

Linda Anne Norman
May 25th 1944 - February 24th 2018

Lin had a very rich life, contributing immensely to her family and our community and taking care of our environment. She was one of those people who radiate warmth and so brought happiness to others. When I asked Colin what attracted him to her when they met over 30 years ago - amongst other things he said, that it was the way she “took life by the scruff of the neck.” That certainly seems to be the perfect epitaph for her, as Colin, and Lin’s daughters Kate and Chloe lovingly described her to me.

Lin lived life with energy, with love, with passion and with commitment. And this is what will remain with you now that she is no longer physically here with you - her example, her love, her values, and her influence will constantly provide support, encouragement, and inspiration to you who will be missing her so much.

You don’t need me to tell you this - Lin was a people person as we can tell from the number of people who have come here to celebrate her life. She had a wide circle of friends. She loved being with people and took pleasure from hearing others’ news – not just out of politeness, but because she was really interested and positively wanted to understand to support. She absolutely loved get-togethers. She was always full of life, full of fun, and was always up for a giggle. She dealt with the downs as well as the ups in life with good humour. This was true right through her life. She even found humour in her final illness. When she was in hospital she was having a conversation with an orderly about her allotment and about growing organic vegetables and commented, “Fat lot of good it did me”. Even at the end of her life, when she had taken to her bed, she took interest in the family lives of her carers and often had them in stitches. And when she was too weak to speak she still acknowledged their presence graciously.

She always threw herself into life and did nothing in half measures, so much so that it could be tiring keeping up with her. She adapted to change and circumstances as needed. When Chloe and Kate were very young she was working part-time in retail and doing an honours Open University degree. And then she went into teaching business studies in further education. As any of you working in FE know, you can’t settle into a routine of churning out the same thing year after year; you have to adapt, changing your courses and curriculum to the demands of the government and business needs. So it wasn’t easy and her flexibility was essential. Later she went on to work on the development of Further Education and this work really did make a huge difference to the lives of many young people

When they were young Lin was great fun as a mother, but Kate and Chloe say she could also be “bloody strict”. She took life seriously but at the same time always found fun in life. She was creative and inventive, writing imaginative stories for the girls when they were small, creating obstacle races in the garden, leading fossil hunting expeditions and mackerel fishing at Lyme Regis, and foraging for ingredients to make nettle soup, rosehip syrup and blackberry jam. When her first marriage came to an end she rented a farm cottage and gave her daughters, who then were then aged eleven and six, a “Good Life” childhood - not just the good life that I talked about earlier (and it certainly was that) but the type of Tom and Barbara good life of the 1970’s TV series. They all enjoyed the open space, chicken, geese, cats, dogs, rabbits and the garden – which Lin transformed from a weed ridden jungle to a productive vegetable garden.

Meeting Colin over 30 years ago gave Lin a strength and confidence to go on and achieve further successes in her professional and personal life. They found enormous happiness and did many things together. They ran half marathons, home brewed beer, bought and restored their house in Shakespeare Road, set up an education consultancy and bought holiday homes in France and Yorkshire to enjoy with family and friends. Most importantly, they created a strong family network that brought together her daughters and Colin’s children, Gillian, Nick and Richard – along with a wider extended family. This wider family brought much joy to Lin and was a great source of strength throughout her illness.

Another significant relationship in Lin’s life was with her sister Maggie. They treasured their family history and their shared experience of coming from the same place, growing up post war and making good in life. They had that real bond that perhaps only sisters can share. They laughed together until they cried at things no-one else could understand and genuinely enjoyed each other’s company. Lin was always supportive and encouraging. It was Lin who suggested that Maggie apply for the post that started a happy and successful optical career over the next forty years.

Lin took great pleasure in family. When grandchildren came along she embraced her new role with typical hands on enthusiasm and energy. She spent many happy holidays with Rachel, Olivia, Scarlett, Tom and Zachy at the house in France. She happily undertook childcare and school pick-ups and loved museum visits, theatre shows and trips to interesting places with the grandchildren.

Travel was another love -and being the woman she was, when she went to India, she not only visited the Taj Mahal and other famous sites but included a visit to meet Ravi, the child she had sponsored for several years through Plan International.

Lin was passionate about causes and had a great sense of social justice. She joined marches, signed petitions and campaigned on a range of issues, from the environment, local housing, women’s issues and politics. She was always happy to debate with those who did not share her views and never one to back down when she thought a stand should be made!

Caring for the environment was important to her. She was an early member of the Ecology Party, the grass roots of the Green Party. Even in death she did her bit for the environment by having a cardboard coffin, made from recycled materials.

Lin took on an allotment 15 years ago and became an active member of the South Harpenden Allotment and Gardening Society. She won awards for the excellence of her plot. She made many good friends there, joined the Committee and some years later took over as Chair. Members of the society have written a wonderful tribute to Lin, saying that she was a “brilliant Chair, keen to foster a sense of community among the plot holders. Committee meetings were organised with humour and warmth. She was very quick to pick up issues, and dealt with them in her usual calm, friendly and measured manner”.

Given Lin’s character, perhaps it is not surprising that she was so very stoical in the face of her devastating diagnosis. She was disappointed that diagnosis had taken too long but then she took up the fight. And then she adapted uncomplainingly to her weakened state and seemed content with her own shrinking world, but still took an interest in the lives of her family, carers and visitors.

Colin, Chloe, Kate, Maggie and her daughter Maddy were with Lin as she died. She had always loved Dad Army and as it was on television that evening they had it playing in the background. It was Lin’s favourite episode – the one with “Don’t tell them your name Pike.” As the last note of theme tune played, Lin peacefully took her final breath, undramatically, quietly at peace.

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