

## Margaret Colyear “Peggy” Halvorson

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I am honored to deliver this eulogy of Margaret Colyear Halvorson, who we all knew as “Peggy”.

I wish to thank Richard, June, Marge and Cliff for telling me stories about Peggy.

I am very surprised that I was chosen by the family... since Peggy threw me out of her house a few months ago saying “Ed, I have had enough of doctors! Of course she was right, she didn’t need any more doctors!

I was the dean of the USC Leonard Davis School of Gerontology. The current Dean, Dr. Hassy Cohen, and Associate Deans Henke and Esaghapour are here today to honor Peggy.

For those of you not familiar with the term, Gerontology, it means the study of aging. While we are all, in the field of gerontology, learning about aging, Peggy already knew all about how to age well.

When I would speak to groups, I would frequently acknowledge Peggy as an example of successful aging. Peggy lived life her way! Peggy savored all the seasons of her life.

I would like to read Chapter 3 from Ecclesiastes that illustrates these seasons:

*To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:  
A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to uproot  
A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up;  
A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance;  
A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together;  
A time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;  
A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away;  
A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;  
A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace.*

Today is a time to mourn and a time to dance and a time to celebrate the wonderful life of Margaret “Peggy” Colyear Halvorson.

Peggy knew how to live and she knew how to die! When she knew that she was going to die, Peggy called her children, told them she loved them, thanked them for the loving care they had provided to her and told them she would die the next day.

She was off by one week. Having lived over 5,300 weeks, being off by one week is pretty good!

Peggy was a mom for all seasons and all challenges! She started with twins, Richard and June, then Marge, then another set of twins, Diane and Barbara. In addition, she adopted Gwen, the daughter of Dr. Halvorson. Despite the challenges of raising 6 children, she always faced life with a positive attitude.

Peggy loved animals and this love was passed on to her children.

One day, Barbara and Marge read an advertisement for an auction of animals from a roadside circus. They went to the auction in Bakersfield and intended to buy a camel, but it was too expensive and too big to fit into a car. So they bought a smaller less expensive animal, an 80 lb baby lion and brought it home. They were sneaking it though the side of the house. One of Peggy's guests saw them and said "I thought I saw a lion out there". Peggy thought he might have had one too many cocktails. But when they went outside, they met the lion.

I asked Peggy, after she let her kids bring home a lion, why did she keep the lion?

Peggy responded: "Ed, what else could I do?"

Any other mother would have called the local zoo, but Peggy went out and bought chickens, 3 a day, to feed the lion.

According to Richard, when you turned your back on the lion, the lion would stalk you and then jump on you, knocking you down and then proceed to lick you!

The problem was that after eating the three chickens, the content lion would roar. The Consul General of Israel lived next door and was used to dogs barking, but not lions roaring, so the lion had to go!

Peggy was a Trojan and several of her children went to USC. Peggy was a member of the Board of Councilors of our school, the Leonard Davis School of Gerontology at USC, for many years. We have retreats of our Gerontology Board each year. June has been to many of them. Peggy loved attending the retreat and came every year.

When I would get up to speak at these USC Gerontology retreats, I was always a little nervous about how the weekend would go. But I knew that Peggy would be sitting in the front row, holding hands with Colonel Jim, and smiling at me with her wonderful relaxed smile and I knew everything would go well.

Peggy told me "You have to give back," and she did!

In 2004, Peggy was honored with the Outstanding Philanthropist Award at the Association of Fundraising Professionals' annual National Philanthropy Day.

Peggy was a philanthropist, but... not the usual philanthropist. Peggy wanted to do philanthropy her way. She wanted to support specific projects rather than organizations;

She provided funds for projects for the Salvation Army, the Special Olympics, Covenant House, ASPCA, Veterans organizations, and the Redondo Beach Outrigger Club, Cliff's club, where she bought an outrigger canoe for the Kids program.

They named the canoe, "MAKALEKA" which translated from Hawaiian is "Peggy's Canoe"

And of course, she supported her alma mater, USC. She provided research funds to specific research projects at the Norris Cancer Center.

Peggy wanted to help our Gerontology students, but, not with the usual scholarship funds, she wanted to do it her way!

In 1994, Peggy established the Margaret A. Halvorson Emergency Fund at the Leonard Davis School of Gerontology. She created this fund to help students complete their degrees in gerontology by assisting in ways not usually covered by other means of support.

In her own way, through these funds, Peggy Halvorson has helped numerous students in need over the years. She has bought groceries and repaired cars... yes, one student's car was damaged by hurricane Katrina and she needed the car to drive from New Orleans to Los Angeles. Peggy's fund provided the money to repair the car.

There were students who could not pay rent and would otherwise be homeless and have to drop out of school. Peggy was there for them.

Peggy was literally a lifesaver for one of our students. There was an international student who was on the verge of completing her PhD and was offered a position as a university professor in her country of origin. All she had to do was make a few minor edits to her dissertation. But as she was making those edits she began to sense something was wrong and went to see her doctor who determined she had breast cancer. If she graduated her student health insurance would no longer be effective and although her native country provided universal health care it would not treat her because of her pre-existing condition. She was caught in between two bureaucracies and her life hung in the balance. Peggy's fund was there for her and provided the funds for her successful treatment.

These are just a few of the many people whose lives have been impacted by the generosity of Margaret Colyear Halvorson.

Many years ago, one of my board of Councilor members suggested that our school host a golf tournament. I didn't play golf and knew nothing about golf tournaments but was willing to try anything that might bring funds to support scholarships at our school. I needed lots of help and Peggy was there. I asked all the members of the Board to be tee sponsors, sponsor foursomes and make the usual donations. Of course, Peggy wanted to contribute in her own way. She told me "Ed, I want the USC Band and Song Girls to be there!" So, every year at our golf tournament, we have the USC Band and Song Girls and it energizes our tournament. When I hear the band, I can see Peggy's smiling face with her hand up in the Trojan salute.

I was looking for a phrase that best exemplifies Peggy. I spoke with Marge this week and she provided me with the phrase. She told me that at the funeral of Richard Curtis Colyear, her father, one of his best friends came up to her and told her that her mom, Peggy, was a "true lady in every sense of the word".

Today, we celebrate the life and death of a true lady, in every sense of the word, Margaret Colyear Halvorson. Thank you for the honor of speaking to you today.