of the University of Chicago, she is the author of "Dances of Haiti: Their Social Organization, Classification, Form and Function." Further, she has shared her intellect with us by writing several books, including *Dances of Haiti, Island Possessed, and A Touch of Innocence*. Ms. Dunham has been recognized for her academic accomplishments as the recipient of honorary degrees from many institutions of higher education, including Brown University, Howard University, and Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri. Her contributions to the arts have come through various theater productions, motion pictures, operatic performances, and television presentations. Throughout Ms. Dunham's career, she has performed both nationally and internationally in major performances and famous venues, including *Aida* at New York's Metropolitan Opera House in 1964.

As an advocate for education of the arts and humanities among the citizens of East St. Louis, Illinois, Ms. Dunham has proven her dedication to public service and community involvement for over three decades. Through the Katherine Dunham Centers for Arts and Humanities, she continues to provide cultural enrichment to both adults and children, while presenting opportunities for Master Artists to display and share with others their enormous talents and abilities. At age 90, she continues to develop new projects for the East St. Louis, Illinois community, including the soon to be completed African Artisanal Village on the campus of the Katherine Dunham Museum. A vision of Ms. Dunham and her late husband, John Pratt, this center will provide exposure to the arts of Africa, as well as a performing arts facility for the children of the Dunham Workshop and other visiting artists.

Mr. Speaker, the city of East St. Louis, Illinois is proud to be the direct beneficiary of both Ms. Dunham's philanthropy and hands on involvement in the artistic community. It is a pleasure for me to wish Ms. Dunham a happy and healthy 90th birthday, as I look forward to