

Shona Kelly Wray Memorial
August 4th 2012
Berkeley City Club
From Jane Emley

We come together today, to remember and celebrate our Shona. While each of us grapples in our own way in attempting to come to terms with this tragic and untimely loss, I believe we can all agree, that Shona *was some kind of wonderful*.

Shona had an easy grace that made you feel right at home. With her winsome charm, she would light up a room as soon as she entered. I loved the way her nose was gently up-turned. It was impish and beguiling. Her radiant smile was always an invitation to laughter. Her warm hazel eyes were vibrant and penetrating, revealing the keen intellect that propelled her insatiable curiosity. To me the roundness of her rosy cheeks seemed to embody the way she so fully embraced life. She was an exuberant woman with an infectious laugh. Shona was a kind and generous soul. She was an authentic and free spirit. Yes, she *was some kind of wonderful*. And I, like the rest of you, will miss her so much.

I had the very great pleasure of knowing Shona for 29 years. We met while studying in Italy in 1983. I remember I noticed her the first day of our orientation in Padova. She had an upbeat stride as she breezed into the room that seemed to signal to all—*Come on! Grab your things! Andiamo via! Let's go!* It was so clear she had places to go and things to see. Back then, it was impossible to catch her on weekends because she was always jumping on another train—ready to go off exploring. While many of us would be sleeping off the previous night's festivities, Shona would be roaming the back streets of some small Italian village. She visited countless cities, towns and, churches during that year.

While studying at the University of Padova, our favorite class that year was art history with Professore Zuliani. He was an inspired teacher whose passion was palpable. He'd say—*"We'll meet at the train station at 9 o'clock! Va bene? Don't be late!"* He conducted all of our classes on-site. Whether we were dodging pigeons in the Piazza San Marco, or standing in the coolness and shimmering light of the Basilica of Sant'Apollinare in Ravenna, or taking in the quiet, rational serenity of Palladio's Villa Rotunda, Shona was always leading the pack, and we, were forever following the swish of that carefree ponytail. These were among the many sacred spaces she loved. Shona just couldn't get enough of Italy.

Though we lived much of the past 29 years /in different states, I always looked forward to seeing Shona when she returned home for a visit. We would often go hiking, or enjoy a leisurely meal outdoors in the beautiful garden at Celia and Jim's—always surrounded by her friends and family. There was an earthiness about Shona. She loved to garden. She loved to cook, and she loved good food. And she loved people. She was at home outdoors. Dining with Shona was such a pleasure because always brought something to the table—both literally and figuratively. She was the real deal; she was genuine. She *was some kind of wonderful*.

There are so many things one could say about Shona. One thing that seems particularly important to me now is that I think that Shona was an agent of change. In her ground-breaking scholarship, she was an agent of change. In the way she reached out and touched so many lives, she was an agent of change. In the life-giving donation of her own organs, she was an agent of change. And, in the way she inspired and connected others, she was an agent of change. The scholarships and endowments set up in her memory will have a far-reaching legacy that will continue to affect change in the future.

On a personal level, Shona has been an agent of change for me. Her passing inspired me to take a look at my own life and encouraged me to go for things I love.

In my case, remembering her get-up-and-go spunk, and her passionate approach to taking a huge bite out of life, inspired me to finally start using a kayak that my daughter and husband had given me for my 40th birthday some 9 years ago. Since June, I have been out on the water at least once a week. The very first time I went out on the water, a beautiful blue heron flew ten feet over my head. I took that as a special welcome. As I paddle and silently glide along the surface of the water, I say a special thank you to Shona each time. And, I feel somehow that she is riding right along beside me. I know that each of us has struggled in our own way to wrap our heads and our emotions around this heart-breaking loss— unwilling to accept that her incandescence and warmth have been extinguished.

So, I'd like to encourage each one of you to look within yourself and find that essence of Shona that was for you *some kind of wonderful*. Keep that essence burning brightly and let it be an inspiration and vehicle of change in your own life. Shona's untimely passing is an admonition to each one of us to seize the day. So, as we say goodbye to our lovely Shona, let us celebrate how she lived her life— with gusto, with warmth, with integrity, and with generosity.

She was an intrepid traveler and citizen of the world who made friends wherever she roamed. Close your eyes now and enjoy the echo of her laughter. For there never was a way to trap that irrepressible effervescent energy that imbued Shona's spirit. So let us toast her! Alla vita! Salute! Cheers to our ramblin' gal!

Jane Emley