

Tisarana Buddhist Monastery
May 1, 2017

Hi everybody, I am Stephan, I am Akka's youngest son.

It has taken me 27 years to fully appreciate what a truly exceptional being my beautiful mother was and still is to me. When you think of the word selfless there is no better adjective to describe the person that my mother was. To her own detriment at times, she was always concerned with the welfare of her family and those she held dear. Placing others needs before her own. Being a parent now myself I am only beginning to comprehend the sacrifices she made on behalf of my brother and I. I remember all the phases of my life; childhood, adolescence and now adulthood. I saw my mom toil, working 9 to 5 and coming home to take care of her two boys who were not easy to handle; who were troubled in many ways. I used to watch her frustration, her exhaustion and I often resented her antics around the house.

Alas, I did not understand. As a teenager, I still did not understand. It is easy as a son or daughter to misinterpret a parent's true intent as something negative or distasteful. Making the best choices for your children often involves an unhappy or disappointed kid. As you grow older you come to appreciate things in a different light. I now see very clearly how tirelessly my mom worked to give us the very best that she had and she did a damn good job. She was there every minute of every day and watched and loved and supported me through my own trials and tribulations and believed in me no matter what. When I didn't love myself, she loved me. When I didn't have the resources to accomplish certain things, my mom was there. To lean on, to cry on, to bolster my spirit. There are many less fortunate individuals that never have that type of unwavering love and commitment - unconditional love and commitment. It's only now, after she's gone that I am able to express this in the way that I need to and I hope she hears and acknowledges that I finally understand.

I hope that I can be half the person that she was. I am grateful that she had the opportunity to realise her dream of leaving the city and rebuilding her life the way that she needed to. She expressed endless gratitude for the home she bought here and made it in to everything she ever dreamt of. You could have offered her all of the luxury in the world and it would have meant

absolutely nothing to her. She was a humble woman and I am proud of her for taking the risk she did to make her dream come true. She left behind a thriving and growing business that she created from scratch, risked financial uncertainty and created the life she was destined to live. That takes real strength and courage and I am unbelievably proud of her for that.

This devilish cancer came completely out of the blue and has taken us all by surprise. One visit to the doctor, the administration of tests and your whole entire world is turned upside down in a painful and sobering way. It poses the question of 'what is the meaning of life?'. My mom was a healthy, spiritual being who did everything right to lead a wholesome lengthy existence. The untimeliness of the cancer that befell her is not something one can simply rationalise. It is devastating. It's painful. And, it's in its very essence unfair.

So, the profound lesson in this confounding situation comes not from the cancer at all but rather the humility, bravery and practicality with which my mom confronted it. Akka taught us all something valuable. How to find acceptance and how to be dignified as you confront adversity and in this case, mortality. Because, aside from the fact that she was my mother, I have never in my life, seen anything as humbling as the way that she comported herself and faced this disease head on. It is more than many of us can say.

I just want to thank the whole community. You have been... no words can really express how amazing you have been. You provided such love and care, all of the food, Bob and Cheryl, ... I am not going to name names because there are many I don't know but you are just amazing; it is overwhelming.

I want to thank all of you.