

have to be hopeful and you will be successful."

## Gold & Silver Circle Profiles



### **GOLD & SILVER CIRCLE** PROFILES

by Kevin Wing



I remember Faith.

Yes, I remember **Faith Fancher** very well, and very fondly, I must add. I still can't believe she's been gone nearly 11 years.

Fancher had a wonderful spirit, and an infectious laugh. I can still hear her laughter when I think back to the years I worked with her at KTVU Channel 2. I recall the first time I met her, when I was a news intern at KTVU. She never treated me like an intern. Instead, she treated me like an equal. That's how she was. She treated people the way she wanted to be treated.

She was a good, good person. She always had a smile on her face, the kind that would light up a newsroom. And every day I worked with her, I would have to say she did just that.

This month, to honor the 10th annual Friends of Faith breast cancer fundraiser happening at Lake Merritt in Oakland Aug. 23, I thought it would be fitting to write about someone who has never been forgotten from this life. Not just by me, but by so many of us.

Fancher's broadcasting career began in college at WBIR-TV/Radio in Knoxville as a radio news writer. After graduation in 1972, she was hired by WBIR as a reporter. Faith was subsequently hired by WSM-TV in Nashville as a television correspondent; NBN (the National Black Network) in New York, a syndicated radio network supplying news and public affairs programming to 100 affiliate stations; and National Public Radio (NPR) as a reporter/anchor in 1978. She served as Washington, D.C., correspondent for CNN in 1980 and returned to NPR in 1982.

She was a native of Franklin, Tennessee, where she spent her childhood summers on her grandparent's farm. She earned a Bachelor of Science degree at the Tennessee-Knoxville with a double major in Education and English.

Fancher passed away at the age of 53 on Oct. 19, 2003 in her Oakland home, surrounded by family and friends.

Her plight was well known to thousands of KTVU viewers throughout the 1990s, after she disclosed that she

was being treated for the disease. Hoping her story would teach others the benefits of early detection, she allowed her friend and former KTVU co-anchor Elaine Corral Kendall and a camera crew to follow her treatment, which began with a lumpectomy at Alta Bates Hospital in the spring of 1997. "Faith's Story" aired for three nights. It generated hundreds of letters from well-wishers and won numerous awards.

The surgery, however, revealed more bad news. Doctors had succeeded in removing the tumor from her left breast, but the cancer -- which was a particularly aggressive type -- was invasive and tests determined that other tissue in her breast was already precancerous.

She told Bay Area viewers that a mastectomy and reconstructive surgery were her best chance of beating back the disease. On May 22, 1997, she told viewers, many of whom had written notes offering comfort and support, that they would be "seeing me for a long time."

That September, believing she'd beaten the disease, Faith returned to work. But her grueling treatment left her tired and weak, and within a couple of weeks she left the newsroom for good. Two years later, her doctors told her the cancer was back.

Giving up her place in front of the television camera didn't mean she dropped the crusade she'd begun on behalf of others struggling with breast cancer. Fancher knew that her position and her ability to profile her journey for the public allowed her access to some of the best treatment and doctors available, and she committed herself to helping those with lesser means struggle through their own battles with the disease. Along with friends, including many prominent Bay Area journalists, she established Friends of Faith and succeeded in raising more than \$500,000 for breast cancer research and giving stipends to low-income and minority women with breast cancer.

By June 2002, she had undergone seven operations for cancer and continued her valiant fight by trying new treatments and continued to talk about her struggle with Channel 2 viewers.

"I will always remember her as a strong, vivacious woman who absolutely loved life, who fought to the very end and encouraged other people to fight, too," she said at that time. "No matter how many times it came back, she said: 'Tell me what I have to do and I'll do it. This is my job now. I'm fighting cancer.'"

Dear Faith, you will never be forgotten from this life.



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