About page

Sladjana (Sofi) Crosley was a healthy, athletic, trim woman when, at the age of 46, she was found to have stage 1a granulosa cell tumour of the ovary (GCT). This followed a couple months of feeling bloated, and having periodic abdominal pain or discomfort. Her response to these symptoms was to assume that she wasn't exercising enough, and then double the number of sit-ups she was doing and extend the distance she was routinely walking.

Finally, after a particularly bad attack of abdominal pain, she went to the hospital where she was x-rayed, told she "had a gas buildup" and sent home with an allotment of simethicone. Only after passing out in her doctor's waiting room, 24 hours later, did they admit her to hospital and do an MRI where they discovered a "cyst" on an ovary.

Following surgery Sladjana was told that the "cyst" was benign, and not to worry because even though, technically, GCT is a cancer it "almost never recurs", and no followup treatment or evaluations were scheduled. Three years later, the GCT returned and the decade that followed became one continual cycle of treatments, evaluations and research as she pursued the discovery of any treatment that would allow her to manage the disease.

Sladjana passed away on Anzac Day, 25 April, which is somehow appropriate because she loved poppies, which are a symbol of rememberance for those Kiwis and Australians who died during the battle of Gallipoli, during the First World War. It was the culmination of her 13-year battle against GCT with a "can-do" spirit that was finally put to the test once too often.

After graduation, Sladjana moved to Buffalo, NY (USA) where she landed a job with Union Carbide as a chemist where, as she said, she didn't have to know much English because chemistry is universal. She learned English with the help of a fellow chemist, who conversed with her in Russian, a language they had in common.

Eventually, Sladjana migrated to Oak Ridge, TN (USA), where she was employed by Lockheed Martin at the US Department of Energy Oak Ridge Nuclear Laboratory. She became a Project Manager, leading nationwide research into treatment technologies for hazardous waste.

Research page

Many of you only knew her as Sofi, the founder of this Foundation, and may not have known her real name, Sladjana. She came up with the personna of Sofi years ago in Dunedin, NZ, where she would play golf, quite often being paired up with others. What she found was that if she introduced herself as Sladjana, no one talked to her for the rest of the round.

If she introduced herself as Sofi, however, then the round was full of comments like "good shot, Sofi", or "nice putt, Sofi". Clearly some people were intimidated by the pronounciation of the name, Sladjana. Soon, anytime a casual, temporary, introduction was being made she was "Sofi". (Note: This didn't sit to well with her youngest daughter, Sofi!)

Sladjana was born in Pirot, Yugoslavia in 1950, the daughter of Milena and Vitomir. She grew up to be valedictorian of her high school, but not before also winning a national competition to be named "Best 14-Year Old Gymnast" of Serbia.

Her parents were not big on sports, however, and used their parental persuasion to convince her to get a college degree. With the help of a full academic scholarship Sladjana completed her Bachelor of Science degree in Chemical Engineering at Belgrade University.

Donate page

Your donation to research into GCT is the best thing we could ask for (except, of course, for finding a cure)! Since 2006 GCTRF has awarded over $230,000 USD to researchers through a competitive process of proposal evaluation. Just tell us how much you want to donate and where to send the tax receipt. 100% of your donation goes directly to research!

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