



Elizabeth Edwards  
campaigning for her  
husband in Concord,  
New Hampshire,  
April 30, 2007.

She doesn't agree with her husband on every single issue. She doesn't hesitate to say so. Edwards is not only a funny, fierce, absolutely lovely force to be reckoned with, she might report on some very private family values, some very public family struggles, and exactly



“I’M REALLY  
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★★★

publicly. And, we’re delighted to say, she doesn’t walk away from a fight. Elizabeth just be the most refreshing political spouse since Eleanor Roosevelt. **BARRY YEOMAN** what it is that makes this woman run. ★★★ PHOTOGRAPHS BY ART STREIBER



IF ANYONE HAD QUESTIONED Elizabeth Edwards's credentials as America's most outspoken political spouse, the final week in June erased all doubts. Viewers across the country were spellbound as she stood up to Ann Coulter, the acidic conservative commentator, who took aim at

Edwards's husband on national TV. Coulter had savaged him four years earlier, trivializing the death of the couple's 16-year-old son, Wade. More recently she called the candidate a "faggot." This time she went a step further. "If I'm gonna say anything about John Edwards in the future," Coulter said on ABC's *Good Morning America*, "I'll just wish he had been killed in a terrorist assassination plot." ★ Listening, Elizabeth thought, *Somebody needs to say "Stop."* The next day, sitting in Portland International Airport in Oregon, she watched Coulter on a live broadcast of MSNBC's

would remain active in John's quest for the Democratic nomination. "I'm absolutely ready for this," she said. "I don't look sickly. I don't feel sickly." When CBS's Katie Couric reminded her, "You're staring at possible death," Edwards smiled a bit wearily. "Aren't we all, though?"

Although her candor and opinions may be unfamiliar to a national audience, her convictions took root long ago. Edwards traces them back to the 1960s, when she was growing up on a U.S. military base in Japan during the escalation of the Vietnam War.

**T**HE SOLDIER HAD DARK HAIR and a plain face and was barely in his 20s. What stood out most, though, was his sullenness. He had come with Edwards's father, Vincent Anania, who was serving in Vietnam, to spend Thanksgiving at their home in Camp Zama outside Tokyo. He was not physically injured. "But he obviously had some sort of a breakdown," she recalls. "We were an incredibly outgoing family and usually could pull somebody in." But for all their efforts, "he was never joyful." Lost in his own thoughts, the young

## Terminal disease, says Edwards, referring to the breast cancer that has spread to her bones,

*Hardball*, flanked by young Republicans and Democrats waving candidate placards. Waiting for her plane to board, Edwards pulled out her cell phone and dialed the call-in number provided by her staff. She was put right through. ★ "In the South, when someone does something that displeases us," she said on the air, addressing Coulter, "we want to ask them politely to stop doing it.... These young people behind you are the

age of my children. You're asking them to participate in a dialogue that's based on hatefulness and ugliness." Coulter flicked her hair and chided the Edwardses for using the "faggot" remark to raise funds on their Web site. But Edwards persisted in firmly asking Coulter to refrain from making personal attacks. The exchange was soon posted on YouTube, and within five days viewers watched it more than 300,000 times.

It was not her only candid moment of the week. At a Gay Pride breakfast in San Francisco, Edwards backed legalizing marriage for gay and lesbian couples—breaking with her husband, who supports civil unions but not marriage. Only a handful of political wives have so visibly bucked their spouses, women like Hillary Clinton, who in 1999 opposed her husband's clemency offer to

Puerto Rican nationalists, and Eleanor Roosevelt, who lobbied FDR not to send Japanese-Americans to internment camps during World War II.

Some pundits have called Elizabeth Edwards's outspokenness a political ploy to broaden her husband's appeal. Those who know her best say it's Elizabeth through and through. Never one to shy away from controversial issues, she has become even more prone to speak her own truth since last March. That's when she announced that her breast cancer had returned with metastatic vengeance. First diagnosed in 2004, the cancer has now lodged in her bones. It is treatable with drugs but no longer curable. Doctors cannot offer a reliable prognosis. Still, Edwards told reporters immediately after getting the news that she



"Every opportunity to reach out, to speak, to touch someone is precious to me," says Elizabeth, shown here at the campaign headquarters in New Hampshire. "I don't know how long I have to complete my story."

man sat in a wooden-armed chair, leaning slightly forward, staring at the evergreens outside the living room window. A few days later, he returned to Vietnam. "We could see how disturbed he was, and yet they were sending him back," she says.



