



## Rick's Thoughts

Brain Cancer is an insidious disease. Since it is located in the control center of the human body, it can impact every aspect of a person's functioning - cognition, balance, digestion, sight, smell. Any organ or system in the body can be affected in the course of the disease, and it can change thinking, actions and personality traits.

It is often lethal and it does not discriminate. It can strike a person of any age, sex, race or origin. It is the ultimate equalizer. It has killed famous people like Senators Ted Kennedy and John McCain and infamous people like Tommy Lucchese the mobster. It has killed finely tuned athletes like Olympian Wilma Rudolph and famous music composers like George Gershwin. After it has been detected and treated, small groups of its mutant cells can lie quiescent for months or even years – and then return with a vengeance. It creates a massive problem for caregivers, family and friends.

This is why some people hearing about Susan's diagnosis have a first reaction of feeling sorry for us. They are sad that we are carrying such a heavy burden. But I don't see it that way. There are some very positive things that have come out of her situation. One is that due to her long term survival many people affected by brain cancer see Susan as a beacon of hope – proof that they may survive beyond the lifespan their doctors have told them. And her acceptance of her circumstance with humility is a positive example to others living with any serious medical problem.

It also has positively affected us personally. Susan and I have grown much closer. Our family has become more cohesive and caring. Our true friends have stepped up and supported us. And it has allowed us to help others affected by the disease.

As for me, I feel blessed to have been given the opportunity to help Susan through the worst time of her life. And I know that if our roles were reversed, she would do the same for me. It's the truest fulfillment of our wedding vows – "in sickness and in health" and "till death do us part". And most important, I am lucky to know for sure what God put me on this earth to do. Few people are more blessed.