

Passing Thoughts

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Mr. Brinkley goes to Washington BY BESS PLAY



On October 19, 1999, Dannon Brinkley stood before the House of Representatives Committee on Government Reform, led by Committee Chairman Dan Burton (R-IN). The subject of the hearing was "Improving Care at the End of Life with Complementary Medicine," and it was the last health-related hearing in 1999. Dannon, a well-known advocate and expert on both hospice and complementary and alternative medicine, was selected to testify regarding

the role of *Compassion in Action* in improving end-of-life care for veterans. In a way, it was like David and Goliath. *Compassion in Action*, at the ripe old age of two, is still a toddler, yet the work we do and the stories told by our volunteers carry tremendous clout.

In May 1997, when *Compassion in Action* was born, Dannon had only one request, "Don't forget the vets." Having served in the Marine Corps, he was and is firmly committed to the welfare of American veterans. Having conquered his own devastating health challenges, he has often said that, while he attributes the major part

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A Message from the Chairman BY DANNION BRINKLEY

This holiday season represents two major landmarks in my life. On a personal level, I will soon be turning 50. On the grander scale, we are about to enter into a new millennium. Given the wildness of my younger years and my several brushes with death, I never expected to see either of these events.

They are both gifts. Turning 50 represents, for me, the gift of time — time to be here, to participate, to learn, and to love. Coming to the year 2000, on the other hand, may seem at first like a passive process — one that requires nothing of us but watching the clock continue to tick. I cannot agree with that at all. Starting this new millennium must be seen as an invitation to create a world that exists within the consciousness of kindness. The challenge is how to go about creating it.

As you know, creation is an active process, and kindness is much more than just a mindset. We at *Compassion in Action*

believe we are, in fact, our brothers' keepers and that every act of kindness has an impact far greater than its mere size. What we carry into the new millennium is an awareness of the dying process as a special and sacred time of life, a willingness to do the work to change America's consciousness about the end of life, and the concept of volunteers as the extended family of the future.

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COMPASSION IN ACTION: *The Twilight Brigade*

Through worldwide education and mobilization of trained volunteers, *Compassion in Action* provides a loving presence for those approaching death, thereby helping ensure that *no one need die alone.*

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