The loves of her life: Elizabeth met John in law school (*left*, graduating in 1977). She and son Wade (*above*)—16 when he was killed in a car accident in 1996—were soul mates. Now the Edwardses spend as much time as possible with their children (*below, from left*, in 2004) Emma Claire, Jack, and Cate.

is a great clarifier: “It takes you away from the mirror and toward the window.”

Until then, Mary Beth—as Edwards was known at 16—had been shielded from the gruesome details of military life. The Ananias were a buoyant bunch: Her navy pilot father once did a dance routine at the officers’ club wearing a skirt and pink bikini top. Around the house, conversations were spirited, too. “Growing up in an Italian family, you use a harsh tone and ten minutes later everybody forgets about it,” she says. One thing Vincent Anania never discussed, however, was what he saw in combat. “They’d be bombing someplace and my dad would talk about brownies that my grandmother sent,” Edwards says. “When he would come back from Vietnam, or we would talk to him on the phone—in that crazy old way where there would be a crackle and you’d have to wait and talk back—he would always be positive.”

Yet hints of war’s ravages seeped in, and not only in the form of a brooding Thanksgiving guest. When a few Camp Zama girls were invited to a local military hospital, Edwards put on her dowdy black-and-white cheerleading uniform and stood at the bed of an injured soldier. She wanted to touch him but couldn’t: Most of his body was wrapped in bandages, and he was unable to

move even his head. “I felt impotent,” she says. “You have this notion that you’re going to come in and make people happy, as if seeing some high school cheerleader is going to change what his life is going to look like in two years.”

Growing up in Japan during the 1950s and ’60s offered the three Anania children a sober lesson in international relations. For some Japanese, Americans were still occupiers; the U.S. bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki during World War II were fresh memories. Protests erupted when nuclear submarines docked at the U.S. Navy base in Yokosuka, about an hour and a half away. “Walking down the street, we had vivid experiences of love and hate,” says Edwards’s younger brother, Jay Anania. “One person would want to practice English, and another would come up with a very icy stare.” While Jay took these reactions personally—as the only boy, he was more likely to get beaten up—“Elizabeth,” he says, “was always able to understand it in terms of what America was to the rest of the world.”

The family was transferred home in 1966. Edwards eventually enrolled at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where [CONTINUED ON PAGE 366]



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: EDWARDS FAMILY/ZUMA PRESS (2); GAIL ALBERT HALABAN/CORBIS OUTLINE; OPPOSITE PAGE: ART STREIBER

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**"I'M REALLY SCARED..."**

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her father was appointed to head the naval ROTC. Stateside, she began piecing together what she had absorbed in Japan. Surrounded for the first time by a wide range of independent news sources, she found herself compelled to join her classmates in protesting the Vietnam War. "The movement was so powerfully alive on our campus that no one could be on the sidelines," says classmate Grady Ballenger, now a dean at Florida's Stetson University. The spark for Edwards came in May 1970, when she saw on TV that Ohio National Guardsmen had killed four students during a protest at Kent State University. Running from her room, she blurted out the news to a group of dorm mates sitting in the common area. One of them looked up from their game of cards. "They probably deserved it," he said.

The moment was pivotal. "I realized I only had two choices," Edwards recalls. "I could either protest what had happened or be exactly like that guy playing cards." Soon she was participating in the rallies and a class boycott that practically shut down the campus. At the same time, she remained close to her parents, who frequently invited her friends to their Chapel Hill home. Ever the military daughter, Edwards found herself defending the soldiers even as she protested the war. "I'd met these people when I was in Japan," she says. "My father had gone to Vietnam. Other family friends had gone. I didn't have any hesitation saying that it's the people in Washington that we have to be mad at, not these kids." Likewise, her father never took a hard line against the protesters. When dozens of professors agreed to grant amnesty to the students who boycotted classes, Vincent Anania announced that he would, too.

One day C. Hugh Holman, who taught the only class Edwards continued to attend, an American novel survey, asked the reason she was striking.

"We have to," she told him.

"You know, it's not going to make any

difference,” Holman insisted.

“We know that,” Edwards replied. “We still have to.”

