

## Tough and loyal, Alexa Danyliuk helped young women break into applied sciences

**RICHARD DANYLIUK**

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11 COMMENTS



**Alexa Danyliuk:** *Daughter. Sister. Leader. Friend. Born July 8, 1988, in Saskatoon, Sask., died March 9, 2019, in Saskatoon, of complications from a fractured leg; aged 30.*

Alexa Danyliuk's star burned briefly but brilliantly. Dressed for an evening out, she turned heads and made glamour look easy. Alexa had a big and complex personality – like Walt Whitman's, large enough to contain contradiction.

Pretty, graceful, she was a sensitive dancer and musician (tymbaly, keyboards, clarinet) who trained and performed in North America and Europe. In 2017, she danced in Romania and Ukraine, also visiting her grandfather's home village.

Alexa was kind and loyal to her friends, and absolutely fearless with her foes. She was the person you wanted beside you when things were at their best or worst. As a child, she was sweet, caring, endlessly inquisitive and startlingly direct. After her first day of school, her teacher noted this was a child who would love her friends but never suffer fools, an assessment which held true to her last day.

She possessed an almost intuitive understanding of science and technology, and was a tough and independent woman working in the male-dominated field of electrical engineering. She led rather than followed, first in the oil industry, then with major construction projects. She could outthink, outwork and outswear any man on a rig floor, as some discovered to their chagrin. Alexa believed fervently in the ability of women to do this work and was involved in numerous volunteer programs to encourage young women to break barriers and enter applied sciences.

Alexa and her younger brother, Nic, were five years apart, but close. Their humour was wild and sometimes caustic. Both thoroughly enjoyed reprogramming their parents' cellphones with bizarre ringtones. Internal disputes between the siblings were acceptable, while outside threats were met with a unified front. Their risqué matching tacky Christmas sweaters became a holiday staple.

Alexa loved dogs, and rescued a northern stray named Theo. Near feral, he quickly fell under her spell and they became intensely bonded. She often said that he rescued her, too. Alexa would not accept neglect or cruelty in any form and her fundraising work with a local dog rescue was vital to her. Donations to that charity after her death exceeded her family's



Alexa Danyliuk.

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A week after her injury, Alexa was visiting her parents when a blood clot in her leg let loose and a pulmonary embolism killed her almost instantly. She died where she began her life, in her parents' loving arms. She was only 30. The church overflowed for her service. Countless circles of society intersected, reflecting her kindness and her faithfulness, and the number of lives she touched.

Theo now lives with Alexa's parents and seems to be doing well. Still, he often watches through the front window, waiting for a beautiful, smiling young woman to stride up the walk, bringing the sun along with her. Sometimes, we wait, too. Her absence, and yet somehow also her presence, abides where the sun shines, when someone laughs wildly and when someone is treated gently.

*Richard Danyliuk is Alexa's father.*

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