

Shona Kelly Wray Memorial
August 4th 2012
Berkeley City Club

From Maggi Kelly

I want to give a background to my sister's life and highlight some of the many milestones in her life.

Shona was born in Palo Alto in 1963, and when I was born 2 years later the family moved to Berkeley as my father was appointed Assistant Professor in the Civil Engineering Department at UC Berkeley.

(Incidentally, the choice of this lovely building to hold this memorial is auspicious for a number of reasons: I think Shona would love the Italianate details and also the fact that it was designed by Julia Morgan, who was the first woman to be admitted to the Civil Engineering department here at Cal.)

We were very happy in Berkeley as children, we were surrounded by families with children of similar ages; you will hear from one of them later – Leslye Alexander - and many are here with us today. We also had our cousins across town, the Holts to look up to and learn from.

Shona went to Willard Junior High School, and then Berkeley High School. In both places, but especially in High School, she was a rebel of the best sort – pursuing courses and opportunities that she found interesting and stimulating – she took calculus and philosophy; she ignored, or rather, just didn't hear anyone's criticisms that Latin was for dorks, or car mechanics was a waste of time. She also was a leader for me in the pool – she played water polo before Berkeley High had a girls' team.

After high school, she was off to college at Davis where she met many lifelong friends, again, many are here today, and you will hear from some of them. During her Junior year in college she went to Italy to study, and returned with new insights into Italian history, and a consuming desire to make Italy her subject matter. After college she was awarded a Fulbright Scholarship and again went to Italy, to Bologna, and worked with Umberto Eco (of the Name of the Rose fame). She met Randy there, he also had a Fulbright.

Randy and Shona were married in 1991 in Berkeley CA, and they moved to Boulder. Shane was born in 1994, and Alina two years later. Her grad work at the University of Colorado at Boulder took her back to Bologna many times to work in the archives, uncovering, reading and analyzing wills and testaments from the time of the Black Death. This painstaking work yielded great insights into how the Bolognese people reacted to the impending disaster of the Plague. You will hear more about that later when her friend and colleague Roisin speaks. I've also made copies of an article that sums up Shona's life by Roisin for you to pick up if you like.

In 2002, she was awarded the "Rome Prize" and became a fellow at the American Academy in Rome. The Academy was founded in 1894 to foster the pursuit of advanced research and independent study in the fine arts and humanities. As the Academy states, Shona was one of a small select group of recipients "invited to Rome to pursue their work in an atmosphere conducive to intellectual and artistic freedom, interdisciplinary exchange, and innovation." Shona and the whole family moved to Rome for the year. You will hear about that time later as well from Randolph Langenbach.

In the Fall of 2011, Shona moved back to Italy, Florence this time, to begin a year at the Villa I Tatti as a fellow to work on her project, Faculty Families of Fourteenth-Century Bologna. The outpouring

of memories from her friends and colleagues at the I Tatti are testament to her time there: she was in her element at the I Tatti, loving work, thriving in Florence, and enjoying time with Alina.

Shona and her scholarship are indivisible. As many have observed, for her, work was personal. She was very personally invested in understanding the lives of those that lived before us. Her friend and colleague Montserrat Cabré has said that through her work Shona pointed us to the importance of embracing supposedly marginal, inexplicable traces that sculpt history and human life. As Roisin says, and you will hear from her later: Shona was always particularly empathic to those around her, and when she turned her attention to her historical subjects she saw them as complete human beings with rich emotional lives and the ability to support one another in challenging times. I think those are beautiful descriptions of the ways in which my sister's personality, life and work were intermingled, and in writing this I realize that that interaction can be characterized by two important traits.

First, she was always steadfast, consistent and focused in her love of history. She thought about history from a very early age. In pottery class, while I was stamping out yet another clay ashtray for placement in my mother's garden, Shona was sculpting a complete Egyptian sarcophagus, complete with linen wrapped mummy inside. She could read countless frail documents and reveal the story they told because she loved the work, she thrived on her ability to tease from these forgotten pages the lives of families, mothers, fathers, and children who were dealing with something horrible in their lives with grace and focus. I see her steadiness and calmness in her son Shane, and often see in his face clear traces of my sister looking back at me.

Second, she had the most amazing ability to make real and lasting friends around the world. Many of these people have spoken to me, my parents and to Randy about how they feel connected to her, and through her to others. Some who have only met her once, at a conference say, will comment on how she made a lasting and indelible connection with them. She was never insincere in her interest in the lives of her friends, she was always completely empathetic and invested in all of us. I see this kind ability to form friends and make important connections in Alina. I witnessed in Florence Alina's ease of making and keeping friends; her natural social ability (and great artistic sense) reminds me of my sister.

I would like to end by thanking all of you for coming, especially the Holt family who have themselves had such a loss in Eileen. Shona loved Eileen so much! It gives me some comfort to see her so much in her children, and some solace to hear all the stories about her wonderful life. Shona was the first person I knew in life, she was my gentle, loving, forgiving and beautiful sister. Shona would want us to have a nice time here, tell stories, laugh, and remember the best parts of her life fondly.