

Sheila Kelly Sharemet (1956-2025)

By Greg Kelly – (Sheila's brother)

Sheila Marie (Kelly) Sharemet -- strong in mind, body and soul -- passed away March 17th, at age 68 at her beloved home in Houston, Texas.

Sheila built an accomplished career, satisfying personal life, and strong community connections -- all of which will outlive her. For the many who mourn her sad passing and grieve over the hole her death leaves, remember that hers was a life to be celebrated and emulated, to be admired and honored. She'd want it that way.

Born on December 6, 1956, in Monmouth Beach, NJ, she was the daughter of Charles W. Kelly, MD and Joan (Sheehan) Kelly, both Brooklyn natives and Jersey Shore transplants. Sheila attended the Star of the Sea Academy on Chelsea Avenue in Long Branch and graduated from the Monmouth Beach School in 1970. Both learning intuitions helped her form an earnest persona and noble nature --and earned her lifelong friendships. In 1974, Sheila graduated from Red Bank Catholic High School (where all five Kelly sisters attended). At RBC she was nothing short of a star.

The home base for Sheila's family was in the borough of Monmouth Beach at 40 River Avenue — a short walk to the ocean or the river. The family's 4,000-square-foot Tudor-style house sat on a hill; her dad paid \$17,000 in 1963 for the one-acre property. Through the front door was a 50-foot-wide living room, with vaulted 40-foot-high ceilings and a spectacular 25-foot-long balcony, all covered in pricey redwood. The room had quite a wow factor. Perfect for big parties and the family hosted more than its fair share.

A large country kitchen was warm, welcoming and conducive to conversation and connection. In the center was a wooden kitchen table that seated the whole family -- parents and 8 siblings (5 girls and 3 boys). It was family central for the Kellys.

The house was a happening place -- with a near "open-door" policy -- for our large assortment of relatives, friends and neighbors. The home had a real charm and action was constant. Despite its grand trappings, the house had an agreeable worn look and feel to it. A real family lived there. Today, 60+ years later --family members still encounter people who tell how much they valued the family, its spirit and appeal, and the inviting warmth of the home.

In Monmouth Beach everybody belonged, even the oddballs somehow found a way. This was the community my sister knew before she moved to the big city. The town had a church and a school, an ocean and a river, a corner store and a bar, a library and a park,

and a nightclub and a gas station. All in one-square-mile. Sheila grew up in a small, safe community. A good town with a sturdy foundation. It's not a big stretch to call her times in Monmouth Beach as "golden years."

All homes have good and bad memories. Sheila's was no different. Over the course of three years during 1971-74, the family lost two sibling sisters (both under age 22) in two separate car accidents. Like all her siblings, Sheila suffered greatly from these tragic losses. A cruel fate delivers a lasting hurt. Summarily, she had to seek coping mechanisms. From the pit of despair Sheila found self-confidence and self-respect, determination and diligence, curiosity and caring, working and playing hard and a passion for life. Traits she developed all on her own and sought to pass on to others as well.

No student-athlete ever brought more pride and glory to Red Bank Catholic High School sports. Sheila's legitimate claim to fame is based purely on merit – her extraordinary record in cross-country and track racing. The young lady was fast.

For her remarkable running achievements, Sheila was a two-time inductee into the RBC "Athletic Hall of Fame." Like always Sheila covered all the bases – gaining entry on her own (2017) and as a team member (2025).

While at RBC, Sheila earned varsity letters in three different sports — Track & Field, Cross Country and Gymnastics. This included membership on several trailblazing athletic teams that won 7 state championships during her time as a Casey student-athlete.

It was Coach Jack Rafter -- revered as the father of girl's cross-country athletics in New Jersey – who first saw and sculpted her ability (in mind and body). He said Sheila was "one of the most intense competitors I've ever seen" and characterized her competitive racing record "amazing."

Coach Rafter explained that with her "desire to excel," "strong, flowing motion," and "powerful forward trust," Sheila made running "look easy," A metaphor for her life.

