

## **Betty Perry, August 15, 2008**

As I tell you of my remembrance of Joan Lee, I still have a hard time realizing that I cannot phone and ask her advice. I have to keep telling myself it is too late. It is truly hard for all of us to believe she is not here. She was a dedicated worker on the issues of care for the elderly and for people with disabilities.

She came well prepared to be an advocate after retiring from directing an adult day health care program. Previously she had earned a degree in gerontology. Before that she had other academic and cultural training. With all of that background what really distinguished her was her indefatigable effort to see the things she believed in really happened.

She was a leader of Gray Panthers in California, and she was a concerned OWL member. All of us will miss the work she has done for seniors and people with disabilities.

And I will especially miss the help she was to me on dealing with these issues. I always had a knowledgeable person to talk with who shared my concerns and was up to date on the issues. We will all miss Joan. The senior community in California knows that voice we could count on to support our most essential needs has been silenced. Our real tribute to Joan will be to keep up the work she pioneered.

Joan and I have worked together since she retired from the Adult Day Health Care Program and began working seriously for the Gray Panthers. She looked at all of the senior organizations when she retired and she decided Gray Panthers was the one for her. What a wise choice. It offered a wide range of issues including Peace and the environment. Gray Panthers offered a strong group which Joan really appreciated.

I thought back to the development of the splendid in-home supportive services program. This excellent program provides part-time home care for people who might otherwise be in nursing homes. We walked the halls of the Capitol, passing out supportive alerts to gain legislative support for these service. This really provided the way for the Supreme Court's Olmstead Decision to work. The decision said the care states provide for people who need help should be the least restrictive care as long as it costs the state no more than care provided in a nursing home. Joan was dedicated to this principal and she proudly served on the state's Olmstead commission in order to help people live as independently as possible.

Joan brought great zeal to her advocacy. She brought a strong understanding of the issues. She wrote clearly for her newsletters and for her testimony and the support letters that she sent to lawmakers and the Governor.

She enjoyed having access to Senator Boxer's office and Congress Member Matsui's staff. The local legislators all heard from her, and they valued her opinions.

In the past three years the senior groups, Gray Panthers, Cara, the Congress of California Seniors, and OWL were brought together by Health Access in the MeDIC group, another way to increase our senior advocacy.

I think the message Joan sent with her concentration on the work of Gray Panthers was that members could come to meetings or hearings, would learn about issues and would be empowered to act on their knowledge.

Think about that.

Isn't that what being a good American is all about? Knowing what your government is doing and then letting your lawmaker know when he or she is doing right or when he or she needs to change course. Few people can have that power and do this, with the intelligence and honor that Joan Lee did.

We can all take a lesson from her life. She really took good care of her health. Who else does yoga exercises every morning? She ate the right things. She got her sleep. As I sat with her on one of her last lucid days, she seemed to be saying to me, How did this happen? That is what we all wonder, but we must be comforted with all the years we had Joan's inspiration, with her zeal and her love of life.

As we look back on Joan's accomplishments, we know that the influence and help that she received from her husband Arnie were major contributors to her inspiring life.