

Amanda Nicola (Nikki) Green

7th November 1956 - 27th October 2017



Funeral 13th **November 2017**
At West Hertfordshire Crematorium, Garston

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Nicola's life

Nicola's life is a story of a magnificent victory after a very challenging start. Her mother, Stella, sadly died from post-natal depression when Nicola was three and a half years old and her sister Lisa was six months. Luckily their father Gerald, or Gerry, met and married Erna. Erna recognised that these little girls needed a mummy so they became a family. Before long their younger brother Paul came along.

As a child, Nicola was always very bright, though she could be vague. She was fun and very sociable: Erna remembers her primary school reporting that Nicola had performed the dance of the seven veils for her friends. She had a great imagination and was very, very talkative. Six years older than Paul she taught him to swim and ride a bike, and he always looked up to her. Nicola and Lisa travelled on the bus together to school for a number of years and, as the older sister, she was always on at Lisa to smarten herself up. Look at the child and you see the woman! Nicola had a special talent for languages. Erna is Slovene and taught all three children to speak Slovene. Nicola spoke it perfectly: she even managed to speak in two different dialects. She spoke it so well that, as her friend Bill says, people in a café in Watford hearing her speak assumed she was Slovene.

After school she started studying law at Southgate College, but that wasn't right for her so she left and worked at the Waldorf Hotel in the Aldwych in London. She loved talking about all the famous people she met there.

But then life became too much for her, so much so that she tried to end it several times. And thus started a very dark period of long spells spent in hospital, in various settings. These included Napsbury, Horseshoe Lodge and Shrodells - where they tried to help her get back onto track. It took a long time but she did manage to get her old self and her love of life back. Nicola always spoke very highly of Doctor Terry, the person who she always said helped her seize her life and get it back. She was always sad that she had not been able to thank him before he retired.

Apart from getting her life back, the best thing that came out of these long stays was the friends she gained over the years in these different units. These friends have been so important, to her love of her life and above all her well-being. What also helped make this possible was that she was offered a one bedroom flat in Octavia Court where several of her friends got flats too and where she made even more friends. In fact she loved her flat there so much, small as it was, that she refused the offer of a bigger flat that would have meant having to move.

So her life took off thirty years ago. After such a hard time fighting her demons and trying to get well again, she spent the next very happy 30 years living there in her tiny flat, surrounded by all these friends, one of whom was her most dearest and precious friend, Barry. Nicola was the first person to talk to Barry when he went into Horseshoe

Lodge thirty four years ago. They became friends for life and supported each other over the years, through good times and bad. They would spend all their time in each other's flat - if they weren't in one they were in another. They spent many a Christmas together with Lisa and her husband Pete and their family. They also went off on trips together – first to Barcelona and then to many other places with their friends.

And so – by moving into Octavia Court - Nicola blossomed into the person she was always meant to be. And what a person she was! It's hard to know where to start. Nicola loved people, chatted to anyone - and everyone in Watford knew her. She had this gift of being interested in people and finding out about their lives. This wasn't just politeness; it was genuine interest as she would be telling her sister, Lisa in her daily phone calls everything she had learned about everyone she cared about. It was the same the other way round; she told her friends everything about her own family. Her friends knew how proud she was of Lisa and Paul and of her special love for Peter, Lisa's husband, with whom she shared an interest in music and politics.

Nicola never had a bad thing to say about anyone. She loved being surrounded by friends, holding court in the Pret a Manger café in Watford where she went every day. She loved being the centre of attention. Although – as far as we know – she didn't repeat her performance of the dance of the seven veils, she did love entertaining her rapt audience, especially with lots of jokes, some too rude to mention here.

Nicola has been described as the lynch pin of this group of friends – the person that brings people together and holds them together. She was always helpful and trustworthy. For example she was Gregor's key-holder. And when Bill and Richard had to share a flat, Nicola chatted up the housing officer and managed to get Bill the single flat beneath hers. Then when she was arranging to get furniture for her flat she managed to get some for Gregor too. And when Jo was away she would feed her cat, and would help her out when she was feeling down. Nicola was always like this, helping anyone.

Nicola had many interests and kept herself busy. She had a cleaning job for 10 years at the Architects Corporation, where they seem to have loved her and she loved it too. She loved cleaning and watched all the cleaning programmes on TV. Other times she worked as a volunteer: as a befriender for Age UK and as a telephone receptionist in a volunteer bureau. She was also a member of the book club at the library and loved going to the cinema and the theatre.

Just as she was as a child, she was always careful to look good, dressing in colourful clothes, wearing her make-up and looking after her hair, which often had striking colours. If you wanted to upset her, it would be to fail to comment on her new hair-do.

In case you are wondering, Nicola wasn't all sweetness and light. She could be feisty and stubborn. Once her mind was made up there was no way that she would back down. She would say "The lady is not for turning." She also had a right temper – she could blow up and then it would pass quite quickly and she would be forgiving. This was always known as "the wrath of Nicky".

This passion and energy with which she lived her life also gave her real inner steel. And this is how she lived her last few weeks. Diagnosed with advanced pancreatic cancer she convinced herself she would get through it, until she was ready to acknowledge that she would be dying soon. So she accepted going into the Peace Hospice where it seemed as if she had chosen not to suffer. There was no pain and no agitation, not even the need for painkillers. She was calm and dignified right to the end and her last words to Lisa, the night before she went into the hospice, were to say, " Look after Barry." Then - just as she would say to her friends when she had been holding court for long enough, she said, "You can go now". And they went. When Lisa looked back Nicola sat up and waved goodbye. And she died very soon afterwards, clearly at peace in the hospice.

So we genuinely can celebrate the magnificent life Nicola recreated once she had been helped to manage and live with, and indeed flourish, with the lifelong illness that had been so devastating in her earlier life. So we can celebrate the example Nicola leaves for all us when we experience adversity, as we all do. Above all we celebrate her love that will never be lost and that will still calm, invigorate and inspire all those she loved and cared for.