**W**HY DON'T YOU JUST comb your hair?” Lewis Leary's comment came from nowhere. The iconic literature scholar—he had been teaching since the 1930s—was leading a graduate seminar on Henry James, and his long conference table was a coveted place for Chapel Hill students. “He was a charismatic, rascally guy,” says classmate Ballenger. “He loved provoking and annoying us. He especially loved Elizabeth, because he could challenge her and she wouldn't back down.” That afternoon Edwards sat next to the professor. “She had the blackest, shiniest hair and the palest blue eyes, and the contrast was startling,” says John Auchard, a classmate who went on to coauthor John Edwards's book *Four Trials*. But she had bicycled to class that day. Her hair was tousled.

Shocked by his comment, Edwards turned to the professor. “I cannot believe you said that to me.” Leary—“a little cowed,” as Elizabeth puts it—backed off.

“We were so proud of her,” says Bal-

lenger. “We all knew he had a crush on her—as we all did.”

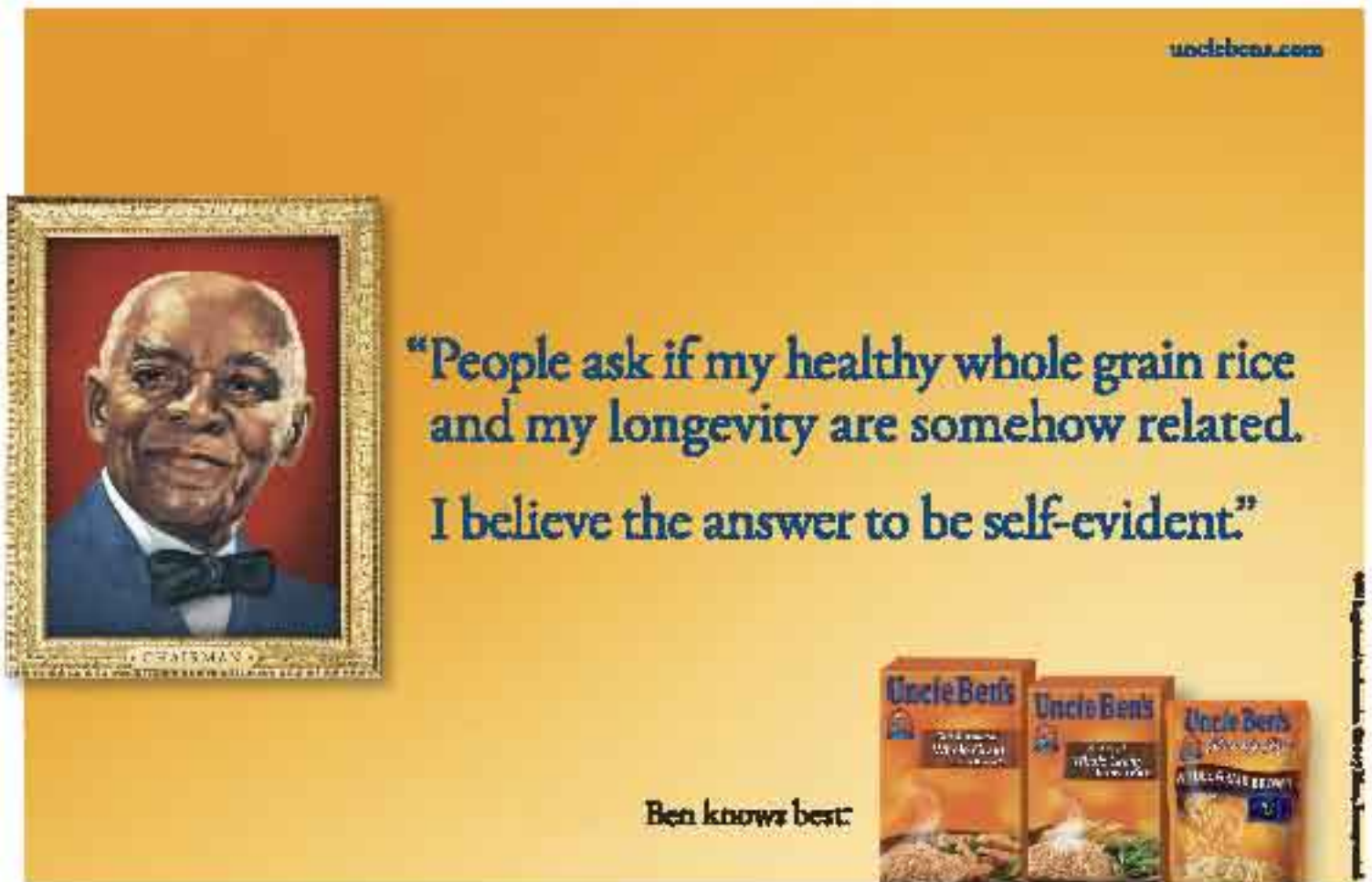
Ultimately, she traded literature for law school at UNC. There she met John Edwards, a small-town North Carolinian who had studied textiles as an undergraduate. To a well-traveled young woman accustomed to the world of letters, the quiet millworker's son didn't seem like a romantic prospect. But their first date won her over.

