

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

ESSAY BY RACHEL SPELLMAN

HON. JOHN B. LARSON

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, November 19, 2002

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to insert an essay by one of my constituents, Ms. Rachel Spellman, into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD. Rachel's eloquent remarks regarding her struggle with cancer have been an inspiration to me and I believe that we all can benefit from her positive outlook and the thankfulness with which she greets each day. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I would urge my colleagues to read this wonderful essay and join me in saluting Rachel for her strength in her battle with this disease.

I CAN BREATHE

(By Rachel Spellman)

You have cancer. Imagine hearing that. You have cancer. I was only two and didn't understand. Everyone has to go to the hospital everyday and get tested, pricked, poked and x-rayed, right? I hadn't the faintest idea how in danger my life was. I am glad I was so young and naive, so I didn't emotionally fall apart. But it does bother me that I cannot remember anything. Only little flashbacks and stories from my parents can evoke the slightest hint of a memory. I am fighting an emotional and sometimes a physical battle everyday. I learn to take one day at a time. I can do it. Just one day at a time.

Having lived with cancer has taught me many of life's hard lessons. I feel an immense appreciation for life itself. Just being alive. Now, eleven years in remission, I know how lucky I am and I am so very grateful for my second chance. My experience has taught me to believe in something stronger than myself. I learned to have hope and faith during hard times. One must slow down to notice the small things and how simply pure and wonderful they are. Even those little, annoying things you know you wouldn't have any other way.

The doctor called my parents three days early and he said to come in right away. It's not important. I had myelodysplasia, a malignant disease of the bone marrow cells. Chemotherapy and radiation were not enough. I needed a bone marrow transplant. Allyson, my sister, was a match. I was very lucky. It is very hard to find donors. The procedure hurt her more than it hurt me. I was in the hospital for about 4 months straight. The next year I was in, on and off, for follow up. I had an IV put in my chest to put meds, and sometimes food, through. I still have a scar on my neck and chest from it. I was on immunosuppressive drugs for 8 years, until I was 10. An endless list of pills and liquids to take everyday. I am now doing much better and only go to the hospital about every three months or so. It's very hard to listen to people tell me about their little cuts and bruises when I know the things that really do hurt.

I often feel alienated and different. "Friends" do not understand me, but I really shouldn't expect them to. That doesn't make it any easier. I am so different. Girls talk of their highlights and sloppily braid each other's hair. Looking in the mirror, I think

about how great it would feel to pull my hair back into a ponytail and not have a wig fall off. Flowing. Like the little mermaid, her long hair dancing about her as she swims. Yeah, that's it, I want to be Ariel. It really would be great. In gym class the kids are sweeping past, I am unable to keep up. My skin is scarred. My hands are wrinkly. I am constantly being mistaken for 10 when actually being 14. The list could go on forever. But what hurts the most is not having a friend to talk with. No one ever takes me seriously. I often blame this lack of true companions on cancer. I find my favorite part of the day is coming home. I finally get to remove the things that I use to try to fit in and appear normal. Shut the front door, take off the heeled shoes, remove the itchy wig to reveal my short dull brown wisps, and slip into some comfy clothes that are more me. I feel like a player exiting the stage. Removing my costume, I shake off the character of the day. On stage, I must hide my true emotions and let this other character shine through. I get so good at it, I even fool myself.

However, the tears are real; that is irrefutable. That is when I know I have stopped pretending. Show's over. My mother, a strong and inspiring woman, has always been there for me, but this need to connect with peers is overwhelming. Sometimes, I feel guilty for my emotions. There are so many amazing things about life! What right do I have to feel like this? I am selfish. I'm alive, aren't I? Survivor guild perhaps. My mother says its OK to be upset. I guess I believe her. Juggling these feelings and those of a regular teenager can get very nerve racking. I'm not sure of too much, but I know one thing. It'll take time. Just time.

One must remember that painful days will pass. Often they pass too soon. Waste not your time here; we live in a wonderful place. Smile. Take pleasure in the simple things and see the complicated ones as a challenge, a new journey. The little stresses of each day should be seen as a comedy of errors; enjoy your mistakes and remember to keep your life in perspective. Above all, love. Love simply the fact that you are here, and that when you awake each morning, you can breathe. For your breath might stagger occasionally, but you're still going. In. Out. In. Out. One day at a time. In. Out. In.

TRIBUTE TO DAVID LUCCHETTI

HON. ROBERT T. MATSUI

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, November 19, 2002

Mr. MATSUI. Mr. Speaker, I rise in tribute to David Lucchetti, one of Sacramento's most outstanding citizen leaders. David is retiring after many years of wonderful contributions to the Sacramento Neighborhood Housing Service Board of Trustees. As his friends and family gather to celebrate David's numerous achievements, I ask all of my colleagues to join with me in saluting one of Sacramento's most accomplished citizens.

David began his illustrious career in 1970 when he was hired by Anderson Lumber Com-

pany, a division of Pacific Coast Building Products, Inc. Through his trademark hard work and dedication, David was named the Chief Financial Officer for Pacific Coast Building Products in 1979. Under his leadership, Pacific Coast Building Products was awarded the prestigious "Best in the Business" awarded by the Sacramento Chamber of Commerce. In addition, the company was also recently recognized as one of the ten Most Admired Companies in the Sacramento area. Perhaps, most impressively, the company has maintained a regular presence on the influential Forbes 500 list under David's tenure. All in all, David has steadfastly represented the interests of Pacific Coast Building Products with great honor and results for the past three decades.

Aside from his contributions to Pacific Coast Building Products, David has also offered his valuable services to a number of worthy community organizations. David has been a long time member of the Big Brother/Big Sisters Foundation. In addition David has also been a member of the Sutter Club, California State University Sacramento, the Sacramento Business Advisory Board, and a Board of Trustee member to the Sacramento Regional Foundation and Sacramento Neighborhood Housing Service. David is also associated with Succeed Catholic Social Service.

It is not surprising that David has been widely recognized for his involvement in the community. In 1996, David was named by the Sacramento Diocese as the Distinguished Catholic School Graduate of the year. Earlier in 1993, David was appointed by Governor Pete Wilson to serve on the California Contractors State License Board. In 1997, David and his wife, Chris, were the proud recipients of the Philanthropist Couple Award in recognition for all their charitable work over the years.

Dave's unparalleled success in the boardroom and in the community truly makes him one of Sacramento's most accomplished and treasured citizens. His commitment to help others is a shining example to everyone who follows his leadership.

Mr. Speaker, as David Lucchetti's friends and family gather for his honorary luncheon, I am honored to pay tribute to one of Sacramento's most honorable residents. His successes are considerable, and it is a great honor for me to have the opportunity to pay tribute to his contributions. I ask all my colleagues to join with me in wishing David Lucchetti continued success in all his future endeavors.

TRIBUTE TO THE HONORABLE
SANDRA L. KOFFMAN

HON. SAM FARR

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, November 19, 2002

Mr. FARR of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a very special woman, the

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.