

## Vicki, a Remembrance

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I've been thinking about the end of Vicki's life and realizing that there is a theme that runs through her life, from her earliest years, that she told me about, to the years since 1991 that I know about because we stayed in close touch over the last 33 years, to just a few moments before she died. Vicki was intentional about her life – and death -- in a way that few people are. It may be even rarer for a woman born in 1939. That is something I deeply admire about her.

There are many ways her being intentional showed up. She was intentional about choosing with whom she wanted to be friends and then cultivating those friendships. I was returning from an early morning run to a conference center in Santa Fe when I was hailed by a woman across the street I thought I recognized. I paused and walked over to her outdoor table. "Join me?" she inquired. "Really good coffee," she said, tempting me with an accent I could never quite place. Hot, sweaty, I couldn't resist. Then she did what she was great at: "I loved how you took on X," regaling me with my own words, but now delivered in mock seriousness. She hadn't been waiting for me, but the moment she saw me, she told me years later, having already decided she wanted us to be friends, she called out to me.

And we became really good friends. As she did with so many people over the years. Her friendships with people in New Zealand were vitally important to her. She made long-distance phone calls when others of us wouldn't, not because she was flush, but because a weekly chat with dear friends mattered so much to her. She moved easily across topics, whether narrative therapy, gossip, dogs, golf, family, travel, sports, or home renovations! And she kept her friends. When the pandemic made visiting impossible, she was on Zoom or Facetime. She spent

several holidays with us once we moved to California and my older grandchildren remember her fondly. They especially remember her watching the Warriors, amazed at her knowing absolutely everything about every player and every play.

Vicki was also intentional about who she mentored and how she did it. Nurturing talented thinkers, writers, teachers, and clinicians was central to her purpose in life. So many younger professionals have benefited from her attention, wise counsel, and steadfastness. If Vicki was in your court, she was there to stay. She read papers before they were turned in or submitted to journals. She was a fine and discerning editor, and you could learn from her edits. She really cared that younger professionals have opportunities, and she used her various professional positions to promote others, not herself.

Finally, Vicki was intentional about her death. The last few weeks were ones with a lot of physical limitations. She was hitched to oxygen, she hurt, and she couldn't do the things she loved to do. It was almost impossible, towards the end, to walk her beloved Tia and this meant loss of companionship with the local dog walkers as well. I have had forty years of intense dealings with medical issues and during the last few weeks I got very involved in the details of her medical condition. Often our exchanges would go like this. "Vicki, if I were you, at this point, I would do x," to which she would reply, "I know you would." Vicki did not.

I wanted to visit her, but she didn't want me to come. "You'll cry. You'll be sad and I only want to see people who will make me laugh." I would have been sad. I wouldn't have cried. And I would have tried like Hell to make her laugh since Vicki had one of the all-time great laughs.

During the last week of her life, when her intention to use the California End of Life Option Act was settled, maybe two days before she died, she reminded me of our first meeting in Santa Fe. "I was really pissed at you," she told me. Someone I knew had walked by at some point, had asked to join us, and I had said, "Yes." We both laughed, but it wasn't Vicki's memorable laugh. Also, during the last days, the ending of our conversations shifted. I would say, "I love you, Vicki," to which she would reply, "I know you do."

A few hours before she died, during what we knew would be our last conversation, she asked me to write her obituary, we went over some details, and she told me that any other details I needed to know, I could ask Brandy, her beloved Goddaughter, because she would know her wishes. It was time to say good-bye. "I love you, Vicki." "I know you do." "I'm glad you know I love you." Vicki used the end-of-life option the next morning with Brandy and Brandy's wife by her side.

I miss her keenly. I miss her unfailing support of me personally and my work. I will miss rolling our eyes at each other during boring meetings; receiving her book choice gift on my birthday and sending mine to her. I will miss sharing meals together, especially her birthday dinners. I will miss that laugh. But she will always be with me as an example of living and dying intentionally. And that is precious.