

Rick,

I would appreciate it if you would share my sad news with your readers.

Jeanee von Essen, my wife, died on Sunday. She was the Director of Foreign News and Development for the NBC News Channel for the last 26 years. Before that she was the Vice-President of International News at CNN. I believe she was the 12th person hired at CNN. She started the foreign news coverage operation when CNN launched in 1980 and ran it until 1989. She used to talk about the early days when the CNN foreign desk files were riding around in the back of our car because there was no place to keep them at work yet.

She loved news—particularly foreign news—and she loved working with the NBC affiliates and our international partners. She was an outstanding writer, editor and leader. The only thing she loved more than journalism was her family—our son Hugh, his fiancée Lynn, and our granddaughter Ruby, who was the joy of her life for the past six years. (I think I was in the mix too.)

She was born in Panama, spent most of her childhood in Europe, and by her high school years her family had settled in Kerrville, in the beautiful Hill Country of Texas. On Monday we will lay her to rest next to her mother in a small country cemetery a few miles outside of town. The arrangements are being handled by the Kerrville Funeral Home. We plan to have a celebration of her life within the next few weeks here in Charlotte. Donations would be welcomed at Second Harvest of Metrolina, a food bank here in Charlotte.

Here is the note I shared with our staff:

It is with great sorrow that I write to tell you that Jeanee passed away on Sunday morning. She left us peacefully as I stood by her side.

I know that she would want me to tell you how much she enjoyed working with you, and how she thought of you as wonderful friends as well as great co-workers.

Thank you for all the ways in which you have supported and encouraged her over the past six months.

We had 45 years of married life. I am a lucky guy—a lucky, heartbroken guy.