



ANDREW ON WEDNESDAY

Not just an obituary

I found this article incredibly hard to write. Losing Jacqui is more than just bereaving a colleague.



As Dean of this lovely Faculty, numbering hundreds in academic and administrative staff and students, losing one of your own feels like a stab-in-the-back. To add insult to injury, Jacqui was overflowing with 'life' until a couple of weeks ago making this situation even more difficult to fathom. Add to this that she was a faithful friend for almost 30 years and you can understand the pain and soreness that Jacqui's demise left.

When we first met we were at university reading for our undergraduate degree. At the time the number of students was diminutive by today's proportions and we all knew each other and literally 'lived' on Campus. Like it always happens with heartfelt friends there were periods in our lives, some of them quite long, when our paths did not cross but nevertheless every time we met it was as if our last conversation happened the day before.

But as the title of this column goes this is 'not simply an obituary'.

I do not want it to sound as if Jacqui was faultless, because she wasn't - like each and every one of us! However, the beauty of Jacqui was that her imperfections suited her and she played around with these weaknesses. She laughed about herself but also loved herself at the same time. Her intensity, her smile, her prompt responses, her gleaming eyes were a blend of loveliness and exquisiteness. Her humour and ability to share

a story were topmost. At times you would read it on her face that she was sad or in pain but this did not take away any of her readiness to live.

"You will be missed dear friend". Needless to say Jacqui was in the front line to put criminology studies on the map, very true with others, but there she was taking the lead in initiatives that gave that Department at our University a profile like no other. The international seminars she organised with her colleagues, the varied academic programmes, the numerous students that she taught, the protocols she developed and joint international programmes, the mentoring and supervision are only a sample of this endless list in her pursuit of academic scholarship. Her erudition is unrivalled and she defended her students as if they were her own.

However, even though Jacqui worked hard she was also an incredibly high-spirited person.

She also knew exactly how people felt the moment she met them. She was always there giving advice, telling people what was the best way to tackle life challenges, whatever the matter. Jacqui was exceptionally generous, big-hearted and open-handed. I've heard stories of her generosity that would make your eyes pop out.

Jacqui had a colossal spirit. She loved endlessly.

She mentions the death of her mother as being the biggest loss in her life, a situation that she probably never really completely recovered from. She

“

You will be missed dear friend

”

considered her father as being a gem and would visit him daily. Her patience, her non-stop adjournments on Facebook telling us all about her father's pranks, were a manifestation of her unwearied adoration for her dad. It is pointless to say that she loved her son Ramon to bits. He was the *mimmi t' ghajnejha* - the bond she had with him was simply amazing.

But for Jacqui life was not only about her.

Jacqui loved serving her community and her country and spoke about injustices with

courage and pluck. She was a local councillor at Dingli and I know for a fact that even though she was a minority in the party she represented she still managed to give a great deal of service to her village and had a fantastic working relationship with the rest of the local councillors. This time round she was also planning to contest the general election and was visiting homes not to simply hunt for votes but to listen to people's grievances and to try and bring a change in their lives - because Jacqui's life was all about going the extra mile.

"Jacqui, there is no playing around with words, you will be missed dear friend. You are an inspiration, a motivator and a benevolent soul. The moral of your story is that we need to work hard but also enjoy life. We need to commit ourselves to the 'cause' but also to our own needs and to those of the people close to us. We need to love because in loving and giving we are loved in return. You will not be forgotten because there is a piece of you in so many of us."

And as the last tune at the funeral-celebration went;
*You are the Dancing Queen... Dancing Queen, feel the beat from the tambourine
You can dance, you can jive, having the time of your life
See that girl, watch that scene, digging the Dancing Queen
Dancing Queen (ABBA)*

Dr Jacqueline Azzopardi (1969-2016), former Deputy Dean and Head, Department of Criminology, Faculty for Social Wellbeing, University of Malta.

"Ghandi xi Nghid"

Dr Andrew Azzopardi

Dr Andrew Azzopardi
Dean Faculty for
Social Wellbeing,
University of Malta &
Broadcaster - Ghandi xi Nghid
www.andrewazzopardi.org