

WENDY ELIZABETH CALLAHAN

By: Nancy Dante Bennison, Jeanne Ehrhardt Franklin, Karen Lewis, Ginny Murray, Ellen Mokover Martin

Our dear friend Wendy passed away on August 14, 2003, after a valiant four-year battle with breast cancer. Here are some abbreviated remembrances.

At Vassar, Wendy majored in History. She excelled academically and wrote beautifully. Sometimes the writing did not come easily, but, in the end, everything she wrote was perfect.

Wendy won Vassar's prestigious *Belle Skinner Fellowship* to study in France after graduation. Upon her return, she moved to NYC and worked at City University's Board of Higher Education, the political center of the university. At a time when promotions were almost impossible to come by, particularly for a young woman, Wendy was promoted three times. She ultimately served as Director of Administrative Services, where she oversaw a department of 80 and transformed a lumbering bureaucracy into a well-oiled machine.

Wendy also earned an MAT at Harvard and later attended NYU Law School, where she again distinguished herself, becoming Articles Editor of the Law Review. After a federal court clerkship, Wendy joined Patterson Belknap Webb & Tyler, the Manhattan law firm where Ellen was working. The firm's senior partner, former federal Judge Harold Tyler, took a special liking to Wendy, and she was his right hand in numerous matters. Judge Tyler's comment upon hearing about Wendy's death: "Wendy was a complete person; magnificent lawyer, magnificent person. Everybody who worked with her came to love her. We have been very fortunate to have a continual number of very talented lawyers. None of them, however, has ever exceeded Wendy."

In 1993, Wendy left New York to return to Boston to support her family in the care of her father, who had been diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease. Despite the difficult situation, she loved being near her family and treasured the opportunity to develop close relationships with her nieces and nephews. Her nightly calls with her nephew were particularly animated if it had been a good day for the Red Sox, a passion the two shared. (We have no doubt that Wendy deserves at least partial credit for the Red Sox's two World Series victories in the past four years.)

Wendy loved to laugh, sometimes so hard that she cried, and she made us laugh/cry too because her laughter was infectious. Wendy brought her humor and wit even to serious subjects. For example, her scholarly Vassar thesis



Wendy Callahan

about sanitary conditions in 19th century England was called *Sanitation Under the Reign of Queen Victoria or the Royal Flush*. Wendy retained her sense of humor and wonderful laugh even after she became ill.

Wendy enjoyed many things, including her apartment in Boston's South End, which she turned into a beautiful home, filled with exquisite things. Every place your eye turned there was another jewel, not necessarily something with a high price tag, but always an item that had been selected and that was displayed with the very best of taste.

Wendy also loved the trips she took when she was well enough to travel. When we convened in Boston for a weekend in 2001, we stayed up late while Wendy showed photos of her trips to Ireland and to a horse farm in Canada. It was past our bedtimes, but Wendy wanted to tell us about every detail of every picture (down to the name of every horse), and it was such a pleasure to watch her excitement.

Wendy loved us. She kept an entire chest of Vassar mementos that (in addition to including true historic items, like the "We'll Move Jewett Brick by Brick" sign) appeared to include every letter any of us had ever written to her. Wendy was always there for us when we needed her, and she always offered wise counsel to her friends.

Wendy gave her all to everything she did and was never a quitter. Until the very end she fought her cancer that way and with the utmost dignity. We miss Wendy very much but take solace in our belief that she is now at peace.

During her illness, Wendy became a strong advocate for research to find a cure for breast cancer. Wendy's family has since established a breast cancer research fund at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center. Contributions have brought this fund close to the \$100,000 mark, which is what is needed to create a permanently endowed fund. Anyone wishing to contribute to this excellent research program can direct their donation to Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center c/o Wendy Callahan Breast Cancer Research Fund, P.O. Box 55, Wellesley, MA 02481.