Wearing a bow tie, he picked her up in his red Duster and took her to a dance, complete with disco ball, at a local Holiday Inn. At the end of the night, he kissed her on the forehead. They were inseparable after that. “I would come through the law school library, and I'd always see them sitting at the same table,” says classmate Gerry Cohen. “There'd be textbooks spread out, and Elizabeth would be busy taking notes. John would be sitting at the table staring at Elizabeth.”

They married three days after the bar exam and worked briefly in Nashville before moving to Raleigh. She began her own practice as he was starting his. Working in commercial litigation, Elizabeth quickly discovered that women attorneys, even sharp ones, received less respect than men. During depositions one day, when her male

colleague left the room, an opposing attorney began talking candidly with a witness, not realizing Edwards was a lawyer. “They assumed I was a piece of furniture,” she says. She rarely grew angry; instead she turned situations to her own advantage. During a bankruptcy trial, when she learned that a key player was planning to flee, Edwards stood outside the courthouse, making small talk as the man waited for a town car to whisk him to the airport. “I sort of chatted with him the whole time, saying, ‘Oh, the buses here are so unreliable,’ just yakking away,” she says. “I'd been in the courtroom, but he had never thought of me as a lawyer.” With her target disarmed by his own sexism, Edwards served him a subpoena and walked off.

After her first children, Wade and Cate, were born, motherhood tugged harder on Edwards than her career did. When both kids were in grade school, she reduced her hours to part-time and parented in overdrive. While other mothers bought Halloween costumes at the store, Edwards stayed up late making hers by hand. She brought Krispy Kreme doughnuts to basketball games, not just for her children's teammates but for the opposing players as well. She counseled Cate's [CONTINUED ON PAGE 368]



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The advertisement features a framed portrait of an elderly Black man, Ben, wearing a blue suit and a dark bow tie. The portrait is set against a red background and is surrounded by a gold-colored frame. To the right of the portrait, the text is written in a blue, serif font. At the bottom right, there are three bags of Uncle Ben's rice: one labeled 'Uncle Ben's Original', one labeled 'Uncle Ben's Wild & Crazy', and one labeled 'Uncle Ben's Whole Grain Brown'. The background is a solid yellow color.

friends about sex and made Wade's repeat every synonym for *breast* until the words were no longer titillating.

Edwards was particularly tight with Wade, her oldest child, a gifted writer with an affinity for underdogs. "In a lot of ways, they were like soul mates," says Tricia Arnett, an old friend whose daughter grew up with Cate. They bid on sports cards together. They ran together. She read every book he read in high school. One night, battling insomnia, Edwards stayed up late watching *Sophie's Choice*. She came to the scene where Meryl Streep, as Sophie Zawistowska, is forced to choose between her two children in a Nazi death camp. "I remember going in and crawling into bed with Wade after watching that, just crying and crying," she says. "He was so unbelievably sweet that you knew that he could never live another day if he thought the price of his life was his sister's."

Then, in April 1996, a police cruiser pulled into the family's driveway. That afternoon, Wade had left for the North Carolina coast, where his family was to join him later. Facing the state trooper, Elizabeth spoke first. "Tell me he's alive," she said.

**W**ADE'S DEATH BECAME the defining event in his parents' lives, as it remains today. En route to the beach, coastal winds blew the 16-year-old's car off the road before it flipped over, killing him instantly. His passenger, a schoolmate, survived. The evening before the funeral, hundreds of mourners greeted the couple on a reception line. "Elizabeth would search their faces to see if they might have a special reason to stand there," says old friend and classmate Glenn Bergenfield. "To watch her comfort everyone who had come that night, it was beautiful. Imagine 1,400 people whose hearts are breaking."

