



Volume 3

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Maria Sklodowska Curie – II- A
Personal Word

Lead: In 1937 Marie Curie died of leukemia caused in part by her long exposure to radiation seeking to determine its value in medical treatments. Today I would like to share a personal word.

Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.

Content: In the quarter century I

have written and related these narratives as a public historian I have avoided making myself the focus of the story. Nevertheless, recently many loyal and supportive listeners have expressed concern about a perceived change in the quality of my voice. They are correct to have noticed this change. Perhaps the struggle of Madame Curie is a good platform to explore the value and challenges associated with radiation.

In early 2017 I was diagnosed with throat cancer. I presented a lesion on my right tonsil, due it is believed at least in part to my exposure to Agent Orange while serving as a U.S. Army officer in the Republic of Vietnam in the early 1970s.

I was treated by a highly supportive and competent medical team at the Hunter Holmes McGuire Veterans Administration Hospital here in Richmond. This treatment entailed substantial radiation exposure as well as several sessions of chemo-therapy. If you have known anyone with head and throat cancer you are aware that the results of radiation treatment to the head and neck are almost as devastating as the cancer itself. My hearing has been particularly impaired. My taste buds are permanently altered requiring me to live on a liquid diet. My saliva glands were destroyed meaning that I am constantly dealing with extreme dryness of the mouth. And, finally, I was inflicted with a severe case of

Trismus, the medical term for a constriction of the right jaw caused by scar tissue generated by the radiation of my right mandible muscle which has forced my mouth to close almost completely. Naturally, this has made speaking, lecturing, recording and interpersonal communication extraordinarily problematic.

Despite this I was unwilling to allow cancer to defeat me, nor have I been willing because of my health struggles to give up my passion for public history as embodied by this broadcast. Fortunately, we have a substantial inventory of high quality narratives created prior to my treatment and we have tried to intermix them with new programming

so that our listeners will not be too distracted as I continue the process of healing.

The good news is that the cancer seems to be in remission as repeated PETSCANS have indicated. I am growing content that perhaps someday I will recover at least a small ability to eat solid foods. I am resigned to never having ordinary saliva production again, but have learned to hydrate by drinking lots of water and have figured other ways of lubricating my mouth and throat. We are also making progress on the Trismus. Just in the last month after extensive and rather painful therapy at the VA, the separation between my teeth has widened as my therapists have literally

begun to stretch and try to soften the scar tissue, thus forcing my mouth open. I have hopes that I will regain more than a little of the resonance most of my students, colleagues, and listeners have enjoyed in the past on this program.

Also, while in recovery I have continued to teach, write new programs for the program which can be found at this website, written a new book, *Master American History in One Minute a Day* which will be released in May of this year and begun preparation for another book, *Master American Presidents in One Minute a Day* for publication in time for the election in 2020.

I am grateful for the support of my husband, my children, friends, and the medical team at the VA. Many of my physicians and hospital staff listen to *A Moment in Time* and value its contribution to their understanding and have struggled to help me re-claim my health and vigorous verbal delivery. I am particularly thankful to my associates here at *A Moment in Time*, my colleagues at the University of Richmond who have fought with me through this tough time and my media partners at WCVE-FM, our home base station in Richmond, for their unwavering support in this tough season of treatment and recovery.

And I am fortunate to have a cadre of dedicated listeners who have

recognized that something was amiss and have been willing to inquire. I am encouraged as to my progress and believe in the weeks ahead you will, of course, find continued excellent writing on the website and in the program, and a perhaps a marked improvement in the quality of my delivery on the broadcast version of *A Moment in Time*.

At the University of Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.

Resources

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