

Of redemption and forgiveness for Linda Chamberlain: Three years after 'Not Anytime Soon'

In June 2015, the film on the life and times of Linda Chamberlain 'Not Anytime Soon: Linda' made its public debut at the TIFF-Bell Lightbox and at Hot Docs a short period later. It was preceded by Linda's scrapbook of her life simply entitled 'Not Anytime Soon'.

Of course, Linda was supposed to die of bone and liver cancer and a variety of other maladies. It was a subtheme of both the film and the scrapbook.

But even back then, most of us knew that Linda did not have bone and liver cancer. We knew that 'Not Anytime Soon' was going to be far more prescient than we had earlier thought when the film and scrapbook were first conceived. Linda wrote a letter of acknowledgement on pink paper which we now enclose when people now buy her scrapbook and DVD.

We don't have many copies left but they are still available replete with their embedded diagnosis of her early demise.

Linda and I met last month at a Tim Horton's. Every year, Linda brings me her tax information and I apply for tax credits on her behalf. A smiling employee snapped a picture of us catching up. It was not a good day for Linda. She gave up her cats the same day as she can no longer care for them.



As we talked, I asked Linda the big question that's always on everyone's mind when the topic of Linda Chamberlain comes up. Why did you tell us something that wasn't true? You have had time to think about it.

Linda's very quick reply was: "I thought it was true. I thought I had bone cancer because a family member had it and I thought I had liver cancer because someone else had the huge weight loss that I had. I talked to people. They told me what I was suffering from and I told others."

I looked at Linda closely and told her that there was more to it.

I said "Linda, that was the voice of bipolarity and addiction speaking, wasn't it? People with bipolarity and a subsequent addiction sometimes conflate tall tales and truth. After we screened the film, a number of mental health professionals who deal with bipolarity and addictions told me the same story. It is not unusual.

It is now early 2018. Linda has (almost) given up smoking and has truly given up alcohol. She goes to AA. She is in a number of support groups. More importantly - at least to me - is that I believe she has kicked the bottle and this is the first time I really believe her.

She has hepatitis B and a number of other maladies. Her alcoholism likely contributed to her weight loss. She also has a liver condition. Ironically, in the medium to longer term, her conditions are life threatening - but not anytime soon we hope. She still needs some serious dental work that we are looking into..

But what Linda also needs at this stage is forgiveness. I asked Linda why she should be forgiven and she replied very simply: "Because I'm a good person and I am still doing good things for people."



These are the best reasons to forgive Linda while she remains on the planet; far longer than originally expected.

I am not quite as sure that Linda will get redemption. In Dante's *Inferno*, for those spending an eternity in the underworld, they stayed there because they had not atoned for their mistakes, often characterized as sins. The dictionary definition of 'redemption' says that it can only come after atonement. As Linda truly believed that she had bone and liver cancer, it's tough for her to atone for her beliefs at that time.

But I believe when Linda puts a strong distance between herself and her addictions, atonement may come. And with atonement, redemption shall surely follow.

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