

# THE NEWS

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## HOW THE LEGACY OF A TOUGH VIETNAM NURSE LIVES ON- DON KIRKLAND

To readers who've encountered my previous column ramblings, I apologize if I occasionally repeat some of the same stories. Like the neighborhood newspaper I printed as a kid using gelatin, inedible ink and a pile tin, one seemingly oft-repeated addendum to the Kirkland archives, Or delivering papers on my bike to the mortuary every morning.

What about selling newspapers on the corner in front of the drugstore a couple of blocks from our house, and spending the money I earned on ice cream at the soda fountain? No? OK, you get the point.

I don't think either, that I've ever talked much about my days as the media relations guys at Desert Samaritan Hospital, now Banner Desert, in the 1980's. That was an interesting job, too, and I didn't spend my paycheck on fountain treats, although I'm sure I was often tempted. I was a quick learner in those early days.

What I also came to realize was the passion by which our hospital nursing staff viewed their responsibilities with patients, something that no doubt largely was drilled into them by Jackie Evans, former Vietnam helicopter nurse who was our associate administrator As you might guess, Jackie was one tough hombre- not a lady to be messed with.

Because overseeing our hospital's relations with TV, radio and newspaper reporters (mainly keeping them away from our CEO, who disliked that part of his job as much as I disliked delivering papers to the mortuary). Jackie and I more than once clashed on situations involving my interaction with the media versus her stewardship of the nurses' best interests.

Perhaps you already figured this out: Jackie always won. Not, that is, because she was necessarily right on every detail, but because the commitment with which she viewed her role, along with the singular passion-well, it was obvious to me and every other staff member from top to bottom, that the recipients of care were Desert Sam's No 1 priority. The media not so much.

Since my departure from hospital PR, I've never forgotten what I learned from Jackie Evans and the other likewise passionate professionals who were fortunate enough to have her as their teacher, leader, defender.

So when the time came recently to find myself undergoing a seven-week regimen of daily 5 min each radiation treatments at **Ironwood Cancer Center** in West Chandler, I knew instinctively that I'd be in good hands. Having seen medical professionals at work during those earlier hospital days, I simply took it for granted that I was being cared for by people whose very lives revolve around the same principles I'd seen in practice 30 some years ago.

As of writing, I've completed the prescribed series of treatments with none of the potential negative outcomes- in fact, with nothing more than the confidence that I'm in good health, along with a deep appreciation for the warmth, professionalism, and yes Jackie Evans-style passion with which my care has been administered these past two plus months.

**To Ironwood staff- Tamra, Leslie, Kim, Alyssa, Bryce and Paul-** I offer my salute for the work to which they've dedicated their careers, and obviously their hearts.