

EULOGY OF GABRIELLE KELLY

Gabrielle Mary Simeon Kelly came into this world early ...a tiny premature baby...and she's been ahead of her time ever since.

She arrived home with Margaret and Frank...a new little sister to Catherine and Andrew, and later at Methuen Street became a big sister to me, David and Charlotte.

And what a sister she was.

There was a gap in our family between the first three born and the last three and Gabe was the bridge between the two sets of siblings. A child still herself, she was, in effect, another mother to us little ones and we adored her and depended upon her, emotionally and practically. She'd pre-empt our needs and meet them (later revealing not *a/ways* happily). She'd bathe us...all three in the tub together, she'd take us to the movies in the holidays. ..usually an Elvis movie at the Majestic Cinema and then for a ride on the ferris wheel on the Cox Foys rooftop. ...if Elvis wasn't showing she'd find some other musical...Sound of Music if she could swing it...Gabe loved to sing...and dance. My god how she loved to dance.

Gabe was a loving, caring, vigilant sister...and she remained so throughout our lives....she was the love heart of the whole family ... its joy germ. Its glue and its light.

I think of this. The pre-dawn dark. I'm seven or eight, Gabe four years older. We pack our school bags and put on our togs in a sleeping house and set off to cycle into the City Baths for swimming training. And when i say cycling...*she* was peddling and i was being dinked on the back...no helmets, hanging on for dear life, all the way into town and for those of you who don't know Adelaide, that's a fair way ...*in the dark*...week after week to do our laps...now that's sisterhood! (Not to mention '60s parenting. Mum and Dad what were you thinking?!)

Gabe's enduring love of a jolly mob was forged in those years, in the happy rowdy chaos of our shared childhood. We were all very close as siblings ...we still are ... raised by parents who lived their deep faith through service and community, and who mandated singalongs during the washing up ... who mandated singalongs at every opportunity actually ... our darling father the loudest voice as we bellowed out a rendition of Weemaway ... Runaway ... or our all-time favorite Stewball over the kitchen sink. (Maybe later)

I never met a singalong Gabe didn't want to join ...or lead. We all love to sing ...it's part of the family DNA ...but Gabe had a way of coaxing you out of yourself...when dad died Gabe, of course, took stewardship of the family song books, which was only right. Her last-ever smile was in response to us singing around her deathbed.

I knew as a kid that Gabe was a terrific sister, I knew she was an upstanding shining member of the St Dominics school community ... that she was good and kind and clever. But it wasn't until she was older and I heard her belt out Blue Moon at the Adelaide Uni Revue that I realised Gabe was *really* something out of the ordinary. She was a heart-stopping knockout...and, incredibly, 53 years later – in the QEH palliative care ward and to her great thrill – one of the doctors told her he remembered her singing Blue Moon that night and that she had blown him away.

Others spotted it earlier...my sister Cate tells of the day ...as a 10-year-old she declared she was auditioning for TV and determinedly rode off by herself, returning home later as a Junior Announcer on the Channel Niners. *Note... she was only ten; no adult involved.* It was a self-start that became the seed of something big...the Channel 9 studios in North Adelaide became her second home...from junior announcer, to Five Minutes with Morna, then it was the Curiosity Show, and Here's Humphrey. She was in her absolute element. For decades people came up to her asking if she was the girl on Here's Humphrey...the mute bear with no pants. Our Gabe has always been unforgettable.

Gabe met and fell in love with Jon Roberts at university...they married young...here in St Laurences...dressed in calico and flowers and leaving the church on Jon's Triumph motorbike with white chiffon scarfs streaming from the handlebars...it was the seventies. They had their beautiful daughters Jordan and Rowan...the two people Gabe loved most fiercely on this earth and whose names rested within her dying breaths.

After she and Jon separated...for so long it was just Gabe and her girls in Semaphore. "Our little family of three," she called them... and she poured her love and dreams into her daughters as she pursued her creative professional life while mothering intensely. Gabe was intense in every endeavour. Jordan and Rowan grew up to be the wonderful women they are today...capable, curious, competent, generous and assured ... sharing their mum's life values of loving and striving and caring and achieving ...and making a difference. She was so happy for them when they found their life loves, Jordan with Ian....and Rowan with Ralph. And when they became mothers themselves to precious Ruby, Benjamin and Lottie ... they stood on her shoulders, taking all their mother had gifted them, and stepped up to the role with intention and wide open hearts. She was so very, very proud of Jordan and Rowan and her love for them knew no bounds; they are sealed in her soul.

It was during her years raising the girls that Gabe became an independent documentary filmmaker. In 1987 she started the Australian Documentary Film Festival...organising it from the front room of her house in Semaphore where a lifelong friendship with Gina was born as the two of them worked away to make something big out of nothing much.