After burying Wade, John threw himself into his job, winning a \$25 million jury verdict for the family of a 5-year-old girl whose intestines were sucked out by a faulty swimming pool drain. Elizabeth quit hers. She visited the cemetery every day, sitting on a blanket and reading aloud the entire 12th-grade reading list. "Some days I am nothing at all but a mother who lost her son," she wrote to the Internet support group she joined after Wade's death.

A "passive Christian" until then, Edwards pondered her faith. "If I had a God who would intervene but hadn't, I couldn't accept that God any longer," she says.

Struggling, she constructed the only God that now made sense: one who offered salvation and enlightenment but not intervention. Online, she bristled at those who suggested Wade might be refused entry to heaven because he had not made a profession of faith. "There is no heaven for me without my boy," she wrote. "I am not interested in a God who exiles my son."

Looking for a way to honor his memory, the Edwardses met with Thomas Sayre, a Raleigh sculptor, and together designed a 106-foot-long curving bench for Broughton High School, which Wade had attended. Shaped like a comet to represent a short, bright life, it featured 70 fine-grained handprints, each belonging to one of his friends.

Sayre cast the molds in a brick studio converted from an old warehouse. As the students pressed their palms into the 110-degree wax, Edwards hovered nearby, making sure to photograph each child. "It's a very intimate thing to place their hands in wax and squish the fingernails so they went down deep enough," Sayre says. "It was moving for me to touch all these hands, and know that I wouldn't touch Wade's."

By the time the bench was dedicated the following spring, the new Wade Edwards Learning Lab stood across the street with 25 computers for students who didn't have one at home. Above all, his death forced a reexamination of Edwards's priorities. "I've spent a lot of words on my own mortality," she says, referring to her recent diagnosis. "But honestly, it's not something that cancer taught me. It's something that Wade's death taught me. Life is this great big blackboard, and on it you write all the things that you do. You write your job, you write your mowing the lawn, you write your buying Girl Scout cookies, or that you're the manager for the soccer team. Sometimes you want to fit something else in; you're just trying to find a little space. Then you lose a child and everything is erased. You start to think how silly it was, some of those things you put on the board. First time you pick up the chalk to write again, you're a lot more careful about what you write there. You realize that it actually matters how you spend your life."

Two years after Wade's death, she gave birth to Emma Claire, the third of the couple's four children. Edwards was 48. By then, John had declared his candidacy for the U.S. Senate.

SINCE JOHN'S 1998 VICTORY OVER A REPUBLICAN incumbent, the Edwardses have developed a political partnership that starts to explain her keenness for the 2008 race. "She's the kind of woman who watches

C-SPAN for fun," says her friend Jennifer Palmieri, who served as press secretary for John's last presidential bid. "She loves to talk politics. She loves to read about it. She's different from her husband in that way: He would never in a million years sit down and watch C-SPAN. He would watch ESPN."

Elizabeth's key role throughout John's political career has been to push him toward fuller authenticity. When he arrived in Washington, he was a novice, vulnerable to advisers who urged him toward safe rhetoric that blunted his strong opinions. She was inexperienced, too. As each grew sure-footed, Elizabeth pressed John to look inside himself for wisdom. "She never asks me to agree with her," he says. "Her primary counsel is to be true to what I believe—as long as I'm honest, it'll be fine—and not to get caught up in the advice of others, particularly the political others."

From the beginning, she was uncomfortable playing the traditional Senate wife, with "the perfectly coiffed hair, the perfect outfit, lipstick all the time," she says. "I'd come from being a soccer mom and decorating cupcakes, and I just made a decision that I wasn't going to change." In her preferred role of political adviser, she made sure she was included in her husband's office e-mail chain, and asked tough questions of him and his staff. Before the United States invasion of Iraq, she attended a meeting in their Washington home with three Clinton-era foreign affairs experts. Sitting in the breakfast room, the men argued that John should vote for the authorization bill. Elizabeth, who grew up in a country where Americans were often seen as occupiers, shuddered at "the idea of preemptive strike, as opposed to something that was provoked." Defying the unanimity in the room, she asked, "Where is the provocation?" Years later, John regretted not listening to his wife. "My vote was wrong, and I'm the one who has to live with that," he says.

