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THE EXPRESSIVE PAINTING of **Faith Fancher** in an Oakland medical center portrays her blowing a kiss to a photographer. Symbolically, she is wishing good luck to other women like herself with breast cancer.

One out of eight women in this country are stricken with breast cancer. Fancher, the professional and engaging Channel 2 reporter, was among the unlucky ones, dying in 2003.

Next Tuesday, the Carol Ann Read Breast Health Center and Faith's Place will be dedicated formally at the Alta Bates Summit Medical Center.

Carol Ann Read, like Fancher an Alta Bates Summit patient, died of breast cancer in 1997. Her husband Peter then worked with the Alta Bates Summit Foundation to raise funds for a

comprehensive breast cancer center that would expedite the detection and delivery of test results.

Thirteen million dollars later -- \$10 million coming from donations -- the Carol Ann Read Breast Health Center opened March 10. Alta Bates Summit believes it has the East Bay's most advanced breast cancer detection center.

Bill Drummond, husband of **Faith Fancher**, saw **Faith's** Place for the first time last Friday. He stood in silence in the circular space -- a tribute to his wife who had battled breast cancer so heroically and publicly.

"She had a wonderful human touch and a big heart," said Drummond, a University of California, Berkeley, journalism professor since 1983. "People would tell her their innermost thoughts. And she was always very gracious and kind."

Drummond was Fancher's boss at National Public Radio in Washington, D.C., in 1979 before romance blossomed. Fancher, a 1972 University of Tennessee summa cum laude graduate, moved on to CNN and then Channel 2 in 1983, one year after marrying Drummond.

"She had something you can't teach -- she was unbelievably interested in people, and she was fearless," he said. "She was the best street reporter I had ever seen. I think the people at Channel2 would tell you the same thing."

Marriage to Fancher was an everyday birthday party.

"She was everything -- social director, confidential secretary and adviser," he said. "She knew how to enjoy life. The biggest asset she gave me -- because I had been married before -- was I didn't know what joy was like, being a nose-to-the-grindstone type guy. She was the warmth and the hearth."

Then began her seven-year struggle against an insidious disease.

"It was a blow that everybody felt," he said, "especially after she had gone public with the Channel 2 documentary. People also were inspired by the fact she

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was going to fight on, and she would use this as a platform to urge women to overcome their resistance and come in for a screening."

It will be five years in October since she passed away, but her husband still hears from people who admired her courage. And her Friends of Faith Foundation still is active, helping others confront breast cancer.

"This shows that you really do have a kind of immortality depending on your good works in your lifetime," Drummond said. "You transcend."

Steve Lundin, president and CEO of the Alta Bates Summit Foundation, described how the medical center has modernized breast cancer detection.

"If you needed to get Test A done, it was three blocks that way, and Test B was six miles the other way," he said. "And women would have a horrendous wait of two weeks-plus to find out if they had a suspicious mammogram. Now we've got it down to hours and days, and we've got all of the state-of-the-art equipment right here."

Lundin noted that Fancher became the "ambassador" for breast cancer awareness in the Bay Area. It's easy to see why.

"She never met a stranger," said Carolyn Kemp, Alta Bates Summit Medical Center publicity director and Fancher's friend. "She was right out there for everybody. There was always joy and panache. She was Everywoman."

In **Faith's** Place, **Fancher's** painting is flanked by the words of Mother Teresa and Maya Angelou.

"It is healthy and respectful to admit the importance of people who have loved and supported us," Angelou wrote, "people whose footprints cannot ever be matched."

Fancher's footprints remain visible locally in the ongoing fight against breast cancer.

Dave Newhouse's columns appear Monday, Thursday and Sunday, usually on the Metro page. Know any Good Neighbors? Phone 510-208-6466 or e-mail dnewhouse@bayareanewsgroup.com .

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