Twitter Thread by Christina Pagel



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THREAD: meet my brother

Unsurprisingly, being locked down over Xmas and New Year turns thoughts to family – and to my brother who died almost 14 years ago in a motorbike accident when he was 39.

First some context: Andreas was 8 years older than me – big difference when we were kids, but we were close as adults and instant messaged every day (yahoo messenger! remember that?!).

Last week I found some of the message chats we used to have that I collated for his funeral & they made me laugh out loud and miss him all over again. So I wanted to share some of my funny, quirky brother with the world – here goes…

He worked at Yahoo doing difficult coding. He loved coffee (with milk). He was also very funny.

18 May 2006

Andreas: I see people heading for the kitchen
Andreas: let me go make my coffee before it gets too full in there
Christina: I've got a cold
Andreas: ok; is this non-sequitur competition?
Andreas: my hovercraft is full of eels

He was a computer wizard – there was nothing he couldn't code. I was and remain a rank amateur compared to him.

29 Nov 2005

Christina: I have declared my first ever structure (in Visual Basic)
Andreas: and what happened?
Andreas: did the earth move for you?
Christina: so far my computer hasn't exploded

My brother was known to be of a literal turn of mind and there was a running joke that I was training him out of it. (PS they did go to California that summer – a trip my dad treasures now).

8 May 2006 [he was a planning a trip to California that summer with my dad]

Christina: mother thinks you can't go to California in June
Andreas: I've had my holiday form signed
Christina: that's a shame
Andreas: no it's good; I'm keen to go to California, if you haven't guessed
Christina: I mean it's a shame that you won't be going in June
Andreas: I'm not sure how to understand your last remark
Christina: I said that mother said you can't go in June
Andreas: I am of age
Christina: yes but if dad won't go, then you'll be on your own
Andreas: this is the first indication you've given that he won't go
Christina: it is implied is it not in me saying 'mother says you can't go then'
Andreas: I feel this communication isn't going as smoothly as it could
Christina: you're not being flexible enough

As a family we would meet often, especially at Christmas, and play games all day which we loved. In 2004 & 2005 my sister had my nieces which changed things a little for a while :-)

19 July 2006

Andreas: So what were you saying about Southampton [where our sister lives] earlier?
Christina: that I was going there on Friday evening
Andreas: and you mentioned this because?
Christina: in case you wanted to go too
Andreas: is it an opportunity for me to be flexible?
Andreas: and understand it as an invitation?
Christina: yes. Well done.
Andreas: ok; do you have authority to invite me?
Christina: well you could ask steph too
Christina: I'll be getting there around 8:30pm on Friday and leaving around 9pm on Saturday so I should warn you there might not be tooo many opportunities for game playing
Andreas: so what is your purpose in going?
Christina: to see my family

Neither me nor my brother were great with small kids but we managed ■. 2007 was the last Christmas we had as a complete family. As it happens, my (now) teenage nieces are delightful, love games and he would have loved spending Christmas with them. And I got old but he didn't.

3 Jan 2007:

Andreas: this was the best Christmas since before there were any children
Christina: that's good
Christina: and next year will be better
Andreas: yes a magic time before they become teenagers
Christina: well we'll be far too old by then to worry about it

I was also the one who tended to end up suggesting presents for him to buy for birthdays and Christmases…

4 Dec 2006

Christina : I have, I think, a great Christmas present for you
Andreas: that's nice
Andreas: I have none of any kind
Andreas: I'm trying out denial as an approach
Christina: how's that working for you?
Andreas: it's not working
Andreas: my days are filled with worry

As siblings, we parcelled out responsibilities

22 December 2006

Christina: I am sending you a picture of my washing machine
Andreas: that's rather tedious
Christina: for the eBay ad you are going to put up for me
Andreas: have you written a description for the ad?
Christina: am in the process of doing that
Andreas: if not, you might be able to sub-contract this bit to stephanie
Andreas: she has lots of eBay selling experience and seems to be a good writer
Christina: it's ok I think I can manage
Andreas: you can say "one careful lady owner"

We both worked in central London in the years before he died and had lunch often. Arranging lunch meetings could sometimes be a trial...

14 March 2006

Christina: are you trying to ditch me for lunch?
Andreas: "I have to work through lunch today" would be my approach for that
Christina: I see
Christina: why don't I just call you once I'm done with my eye test?
Andreas: what would you say?
Christina: 'let's meet for lunch right now'
Andreas: I see
Andreas: you wouldn't say where then.

In 2005, I'd recently returned from 3 yrs working in the US and Andreas had been on a hiking holiday with me in Montana. He fell in love with the US scenery then and went back as often as he could in the 2 years after that.

23 September 2005

Andreas : Hello
Andreas: It's good to hear from you again.
Christina: it is?
Andreas: Well, we shared a week seeing some of the most wondrous sights the planet has to offer; seems strange to drop all contact now
Christina: indeed, but we haven't exactly severed contact ☺

We talked about it often and were planning more hiking holidays together.

May 21st 2006

Andreas: Does this look like where we went? [he sent me a picture of Yellowstone, Montana where we went on holiday in 2005)
Andreas: that walk by the lake in the evening, with the bison close encounter, is still one of my favourite memories
Christina: really? you preferred that to the difficult one that day?
Andreas: just different
Andreas: peaceful and beautiful

Weirdly enough, a few days before he died he had a very minor motorbike accident… eventually was admitted to hospital overnight for observation but he was fine and went home the next day.

Andreas: I had an accident on the way in this morning
Andreas: my bike is damaged, though still seems to ride ok
Christina: oh dear, what happened?
Andreas: I hit a car in front of me
Christina: why?
Andreas: it was in my way
Christina: did the driver accept that excuse?
Andreas: she wasn't entirely happy
Christina: did you fall off?
Andreas: oh yes, the bike crashed to the ground
Christina: I hope you've not damaged yourself too badly
Andreas: not so much
Andreas: I'm going over to [university college hospital] soon
Christina: UCH is near me
Christina: I hope they say you're ok!
Andreas: the ambulance guys recommended it
Christina: you were in an ambulance?!
Andreas: they said a thumb x-ray might be worthwhile
Christina: goodness this is getting worse and worse
Christina: you can text me [from the hospital] and I can come over and sit with you for a bit
Christina: if you like I can bring you a sandwich if you place your order with me now
Andreas: what flavours do you have?
Christina: well I was going to pop by the sandwich shop
Andreas: egg and bacon is probably quite nice
Christina: ok see you soon, *hug*

Below is the last conversation I ever had with him – discussing where to go together that summer. He died that night, just after midnight, hit by a car which turned into his path.

31 Jan 2007

Andreas: http://www.flickr.com/photos/coon/375367562/in/photostream [he sent me a picture of a national park]
Christina: I wouldn't mind going up there
Christina: I still want to go to Norway too, there are ads on the tube
Christina: that say "as rugged as the rockies but closer"
Andreas: well the geographical claims are accurate
Andreas: how do you cope without knowing the language?
Christina: they speak english
Andreas: that's handy
Andreas: Barbara [our mother] has just sent me an empty text message
Christina: oh dear
Andreas: have you been trying to teach her to use her phone?
Christina: yes
Andreas: well maybe more lessons are required

We never did get to do that summer holiday. My (now) husband & I did eventually do both the Norway and the US trip Andreas and I discussed all those years ago. They were amazing. Even now, whenever we are somewhere beautiful, we think of him and wish he could be there to see it.

Well that's it. I found these messages again and am glad I did. And now you all know a bit about my lovely brother too. END