During the 2004 election, close associates saw Elizabeth's imprint as John came into his own—first during the primary season, then as John Kerry's running mate. "It's hard," says Palmieri, "to calibrate where Elizabeth ends and John begins." She, too, flourished during the campaign, savoring her encounters with voters. They would lean in to embrace her, sometimes in tears, whispering that they had lost sons as well, or feared they might in Iraq. They talked about the impossibility of buying health insurance and myriad everyday crises. Those brief conversations were manna for Edwards, a natural extrovert who feeds off intimate contact and human narrative. When

they travel as a family, the Edwardses play a game in which they invent tales about the houses they pass. "There might be a flower box but the flowers are dead, so maybe the mother is sick," she says. "I do it with people, too. You see their faces and come up with a story about them. Whether it's true or not, it gives them life and makes it harder to look at them as an abstraction."

Then, less than two weeks before Election Day, Edwards's own narrative took another grim turn. Standing in a hotel shower, she discovered a firm lump on the side of her right breast. Her physician advised it was probably malignant. Yet, she kept up her fast-paced schedule. "We did not miss one campaign stop," says her friend Hargrave McElroy, who traveled with her. "She shook hands and hugged people and we laughed. It was as though the news wasn't there." The day after the Kerry-Edwards ticket lost the election, her doctor's forecast was confirmed: The lump was diagnosed as cancer.

FOR A WHILE, EDWARDS'S LIFE WAS REDUCED to enduring the side effects of her treatment: four semiweekly rounds of chemotherapy, followed by a regimen of the cancer-slowing drug Taxol, then a lumpectomy and radiation. "They're putting stuff

in your body that if it spilled in your house, you'd put on gloves to clean it up," she says. On her best days, Edwards read to her children or sat in on John's meetings at the house. Other times she lay in bed, aching everywhere: her feet, neck, elbows, and other joints. Her fingers tingled and cramped. Her toenails separated from her skin. She lost the energy to climb stairs or lift soda bottles. After the surgery, her breast sloshed with waste fluid from surgery, which had not fully drained. "The first time you begin treatment, you think you're just going to plow through it," she says. "Then it takes a little bit away and a little bit away, and finally you've got nothing left."

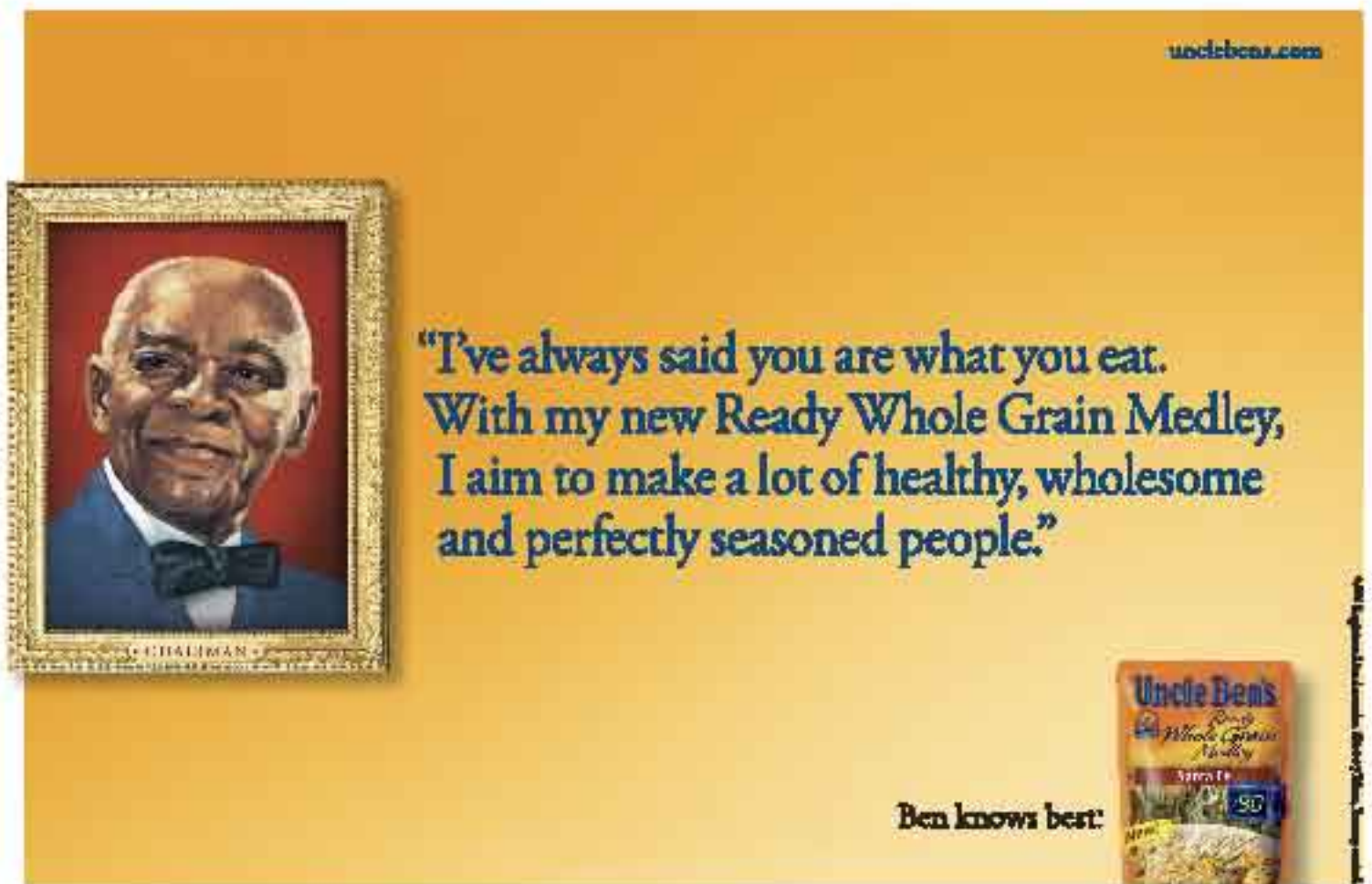
She did resist one intervention. "They wanted to put a port in me," she says, "a place here that they could always take stuff out of my veins and put stuff into my veins. I didn't want it. Because then, no matter what I did, cancer would own me."

