

A celebration of life

Jennifer Hughes

22nd May 1984 - 6th March 2020

10.00-11.00 am, 30th March 2020, West Suffolk Crematorium

a personal goodbye

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Tribute to Jenny

Jenny was born a twin to Cathy and daughter to Tony and Lorraine in 1984, they lived in Bramley, Hampshire where Tony was a Ministry of Defence police officer, then later the family moved to Newbury.

It was in Newbury that Stephen and Jenny first met, at sixth form, when Stephen returned with his family from time spent in Australia.

They rapidly became firm friends, working together on a Young Enterprise Scheme project. Jenny was 'the boss' taking the role of Managing Director while Stephen had to be the Marketing Manager as that was the last role left. After many somewhat heated 'Board Meetings' they decided on a business printing T shirts and stationery. After Jenny wrote a last minute business plan they actually won an award for their ideas, though Stephen remembers that they never actually made any money as they had no idea how to run a business. It was fun but they were not destined to become entrepreneurs.

After sixth form Stephen and Jenny went their separate ways, to further their studies at Oxford and York where Jenny studied the History of Art at the York St John University. Here she met and married and stayed in Yorkshire, in Driffield, a market town in the East Riding. Theo was born in 2007 and Connor in 2008.

Stephen and Jenny got back in touch in 2008 and quickly became very good friends again, talking often. Jenny's marriage broke down after Connor was born and Stephen's friendly support grew into something more. In the summer of 2009 Stephen helped Jenny and the boys to move south to Ely, to be closer to friends and their relationship continued to grow. They moved in together, buying a house together in 2010 and George was born in 2012.

In 2014, on 30th May, Stephen and Jenny married, in St Peter's Church in the village of St Mary Bourne, the church in north Hampshire where her grandparents had married and her Dad was buried in 2009. Jenny was very interested in family history, doing a great deal of research into her family as far back as the Civil War and into Stephen's family too. Stephen remembers a walking holiday in Hampshire when Jenny enjoyed visiting the places where her ancestors had lived. It was a special place for her.

Jenny developed an early interest in creativity, encouraged by her Dad, a former draughtsman who taught her to draw "properly", and her Nan, who taught her to sew.

When the children were very young Jenny made items to sell at craft fairs and she was always sewing. There was always a cross stitch project on the go. For their second anniversary, which is traditionally cotton, Jenny made a celebratory cross stitch for Stephen, with their names and a blossoming cherry tree with butterflies, a project which Jenny and the children somehow managed to keep a secret. There is a cherry tree in their garden in blossom at the moment.

When she first moved to Ely Jenny took an OU course in product design, because she always wanted to make things better. There were of course lots of projects and assignments to be completed, lots of late nights. Stephen particularly remembers the creation of a cardboard model design for a folding chair, many hours of folding different pieces of cardboard. Jenny successfully earned herself a Diploma in Product Design.

Jenny was a keen photographer too. As she was so keen on the outdoors there are many photographs of flowers and trees and lots of family photos too of course, treasured memories.

They are an 'outdoorsy' family, National Trust members, and there were many happy hours exploring Trust properties with the boys, lots of long walks.

Family holidays were very happy times, renting a cottage and exploring the local area in Wales, Scotland, Northumberland and North Devon. One October half term the family took the train to Edinburgh and hired a camper van to tour the North Coast 500, a scenic route around the north coast of Scotland. They had nine or ten days in the van touring around, having 'the best time ever'. It was so beautiful, the last weeks of autumn colour on the trees and amazing rainbows. They explored ruined castles, smugglers coves and wonderful beaches. Every night they looked out for the Northern Lights, Jenny with her camera all prepared, but that particular sight was not to be.

Jenny was an amazing Mum, her children always came first and she has given them a wonderful start in life with so many happy memories.

Birthdays were very important, there were lots of birthday parties with quite spectacular cakes. Planning would take several weeks, starting with 'what do you want on your cake this year?' There were Octonauts, Thunderbird 2, the Minecraft cake and Superman and Batman. All the things the boys asked for and they always looked fantastic.

The whole family have been involved in the Scout movement, Stephen as a Scout Leader and Jenny took on a development role, recruiting volunteers and issuing press releases to encourage membership. The boys have been Beavers, Cubs and Scouts and have loved it.

Jenny was always passionate about helping other people, she wanted to be 'doing something good'. Since 2007 she had been working for various charitable organisations. She worked for Barnardos and Real Aid in Driffield and here, co-ordinated and managed the charity shops for the Arthur Rank Hospice from March to September in 2017, where she made many good friends with whom she kept in touch.

Then she worked in the Facilities Department of the East Anglia Children's Hospice, managing contracts and purchasing. She was very proud of her success in chasing up legacies and donations, ensuring that around £2 million pounds successfully made its way through the lawyers hands and to the charity as the intended recipient.

When she left The Children's Hospice Jenny started at Anglia Ruskin University in Cambridge to gain qualifications in Charity Management. Charity work was 'very much her thing' and she approached it, like everything in her life, with enthusiasm and a determination to learn how to do the very best that she could.

Jenny first became unwell early last year and her health just didn't seem to improve. Then in August things began to get suddenly worse and a trip to the Emergency Department at Addenbrooke's Hospital resulted in an immediate operation to remove a spinal tumour. A week later Stephen and Jenny were told that it was an unexpectedly aggressive tumour and in October a round of radio- and chemotherapy began.

Nothing stopped Jenny battling through some intensive physiotherapy though, determined to walk again she would send videos from hospital of each milestone achieved as she could wiggle her toes, or get to the bathroom herself and after a month she was walking with a frame and getting stronger.

Her cousin Lindsay visited from Canada in October. They had been pen pals since childhood but had met only once, in Toronto when Jenny had visited Canada in 2003. It was very special to meet up again.

By December everyone knew that Jenny's prognosis was not good and it was a very special family Christmas with Stephen's Mum and Dad and very special presents.

After Christmas the family shared another magical holiday, at Centre Parcs in Woburn where Jenny could get around in her wheelchair and mobility scooter and they all enjoyed lots of activities, with Stephen and the boys on the high ropes and bowling and everyone making frames for climbing plants at the willow weaving class. There was lots of fun making special memories and taking lots of photos.

In late February Jenny moved into The Arthur Rank Hospice where she could be made more comfortable and she died there on the 6th of March.

An indomitable spirit, a wonderful mum and wife, someone who lived life to the full and always tried to help everyone else. A busy person, always eager to learn new things and to 'make things better'.

This is an excerpt from The Time Keeper by Mitch Albom that Jenny asked to be read today,

Excerpt from *The Time Keeper*, by Mitch Albom

Try to imagine a life without timekeeping. You probably can't

You know the month, the year, the day of the week.

There is a clock on your wall or the dashboard of your car.

You have a schedule, a calendar, a time for dinner or a movie.

Yet all around you, timekeeping is ignored.

Birds are not late.

A dog does not check its watch. Deer do not fret over passing birthdays.

Man alone measures time. Man alone chimes the hour.

And, because of this, man alone suffers a paralyzing fear that no other creature endures.

A fear of time running out.