

Cancer claims Cornelia Murphy, 40, former Oregon AFSCME political staffer

Cornelia Murphy, former political campaign director for Oregon Council 75 of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), died May 13 in San Jose, Calif., of ovarian cancer. She was 40 years old.

Friends and colleagues remember Murphy as an incredibly hard worker who lived life with gusto and was intensely proud to be part of the labor movement. Funny, irreverent and headstrong, Murphy had a talent for inspiring volunteers to get involved, and making them feel rewarded.

Murphy was born June 29, 1965. She grew up in Washington, D.C., and Rhode Island. She is the daughter of Mariel Valentine and Cornelius Murphy.

After earning a bachelors degree in political science and public law from California State University Northridge in 1992, she went on to work in Washington, D.C., for several Democratic members of Congress — Jack Brooks, Ron Coleman and Max Sandlin from Texas, and Leonard Boswell from Iowa.

Later, working at the Iowa Department of Agriculture in 1999, she became active in AFSCME, and as a volunteer coordinator helped defeat two state constitutional amendments that would have required legislative supermajorities to raise any tax.

In 2000 she went to work for AFSCME's national office, mobilizing union members to support Al Gore for



CORNELIA MURPHY

president in Iowa, New Hampshire, Wisconsin, California and Oregon. With the victor uncertain, Murphy was one of a crew of AFSCME staffers sent to Florida to watch the recount.

After the election, she was assigned to help statewide AFSCME Council 75 in Oregon.

She helped elect Randy Leonard to the Portland City Council and Ted Kulongoski as Oregon governor. She also worked to defeat several measures that would have restricted unions' ability to take part in politics. She helped pass Multnomah County's temporary income tax surcharge for schools and a property tax levy to support libraries.

Pollster Lisa Grove said Murphy's efforts probably made the difference in close races, like Kulongoski's or the Multnomah County I-tax.

"She was an unstoppable force of nature," Grove recalled, "Cornelia stood out quickly to me because she was a doer. She wanted to win."

"She never focused on what she'd done, but was always talking about

other people's commitments even though you knew she'd done twice as much," said AFSCME organizer Debra Kidney.

Her impact is clear, however: Over the last several months, as word spread of her illness, hundreds of people wrote in from around the country on a Web page her brother Paul set up for her at carepages.com.

Murphy had left AFSCME in February 2006 and moved to San Jose to be closer to her brother after the death of their mother. There she took a position with Kenyon Black, a public relations and political consulting firm, but discovered her illness before that job got under way.

She is survived by her father; two brothers, Jeremiah of Rhode Island, and Paul of San Jose, Calif.; and nephews Harry and Gus.

Services will be held in San Jose on May 25 and in Portland June 2 at 11 a.m. at the International Longshore and Warehouse Union, 2401 NW 23rd Ave.

A tax-deductible fund to defray medical and funeral expenses was set up, to which many AFSCME members and others gave generously.

"There probably isn't a labor person in this state who hasn't benefited tremendously from Cornelia's work," said AFSCME staff rep James Hester. "She was totally committed to AFSCME and the movement. I think she'd want us to keep on fighting."

Oregon's workplace fatalities report misses half the story

The Oregon Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OR-OSHA) issued a press release earlier this month announcing a record-low 31 job-related deaths in Oregon in 2005.

While the number reported is the lowest since the state started keeping track in 1943, it includes only those workers covered as compensable claims under the state's workers' compensation system. While this fact is included in the press release, many news reports don't mention it in their stories.

"The real number of workers killed on the job in Oregon is, unfortunately, about twice what was reported," said Tom Chamberlain, president of the Oregon AFL-CIO. "The state's number — 31 — does not include deaths of workers who were self-employed, working in Oregon for out-of-state employers, City of Portland police and fire employees, federal employees and others. And we must remember and honor the soldiers who have died in the Middle East — they died on the job as well."

The Northwest Labor Press reported in April that in 2005, according to records by OR-OSHA and the federal Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries, 53 workers were killed on the job in Oregon. The names and occupations of these 53 workers were listed in the April 21 issue — and the names were read at a Workers Memorial Day event on April 28. This number does not include soldiers with ties to Oregon.

The Newspaper Guild hits newspapers' sale

WASHINGTON, D.C. (PAI) — The sale of four newspapers — three in the San Francisco Bay area and the St. Paul Pioneer Press — to media mogul Dean Singleton should be scrutinized by those newspapers' cities and possibly overturned on anti-trust grounds, says Newspaper Guild President Linda Foley.

Foley commented after the McClatchy newspaper chain, which is buying 32 papers from Knight-Ridder and putting 12 — including the aforementioned, all of which are represented by The Newspaper Guild, an affiliate of Communications Workers of America — up for sale, said it would sell them to Singleton's MediaNews Corp. for \$1 billion. Singleton, a right-winger, has a reputation for slashing news, workers and pay.

The Newspaper Guild and a pro-worker investment firm, Yucaipa, are bidding for all 12, with an employee stock ownership plan to be established if they are successful. Eight of the newspapers are unionized, including the four Singleton wants.

"The apparent complexity of the proposed purchase of three Northern California newspapers shouldn't obscure a simple fact: The industry is dominated by a small circle of owner-

ship groups," Foley said. The late-April sale of the four papers "drew that circle even smaller."

If Singleton buys the four papers, he would have a virtual monopoly east and south of San Francisco, because he also is buying the San Jose Mercury News and two papers south of the city. He now owns the Oakland Tribune.



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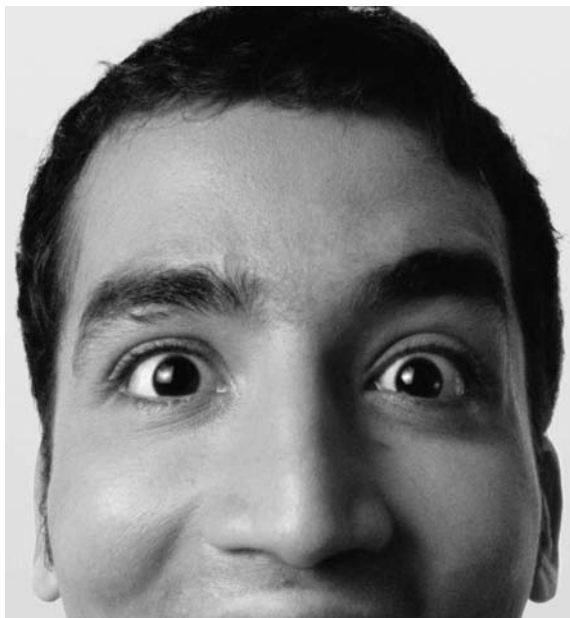
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