Though death was already a familiar theme for Edwards, her words on the issues she cares about have telegraphed a greater sense of urgency since that first cancer treatment. Well versed in maternal grief, she championed a woman who purchased lifesaving body armor for her son only to learn he would not be permitted to wear it

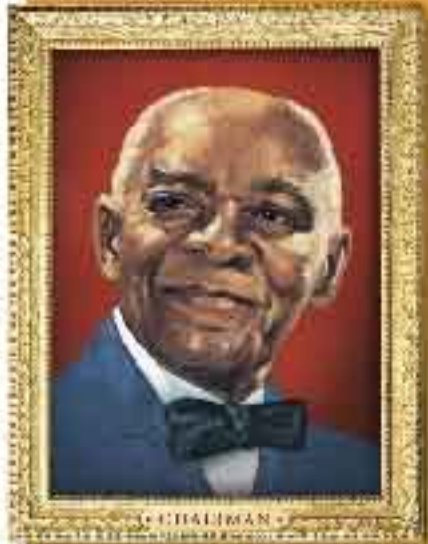
in Afghanistan. She became a vocal advocate for Cindy Sheehan, whose son Casey was killed in Iraq eight years to the day after Wade's death. And then there was the confrontation with Ann Coulter and the stand for lesbian and gay rights.

Edwards says her support for same-sex marriage stems directly from her upbringing. "I grew up in a very open-minded family and a variety of cultures," she says. Accustomed to seeing different lifestyles, she says she's "not threatened by what happens inside a person's house—any more by the sex of the couple than by how they paint their walls. We need to quit being afraid." John, who hails from a Southern mill town, is at "a different point on the journey," she says. Both believe it's important to discuss their disagreements openly, as she did in June. "John and I are really intent on this being a campaign based on transparency," she says.


Another cause Edwards has taken up is the importance of volunteering for medical research, something she's done from the time she received the first news in 2004. "I was the beneficiary of women who put their own health at risk," Edwards says. So far she has participated in two clinical studies: In the current [CONTINUED ON PAGE 370]



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I aim to make a lot of healthy, wholesome  
and perfectly seasoned people."**



**Ben knows best:**

**"I'M REALLY SCARED..."**

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one, her blood is drawn regularly so scientists can look for certain biochemical markers as she reacts to the drugs. It's not a treatment, but she hopes in the long run it will help others.

Even with this latest diagnosis, that the cancer has spread to her bones, Edwards has managed to cast her thoughts outward. Terminal disease is a great clarifier, she says: "It takes you in the direction away from the mirror and toward the window." First she focused on her children. Then she considered the upcoming presidential race, which she refers to as "our work as a couple." In particular she recalled those voters she met in 2004 who lacked health insurance. "As bad as the news was, it was impossible not to feel at some level blessed, because I knew whatever care was possible, I was likely to get it," she says. "You have to be completely self-absorbed not to think about the people who don't have that. I want to make certain that the remainder of my life, however long it is, is not spent concentrating on making me yet more comfortable."

