

THE CARLSON CHRONICLE

“To be, or not to be, that is the question. . . “

Dear CH---

You commented recently on your Facebook page how courageous you thought the young 29-year-old California woman was that moved to Oregon and availed herself of Oregon’s Doctor assisted suicide law on November 1st.

With all due respect to your right to hold a differing view, you could not be more wrong. It does not take courage to opt out of life prematurely. It is an act motivated by fear, a desire to control the end of one’s life, and when glamorized by the former Hemlock Society, now rebranded as Compassion and Choices, a publicity stunt that sends the wrong signal to our youth.

Always it is by definition a selfish act that passes one’s pain onto their loved ones. It is an act of cowardness and the furthest thing away from courage.

What is the true act of courage is to look death in the eye and fight valiantly to one’s natural end

As you know, nine years ago I was diagnosed with a rare and always fatal form of a carcinoid neuroendocrine cancer. I was in stage IV and given the proverbial six months. I sent all my tests, my CT’s, my MRI’s, my blood work, x-rays and body scans to M.D. Anderson, the world renowned Cancer Care center in Houston, Texas.

They refused to see me. It was hopeless, they said and they did not want to waste their time or resources. If Washington’s Initiative 1000 had been passed into law at that time, I would have easily qualified.

Instead, I worked with my team of doctors, developed an attack strategy and I’m still here. I fought like hell, and I still fight. There isn’t a day that has gone by in the last nine years that I haven’t felt pain. Initially, I lost 75 pounds, looked like death warmed over and most were sure I was gone.

Gradually, though, between the experimental radioactive particles placed on my liver and the monthly “golden “rear”” shot I take of a sandostatin that is my chemotherapy, the tide started to turn.

Here I am nine years later. In that time I’ve seen the births and watched with joy the growth of our grandchildren. I had built my wife’s dream retirement home in north Idaho and was able to watch with tears in my eyes as our Marine Corps captain, our son, was wed to a wonderful daughter-in-law at the Botanical Gardens outside San Diego.

Such events have made the pain and suffering truly manageable. There are thousands like me who fight on against all odds and while most of us are never cured we can and do reach a period of stasis in which we manage the disease for a number of years and move on.

To think that I might have missed such events because I’d opt out of life early out of fear is just unthinkable.

I don’t argue with the notion that one can take their life if they wish to do so. The ability to purchase sleeping pills and turn on a car in an enclosed garage is virtually pain free and doesn’t need the assistance of a doctor nor does it bring the state into the matter.

I believe there are issues at the beginning of life and at the end of life that should be left to the person, their family, their doctor, and their spiritual counselors. I firmly believe that we will never be able to legislate fair , equitable and balanced laws respectful of everyone’s rights on all life issues.

I do know that we should not invite the state to get into the suicide sanctioning business.

Ask yourself why did every disability group in the state of Washington oppose Initiative 1000? Why did the Washington Medical Association oppose.?

Are you prepared to take the next logical step and force doctors to write prescriptions and pharmacists to fill them even though it violates their faith, values or belief in doing no harm?

Whatever you do, whatever you believe, my dear friend, don't mistake fear for courage. The courageous ones are those who fight on, against all odds because that is the nature of man.

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