

## Golden Pen: Essayist s point on cancer a powerful one

May 12, 2007) Jeannette Burr has spent the last two weeks in her Brighton home making the painful and debilitating preparations for her next round of radioactive iodine treatments for thyroid cancer. Before her therapy, Burr must devote four weeks to becoming hypothyroid, a physical state usually accompanied by aches, extreme fatigue and memory loss.

"You're not well enough to do anything, but you're restless," Burr said Wednesday. While she's stuck at home, the 47-year-old clinical psychologist finds solace in watching her two sons play basketball, in spying birds feeding in her yard and in listening to custom playlists of relaxing, faith-based music. "I would be lost without my iPod." she said Wednesday.

A May 1 essay about personal struggles with cancer prompted the following response from Burr, published May 4:

Thank you, James Greco, for your guest essay ("Cancer's a fearsome enemy that strength alone can't beat," May 1). As someone who has fought two primary cancers, I appreciate your making the distinction between courage and luck.

Actually, anyone who has to battle cancer is, by default, courageous. What choice do we have other than to be brave and fight for our lives? Even so, I find that I keep blaming myself for being sick and for not being physically stronger, as though I had something to do with the cards I have been dealt. As a psychologist who counsels people all day long on how to give themselves a break, I have a hard time practicing what I preach. As cancer survivors, we need to constantly remind ourselves of your message. Thank you, and may God bless you and your family.

The Burrs moved to Brighton from Los Angeles nearly five years ago. Jeannette's husband, Chris, works as a psychotherapist counseling couples and adults, while her practice specializes in women and children.

You call a person who is afflicted with cancer not courageous? Your mom might have had it, but did you? I think she deserves a lot more than your words my friend. You should apologize for thinking that one person's cancer ordeal is less courageous than your mom's. I understand your hurt, but those people that did survive cancer or are going through treatments are just as courageous those that have died.

Some live and some pass away. It is courageous that my mother at 34 went through treatments for breast cancer, raise 3 kids on her own, and managed to beat it into remission for over 10 years. That is courage. Do what my mother did and tell me that there isn't an ounce of courage in her motives.

To be fair, I lost 5 members of my family to cancer. The youngest being 32. I feel your hurt, but don't EVER think that they are less important than how you feel. You are trying to write everything off as if one kind of cancer is more significant than another. It's CANCER AND PEOPLE DIE FROM ANY FORM!!!! So I think anyone that beats cancer or dies from it is just as courageous.

tonymorelle

Posted: Sun May 13, 2007 3:04 am

You know, I watched my mother die from cancer. Oh, sure, she was strong until the end, but really, courage had nothing to do with it. She just did the best she could with what happened to her. I'm sure if anybody called her courageous for her suffering, she would've been the first to laugh.

To me, the word courage too often gets confused with persistence. Courage is something that a person does, regardless of the personal cost. Dealing with hardship, while noteworthy, is not automatically courageous.

Alexx

Posted: Sat May 12, 2007 5:21 pm

## About the Author

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