The day she received the results "was very emotional," says John. "I said to Elizabeth, 'Tell me what you want. Tell me, 'cause I'll do anything, including stopping the campaign.' And her answer was basically, 'This is what our lives are about. We need to keep going.'"

None of this fortitude means Elizabeth is fearless. "I don't want people to think that I'm not scared," she says. "I'm really scared." The thought of overlooking a potential treatment or drug that could add years to her life, she says, "terrifies me. Though I have great doctors, is there some technology that they pooh-pooh that actually turns out to be the answer? I worry, too, about how aggressively I want to fight this." Still, when the doctors talk about side effects she might want to avoid, like hair loss, tingling hands, aching bones, she says they don't bother her. "I've got one side effect I want to avoid," she tells them: "death."

How long she can do that is unknown. Some metastatic breast cancer patients survive a decade or longer. Most die within five years. Edwards has certain advantages: Cancers that spread to bone are generally less aggressive than others, and her malignant cells contain estrogen and progesterone receptors, offering promising treatment options. (She takes Femara, which blocks the production of estrogen, along with the bone-strengthening drug Zometa.) Yet there is no cure. "Her prognosis is very good," says Thomas Samuel, MD, an oncologist at

the Medical College of Georgia who is familiar with her type of cancer. "But at some point in time, the cancer will be able to outfox the therapies."

Today, without a clear prognosis, even the most casual moments are loaded. Coming home from baseball practice last spring, 6-year-old Jack blurted out, "Who will be my children's grandmother?" As John finessed an answer, Elizabeth hoped the boy wouldn't notice her tears. "Even with the brightest prognosis," she says, "I'm unlikely to ever see his children."

**I**T'S RAINING SO HARD AT RALEIGH'S Meredith College that the orchestra has cut short "Pomp and Circumstance" and workers are scrambling to lay vinyl tarps over the diplomas. Parading into a waterfront amphitheater, each member of the class of 2007 sports a pink breast cancer awareness ribbon. The gesture isn't lost on Edwards, today's keynote speaker. Shoulders draped with a purple commencement stole, she stands on the faculty receiving line, smiling serenely, applauding the 373 graduates of the former Baptist women's seminary.

Her hair, grown out long, blows wildly as she approaches the podium. Two months earlier, she says, "If you'd asked me that day whether I had confronted my mortality, I would have confidently—and erroneously—said yes. The death of a son, conversations across the country with people who are on the edge, embracing mothers of children who are serving in Iraq and Afghanistan: I had a lot of reasons to think that I had confronted mortality. But in truth I had not." Now she urges the women here to understand what it took her 57 years to learn, and even then only under duress, that "what we do, how we do it, does define us.

"You're young," she continues. "Maybe there will be time for a do-over if you don't get it right the first time. But...there will come a time, as it might have come for me, when there isn't.... Every opportunity to reach out, to speak, to touch someone is precious to me, for I don't know how long I have to complete my story."

There is not a person here who can miss the catch in her voice. Edwards is a millionaire, but that won't buy the important things: "Only in America," she says, "could there be a T-shirt that says 'He who dies with the most toys wins.'" What matters, she goes on, are all the people in her life who form a tapestry. She looks up at the graduates. "I need to ask you now to envision the tapestry that you have woven so

far," she says. "There are wide ribbons, and there are sturdy cords. But it's a line drawing, isn't it, really? What's missing? What's missing are the tiny threads that give detail to our tapestry, that give the life to our story. Who are these threads? They are Jen, the guard at the gate who waves at you as you come in. Call the guard by her name. Ask about her life." Take notice, too, she counsels, of the child you tutored or the neighbor whose lawn you mowed. "It takes even less than that: the waiter who will serve you lunch later, who spends eight hours a day serving strangers, someone to whom a kind word is a gift of decency that acknowledges his worth."

It seems too corny to be true, but the rain has stopped falling. The tiniest shard of sunlight finds its way down to the campus. Edwards's voice, suffused with conviction, has grown clear and strong. "The toys won't do you any good when you die," she repeats. "A tapestry well woven will mean for all of eternity that you mattered." **Q**

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**OPRAH TALKS TO...**

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