

Our Steps with ?

As a nation, we walked with her.

By Sara Brode

March 31, 2005, is a day I'll remember the rest of my life. Like my parents remember Kennedy's assassination in 1963 and can tell me where they stood. Like my grandparents remember Pearl Harbor and D-Day, and reminded me each year as a child what happened to our nation on those dates.

March 31 was not a day of tremendous bloodshed, and I don't want to trivialize the costs of those days of war. But it was a day our nation glimpsed a growing enemy, one that sat at our doorsteps waiting to devour our weak and voiceless. March 31 is the day we got those first e-mails saying that Terri Schiavo had died.

I will remember how all other issues seemed to stop moving for the two weeks she was deprived of her feeding tube, as the nation watched a woman starve to death by order of a state judge. I'll remember the pundits and columnists writing article after article devoted to Terri, explaining what was profoundly wrong with the picture. And I'll remember the way America was deceived into thinking Terri's case was just more posturing by the media's favorite scapegoat, the "religious right."

I'll remember shaking off tears after

reading a co-worker's article because the thought struck me at that moment, more profoundly than ever: *Why didn't Michael Schiavo, Terri's husband, just walk away?* How could he prefer Terri dead rather than divorced and in the care of her parents?

I'll remember watching George Felos, Michael's lawyer, speak after Terri died and do nothing but lambaste priests, Terri's parents, and the "right" in general for our efforts over the past couple of

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weeks. He remarked that conservatives had said things that were "hateful" and "cruel."

Yet when he described Terri, a disabled but healthy 41-year-old woman in the throes of starvation and dehydration, like an inmate in a concentration camp, he called her "beautiful." I'll remember the sickness that coated my stomach as I listened to his words. Something was seriously wrong with this man.

I'll remember the first hunger pang I

Terri



felt on the afternoon of Friday, March 18, one hour after Terri's feeding tube was removed. It wouldn't be the last time I prayed for her as my own hunger struck. Every time I ate during those two weeks was a commemoration of her and a time to bring her before the Lord.

The Schindlers have never met me, but I feel a deep respect and a special bond to them—Bob and Mary, who spoke such kind words even after their daughter's death, urging their supporters to show love, asking forgiveness for any hurt they may have caused, and who fought the

good fight for 15 years trying to rescue their daughter; Bobby, her brother who lobbied for her life here in Washington with calm yet passionate persuasion; and Suzanne, her sister, who sorrowfully reminded CNN viewers that what was happening to Terri was "sick," and that she couldn't believe she even had to point this out.

Terri's case is a landmark not only in my young life (at 26, I am exactly her age when she entered her condition), but it has colored the landscape of American history. Terri showed us as a nation just

how far we have fallen, and few have not heard her name. Whether she knew it or not, she showed America exactly what it is contending with—an enemy that comes in the name of mercy but wants to kill off the “inconvenient.” We can fight, or we can bow down to it.

I’m ready to take up arms. Not arms of fear and militia, but arms of prayer, persuasion and action. Arms that love our enemies but call evil what it is. Arms that band together against a judicial system out of control.

Terri exposed our soul as a nation. On 14th Street in Washington, D.C., on my commute out of town, sits the National Holocaust Museum. Inside, visitors mourn the millions of Jews, disabled, ethnic minorities, and other “undesirables” that Nazi Germany exterminated in the 1940s.

We must rally against the culture of death trying to plant roots in our country.

Here in America, we have our own holocaust of 40 million unborn children deemed “unwanted,” but the terminating goes on behind closed doors. However, Terri’s case has shown us that we, too, are ready to start openly, publicly exterminating certain types of people. And this increases my fear for the soul of our nation.

As we continue to pray for the Schindlers, we are praying more earnestly for God’s redemption on our land. We pray that America, the sleeping giant who awoke that fateful day in Hawaii, the giant who helped lead the charge against the evils of Nazi Germany and then communism, will once again stir to action. This time, we must rally, within our own walls,

How Your Gifts Helped CWA Fight for Terri Schiavo

Lobbying on Capitol Hill: CWA’s legislative staff helped in the lobbying of HR 1332, the law to give Terri a hearing in the federal courts. Our staff members assisted Bobby Schindler, Terri’s brother, as he pleaded with members of Congress on his sister’s behalf.

Publications and Media

Appearances: Lies about Terri’s condition and the efforts to save her permeated the media. CWA’s experts published articles and debated opponents on TV and radio. (See page 15.)

E-Alerts and Web site: To our e-mail alert list of 79,000 (and growing), CWA sent breaking news in Terri’s battle. These e-mails offered ways for individuals to act on Terri’s behalf, and our Web site published regular updates read by people across the globe.

The work goes on: Terri has left this life, but her impact continues. CWA will be working for legislation that will protect disabled people at the state and federal levels.

Thank you for your support—it makes our work possible! To join CWA’s e-alert list, visit www.cwfa.org

against the culture of death that’s trying to plant deep roots in our beloved country.

May Terri’s memory live on, and may we each never forget this fateful day in March 2005. ■

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What the Mainstream Media Didn't Tell You

Terri Schiavo was not on life support, as most people understand it. She breathed on her own and was in good health, although severely disabled. She did receive food and water through a tube into her stomach.

According to court documents, Michael Schiavo did not act consistently in his wife's best interests. Although Michael took good care of Terri at first, his attitude seemed to change after he won a sizeable malpractice suit. He refused doctors' orders to give Terri physical therapy and even medicine for a urinary tract infection. However, the medical staff treated the infection anyway. Michael has lived with a woman since 1996; they have two children.

Many medical experts disputed that Terri was in a persistent vegetative state (PVS). Some 33 physicians filed affidavits with the court saying just that, and according to those closest to Terri, she consistently responded to people, including questions and instructions, and attempted to communicate. A neurologist who specializes in brain injuries who spent about 12 hours with Terri said that she could improve with therapy.

Michael Schiavo's key medical witness and lead attorney are pro-death proponents. Dr. Ronald Cranford, who spent about 45 minutes examining Terri before diagnosing her in a PVS, has testified that even spoon-feeding is "medical treatment" and advocates the starvation of people with advanced Alzheimer's disease.

According to *Crisis* magazine, attorney George Felos has been a member of the notorious pro-death Hemlock Society, now euphemistically known as End-of-Life Choices.



Michael Schiavo

Liberals claimed that up to 19 judges upheld the removal of Terri's feeding tube, but that doesn't mean they all agreed with the original decision. The appellate judges just reviewed the legality (according to Florida law) of Judge George Greer's decision; they didn't review the original evidence and determine whether his ruling was merited.

The appellate judges in the last days of Terri's life didn't follow the law passed by Congress, which required a new, or *de novo*, hearing of the case in federal court. This would have meant reinserting the feeding tube while the court reconsidered evidence presented in the original case, where Michael requested its removal and Judge Greer ruled in his favor.

Poll questions asking Americans' views on Terri's situation were strongly biased. A Zogby Poll released on April 6 asked fair questions and found that the majority supported Terri's right to live. Responses on various questions ranged up to to 79 percent in her favor.