The Festival, now the International Documentary Film Festival, still runs today.

She was a founding member of the Film Finance Corporation, now Screen Australia, and a Board member of the South Australian Film Corporation.

Gabe's mission as a filmmaker, as has been her mission her whole life, was to effect change, to connect...and to help dispense the tools we need to improve our lives and to make this world a better place.

She decided to start with saving the Planet.

[PAUSE]

As I look back on Gabe's life I see she only ever thought *big* thoughts and only ever had *big* ideas. She was into the macro not the micro...her job was to entice humans to think bigger. As former Premier Mike Rann said in his tribute," Gabe infused all her work with passion and humanity. She was tireless in pursuing ideas that work to improve people's lives and the health of our planet."

In 1989 she traveled to the Sundance Institute in Utah for an international gathering about climate change....she interviewed Robert Redford, Paul Ehrlich, Karl Sagan and a host of others for what became her first climate change documentary "Prophets and Loss".

Three years later her next major Climate Doco, the groundbreaking "Greenbucks, screened at the first Rio Earth Summit. It was 15 years before Al Gore's An Inconvenient Truth...Gabe, as always, was ahead of her time.

From her modest platform here in Adelaide Gabe blasted off.

Yes, she was the 2022 City of Adelaide Citizen of the Year but the truth is she was, all the time, operating on a much, much bigger stage.

Gabe was always deeply interested in my own work as a journalist and so often over the years she'd ask me who I was interviewing that day or that week.. And time and time again she'd say. "Oh I interviewed them for Greenbucks, or I was on a conference platform with them in Moscow once" ... or Japan, or Morocco ... "say hello to them for me"and more often

than not these eminent people remembered her all those years later. Gabe was the real deal.

She recognized the power and scope of the digital age before most of us... again, ahead of her time. She saw the future was digital and she set about getting amongst it learning the technology and understanding how it could be used in the Information Age ahead.

She uprooted and moved to New York City alone during the internet boom ...working on a health informatics website start-up. It was all risk and hard work and she absolutely thrived on it. She roamed around America and the world collecting the smartest medical minds and ideas, building an online portal before most of us understood what that even was. She was on intellectual fire. But then the dotcom bubble burst before their website was launched and Gabe came home...dreams dashed ...bruised, temporarily wounded, but not beaten.

From Adelaide, her safe base, she rebuilt ...bringing all her ambition and passion for ideas to the Adelaide Thinkers in Residence Programme, which she directed for several years. This was, I think, some of Gabes best work...bringing to Adelaide the world's greatest thinkers to effect transformational change for the state and the nation.

New ways of thinking and doing things in health, ageing, in our courts, in sustainable urban design, in public transport to make our cities more livable, in early childhood learning, renewable energy and innovation in manufacturing. Gabe and her Thinkers changed the way we live. Some of those Thinkers in Residence are tuned in today and I know their admiration is deep. They witnessed her impatience to make the world better, and her tangible gains towards achieving that.

As her last contribution to the Thinkers in Residence program, she brought out the internationally recognised expert in Positive Psychology, Dr Martin Seligman, with his plan to use Adelaide as the template for building

Wellbeing and Resilience at scale. To make South Australia a State of Wellbeing.

It was ambitious... and when he left Gabe took up the baton, with ideas of her own....she lobbied premiers, she rallied business leaders, she persuaded schools and corporations and organizations to raise the funds and the alliances to establish the Wellbeing and Resilience Centre at SAMRHI...and developed the State Wellbeing Programme leading to benefits for school kids, workplaces, our police, our prisons and other institutions. This work has also been taken up nationally and internationally by governments and organisations across Australia and in the Middle East.

This was Gabe's legacy... lasting beneficial change to some of the most important institutions in this state and beyond.

During these years she met Kerry... they met down south on her beloved Fleurieu peninsula, on HIS beloved Fleurieu peninsula, fell in love, married and shaped a 20 year life together ...building houses, running restaurants, designing cafes...a dynamic duowhich is exactly how Gabe liked to roll. And with Kerry came Lewis as a little boy and together *they* grew their love and respect for each other. Now Lewis is grown and engaged to Cordelia and together they stepped forward, still mired in their raw grief for Kerry, to care for Gabe so beautifully and assiduously over this past year.

And also came Kerry's daughter Eliza....Gabe and Kerry shared a deep family bond across the oceans with Eliza and her husband Stephen and their sweet girls Nell and Loie..they loved to holiday en famille... and Eliza too showed great, great care to Gabe during this final year.

And that was Gabe and Kerry's secret sauce ...family. They loved to gather us all around the table for a roast at Claxton Street in the city, or for lunch on the deck at the house Kerry built in Normanville. That's what made them happiest together...kids, grandkids, sisters and brothers, our darling Marjie, friends, friends, friends ... that was their shared bliss.

