

## **Gary Ginnaw's Mesothelioma Story:**



### **My name is Gary Robert Ginnaw, I'm 27 years old and this is my Mesothelioma story.**

In late 2007, my Nan was diagnosed with Mesothelioma and within 2 months, it had progressed to such an extent that it took her life. It all started around July 2007, Nan was suffering with a dreadful chesty cough and infection. She went into hospital as her breathing was giving her a lot of trouble. Whilst in hospital Nan had approximately 4 litres of fluid drained from her lungs. This was obviously, what was giving Nan breathing difficulties and resulted in Nan developing a chest infection. I suppose its normal practice for any such fluid to be tested. I can remember my exact location and what I was doing when my Mum called me to let me know the results had come back and that the hospital had found cancer cells in the fluid. I was shocked but thought to myself people go through cancer battles all the time and pull through so why would Nan's situation be any different.

Over the next few months towards the end of 2007, Nan's health decreased dramatically. She was in and out of hospital suffering from breathing problems and having further tests carried out. But we still did not know what type of cancer she had or how far along it really was. Around the beginning of December 2007, Nan was officially diagnosed as having Mesothelioma. As the family had little knowledge of the specific details regarding this form of cancer, we were all constantly on the internet trying to obtain as much information as possible. In late December 2007, Nan underwent radiotherapy treatment and became very weak as a result.

In the last few weeks of her life, Nan was a shadow of her former self. Nan was always a happy person, always laughing and joking, nothing ever phased her. However, Nan was in bed all day and night, she wouldn't eat and hardly slept. Nan wasn't eating as she had no appetite and had pains in her stomach. She was staying in bed all day and night as she ached all over and had no energy. She didn't watch any television; she just wasn't interested and that showed us just how much Nan really wasn't herself, because she never missed an episode of Coronation Street, Emmerdale, Eastenders, Brookside, Family Affairs, Neighbours or Home and Away! I can even remember going round to see her and if "corry" was on the TV she would get my Grandad to record it on a video and turn off the TV so that she could watch once I had left. Nan wasn't really saying much either so it was difficult to know exactly what she was thinking but in my opinion she just wanted all the pain and suffering to stop. I believe she knew she was fading away and didn't have the energy to fight much longer.

Nan was rushed into hospital late on Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> January 2008 with breathing difficulties and was subsequently kept in. On the morning of Friday January 11<sup>th</sup> 2008, I was woken up by my Mum at approximately 7.30 am even though it was my day off work. I thought something was wrong when she burst into my room to wake me and I was thinking "she hasn't realised I'm not at work today". Mum told me that Grandad had been on the phone and that Nan was deteriorating. The hospital had advised my Grandad to contact all immediate family, as they didn't know how much longer Nan had to live. Mum said that it was bad and she was going to the hospital. I told her I would get dressed and follow her in my car.

The day couldn't have been worse. It was torrential rain and the traffic to the hospital was horrendous as the school run was still ongoing and people were still driving to work. When we finally arrived at the hospital, we went in to see Nan who just laid there looking weak and not really knowing what was going on. After about an hour or so, the Doctors called us in to let us know Nan's situation. They informed us that the cancer had become too aggressive, had spread dramatically and that Nan was dying. They said there was nothing they could do but make her as comfortable as possible. Despite being 24 years of age, upon hearing the words "my Nan was dying" I just burst into tears and was comforted by my Grandad, Mum, Dad, Auntie and Uncle. I think the worst feeling was knowing that after that day I wasn't going to be able to see my Nan again.

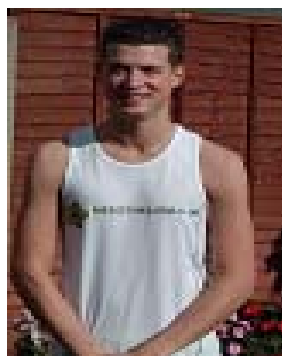
The day seemed to fly by so quickly as the family gathered at Nan's bedside to say their goodbyes. The good thing was that Nan had a lot of family who was there for her that day. She had her loving husband, her two daughters and son in laws, three grandchildren and a great grand daughter all there to say goodbye. But she wasn't prepared to go without saying goodbye to her sister who was on her way to the hospital and other grandchild living abroad. My cousin Lisa had been living in Lanzarote for 13 years and wanted to be there but couldn't get a flight home quick enough. She phoned whilst we were in the hospital and got to say goodbye to Nan over the phone. Nan even recognised her voice so she knew she had said goodbye to my cousin. Then at about 5pm my great aunt arrived and Nan got to say goodbye to her only sister. Within minutes, Nan drifted off into a deep sleep, as the drugs that the nurses gave her to ease the pain made her drowsy. At 6pm, my sister decided to go home with my niece who was not yet 2 months old. She gave Nan a kiss and said goodbye. It must have been hard for her, as she would have known that would have been the last time she would get to see Nan.

At about 6.25pm, I remember going to sit just outside the ward with my Dad and a close family friend. I won't describe what happened next but let's just say Nan had no fight left in her and went to sleep for the final time. We were all obviously extremely upset and consoled each other for the next 60 minutes before saying our final goodbyes to Nan. It didn't seem real. It felt like I would wake up and all of what had happened would just be a horrible nightmare, but it wasn't. My Nan had been taken from me. Shirley May Keefe was 73 years old and in a world where people are living to 100 and beyond it seems cruel that my Nan had to die at 73. She didn't deserve this. She had worked hard her whole life and should still be around today to see her great grand children growing up. It pains me, that, although I can tell my niece all the funny things about Nan she will never get to know them for herself. They say times a healer, well to me nothing has changed. Yes, I have had to get on with life; I have my own property and a partner, which Nan never knew. But I still remember what happened, I still get upset, I still cry because she was my Nan and I miss her so very much. If my Nan could say one thing to me now, I know exactly what she would say, "don't matter do it".

I am running the Virgin London Marathon 2011 for Mesothelioma UK Charitable Trust in memory of my Nan Shirley May Keefe. I aim to raise funds and awareness in the hope that other people don't have to go through the same pain and heart ache that I went through, that my Nan went through and that both myself and my whole family will continue to go through for the rest of our lives.



**My Lovely Nan – Shirley May Keefe**



**I am doing the London Marathon for my Nan.**