

Seize the day, oil the wheels and don't go to work

Peter Treadgold was asked to say a few words at the funeral of Nick Reeves and he offered this moving tribute in memory of his friend and colleague.

Speaking about Nick at his passing is something I have never anticipated doing. He was and still is such a significant presence for us all. He was supposed to be here forever and coming together today we know that there will be a void in our lives where Nick once was.

"Seize the day" is an expression that had no meaning until Nick showed how to do it properly. On the day before Nick was taken ill, he had spent the afternoon with colleagues pushing the government to take the environment and health seriously. After the meeting we all went to a café for a wash-up. Nick was in, good spirits, serious and full of humour, all at the same time.

The following morning I was surprised not to get a wake-up email. Many of you will know that toothy-fairy moment, when you wake to find your IT weapon of choice blinking the sleep away. And there would be a little gem from Nick, his latest letter to the press or missive about where the world is going wrong, or just an instruction to join the fight.

On that morning when Nick took ill, there was no message from him, no nudge. I'm not alone with that, and others have said to me that they will miss the 05.30am message.

Nick has been a remarkably social person, sharing his life with us. Of course, his special times have been with Janet and their family but for all of us, his mates who want a slice of him, we will probably remember him most fondly as the best possible coffee bar slouch. He has been quite at home in the cafés of London and I know full well that any holiday or day out for Janet and Nick would be planned around cafés and social places. We would often meet with Nick first thing – and I mean early – in a café near his work place. He was always alert and fresh, and had already seen the best of the day. Elizabeth would bring the buttered buns, and we'd change the world.

Nick has a remarkable 'back catalogue'. He has always enjoyed expressing himself. He has done this directly through his written work, his pictures and his poetry but you cannot separate his tangible art from the great contribution and expression that has been his presence, his links to friends and colleagues, his advice and his inspiration. Nick did nothing more than fit perfectly into our lives. He would oil the wheels, keep our feet on the ground, but constantly remind us of our obligation to continue to fight for what is right and what is fair.

It has always looked as though Nick was multi-faceted but in my view there is only one Nick Reeves. That's the one that you know: the family man, the artist, the boss or the best mate. He has always been himself, saying what he believes. There was no compromise, not even pragmatism. He was only interested in the long game.

He would have the same expectation of, and regard for, every person. He told me that nobody should be made redundant, that companies should be responsible for the people they employ, that people are a www.theleisurereview.co.uk

"He has been a touchstone for us all but he has never accepted the status quo. How do I know that? Simply that you never saw him twice in the same Che Guevara T-shirt"

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resource to be cherished alongside any rare metal or mineral. He would make no apology for the implications of this statement and he went further, saying that he did not believe in work, just that we should all do what we want. We could discuss implementation (Nick has always been visionary, satisfied to leave the fiddly stuff to the likes of yours truly) but there would be no argument or compromise. He knew what was right.

Nick would never try to impress, though of course he did. He took the fight to the establishment. He really has been the Resistance, the Revolution and a force for good. He has lived a settled life, been a rock for Janet and their family, and been a touchstone for us all but he has never accepted the status quo. How do I know that? Simply that you never saw him twice in the same Che Guevara T-shirt.

So I close these words about Nick Reeves the family man, the leader, our guiding light, by asking you to think of all that Nick believed in. Take the good stuff from Nick as you go about your lives. He would love you to work tirelessly for his beliefs but mostly he would love you to care for each other and do as he did: celebrate all that is good about this world.

Peter Treadgold is a transport consultant, former president of CIWEM and founding member of The Wilkes Society.

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