Gabe made so many friends...she made them quickly and she held onto a bountiful bouquet of them for life. You're all here today and she loved you and valued you and cared for you all deeply And you for her. You partied together, you mothered together, you talked together, you danced together, you sobbed together , you meditated together, you holidayed together, you strategised together ...you stayed together as friends, nursing your shared pasts and planning shared futures.

Thank you for being there with her over her lifetime and especially over this last very difficult few years...when not only did she suffer pain and fear due to her cancer but also the loss of dear Kerry to his own merciless cancer.. It was a cruel cruel twist of fate. The cruelest. Thank you to all those who were there for them both.

Gabe was a spiritual being; spirituality – exploring and honoring it, falling into it – was core to her. It gave her such strength and such hope. It gave her trust, in people and in the universe. She wept at sunsets, gasped at sunrises. “Everything I need comes to me with ease ,” she would say repeatedly over the past few months. That spirituality fuelled what I now see was her elastic capacity for love ...she never ran out of it. There was never not enough for you if you needed it... There was never not enough for me... and that's what I will miss the most.

Her unconditional love, her wise council, her unfailing interest and concern for me and Marion and our family. She knew me, she knew us, she was always in my corner, she was always on my side ... she pushed, challenged and encouraged me ...and she'll be forever in my heart. And I know so many of you feel the same way.

All her family was a recipient of Gabe's generous love ...Davey and Ronnie and their kids,Sacha and Joe Charlotte and Julie and Maya and Joel... her older brother Andy and his girls, Belinda and Greer (who had a very special relationship with Gabe) ... and Cate, her big sister to the end. As young women Cate and Gabe were thick as thieves, intelligent, forceful

powerhouses the two of them. Their bond never broke; it was a lovely thing. The Kelly girls!.

[PAUSE]

The last few years have been tough for Gabe and she was so tough in facing them. The awfulness of her cancer did not define her, but her *response* to it did. She hated the word bravery, she did not want that expectation laid upon that she had to be brave. But the word bravery implies a conscious intent ...the word courage an inherent and subconscious character trait. And she was courageous. She was determined to live with her illness, around it, or in spite of it for as long as she possibly could, never faltering in her commitment to life.

I remember one poignant moment in Sydney last year ...where she came for her most distressing and ultimately disfiguring treatment. She was trying on clothes for her first appointment with her new team of last-line specialists. She was struggling to find the right outfit, stressed in front of the mirror. "I ...I ... I ... just want to look like..." Her words trailed off. "A woman worth saving?" we offered quietly. " Gabe turned around, tears on her cheek. "Yes," she whispered. An hour later she strode into that appointment looking amazing, her skirts swishing, boots stomping, tired eyes gleaming and I saw those doctors take note.

Worth saving. Oh, Gabe, so, so worth saving.

I remember too, a specialist here in Adelaide who knew Gabe well and had watched her pushing so hard against the inevitability of death... telling her solemnly, and as a clear direction, it was now time to stop striving.

My heart stopped. *No-no-no... Tread carefully!* Others had tried to give her warnings and timelines. She would not hear them. Could not hear them. This time I literally felt the force field go up and the advice ricochet off Gabe, saw her icy-steel as she metaphorically raised her elbow to deflect it, felt it whizz by and off into the ether. I tried not to laugh.

Stop striving? Truth was, she couldn't have even if she wanted to. Striving was a muscle memory to Gabe.

She was not going to leave her beloved Jordan and Rowan, refused to ... and Lewis, and her darling grandchildren, Ruby, Benji, Lottie and Nell and Loie one day earlier, one minute earlier than she was forced to. She railed against the odds for every second of extra time. She made the most out of every one of those seconds, wringing life of its last drops of beauty and colour and connection and joy. Wringing it dry. Exulting in it. Cherishing it. Washing it with optimism.

She didn't want to go. She never wanted to go. She loved her life, She loved all of you. But in the end she was truly at peace when she died at home ... born into the spiritual world on the same day she was born into the earthly world. And if that is not pure Gabe, I do not know what is.

She has left us all lessons. She Guided us places. Taught us things. For me ... she taught me how to love, deeply and unconditionally and she taught me cynicism has no place in love or friendship.. She taught me how to bask in love, to trust it and to let it hold and sustain me. [PAUSE]

[SLOW]

So please ... let's all take the lessons she gave us and walk out of here today determined to do all we can as individuals to make the world a kinder, softer and more connected place.

The flowers will die ...

The candles go out ...but *that* ... *that* will ensure our Gabe lives on. As she would say if she were here right now ... Love. Only Love

Goodbye Gabe.