The high school coach right out of Central Casting -- who proved to be among Sheila's most key and enduring mentors (and she had plenty) – Rafter knew a winner when he saw one. Over a 25-year career his running teams (girls and boys) earned more than 500 victories while posting an 82% winning percentage and winning nine state championships. It was Rafter who started the first girl's cross-country team in the state

with a total of 60 young female athletes in Fall 1969. He was at RBC for 45 years before retiring in 2006. A Newark native, he died in June 2011.

In an amazing display of early athletic prowess, Sheila was twice an NJ state champion in the 880-Yard dash (the half mile). The first, in 1971, as a freshman student. She went on to compile a perfect undefeated record in dual track meets during her RBC running career. Sheila was named to several All-State, All-County and All-Shore teams for her running (then much-coveted honors for all young athletes). Adding to her winner's touch, she was also a member of the RBC girls' varsity gymnastics team in 1974, a team that won the state championship.

Terrific as an individual player, terrific as a teammate, Sheila was part of a remarkable group of young female cross-country athletes. In a sport they were long denied access due to their gender — instantly upon inclusion, competed at the highest level. As close to athletic perfection as a team can get. RBC truly was "title town" when it came to 1970s girl's cross-country racing.

Perfection on the field of competition was their banner, and Sheila was the star performer. The Caseyettes captured the first officially sanctioned NJSIAA State Championship meet for a girl's cross-country team in 1972.

The team had five consecutive flawless seasons — five straight unbeaten records and five straight state titles. Athletic pioneers — forged in competitive excellence — ran for the RBC Casey banner.

It was not easy for Sheila and her team; however, no one wanted them at the beginning. These young girls had no guidebook, no official support, little gear (they borrowed sneakers and running shorts in the beginning), and no track to run on (they trained on Red Bank streets and at local beaches). Starting with nothing — all they did was win. Over five seasons — with different runners and coaches — RBC girl's teams would compile an amazing record of athletic achievement in cross country running. Total excellence. Alone at the top. Sheila led this group of elite female athletes who never knew defeat as competitive runners.

Sheila admitted to an early success combo then — she liked competing and possessed the discipline to improve. That is the textbook "coachable athlete." Only serious physical injuries to her feet prevented Sheila from competing at the college level. After earning a B.S. degree in Health and Physical Education from Lock Haven State College in Lock Haven, PA in 1979, she moved her life south.

After college Sheila landed in Houston, Texas. While never losing touch with her Jersey Shore roots and the fond memories there, Sheila adapted smoothly to the Texas life – eager to learn about and embrace it people, places, and things. There she built her life – one productive and with a purpose. She grew to love her adopted home state and was proud to be called a “Texan.”

It was there that she met her future husband, John F. Sharemet. A University of Michigan graduate, Siemens sales executive and Houston Holocaust Museum docent, John was her faithful partner for 37 years.

Their only child was son, J.P. (John Patrick) Sharemet. Houston-born, he now lives in Louisiana with his wife Heidi. Both are Louisiana State University graduates and devoted enthusiasts of that school’s sports team (they even made Sheila into an LSU Tiger).

Combining harmony with cozy, she made a fine home for her family and cared for and loved her only child beyond measure. She was so joyful that he found happiness for himself while also giving her the daughter she wanted.

Their two children, Phillip and Bridget, her grandkids (they called her “She-She”) were her final gifts from God. During her illness and its ravenous impact on her body, those beautiful children brought her only more joy, more strength, and more satisfaction. They will never know what they’re missing.

To know Sheila was to respect her career and realize the lasting impact that her craft had on so many others. She gave it her all. In 2022, she retired from British Petroleum (BP) after 30 years of service with the \$85+ billion international energy company.

Inspired by her physician-father and her uncle, Dr. Gorge Sheehan, Jr., (the Red Bank physicians were medical partners), and building on her own athletic exploits and interests, Sheila gravitated to work in the health and fitness field and stayed for 40 years of excellence — mostly as a high-level manager at corporate fitness centers.

Sheila dedicated her own life to bettering the human condition. Through example and attitude, she helped countless others to find and keep wellness. Known and respected as the “Godmother of Houston Corporate Fitness,” Sheila was instrumental in designing and operating five major fitness centers in Texas over the course of her career. Employing patience, persistence and professionalism, Sheila educated and swayed her big cooperate

superiors about the vitality of her programs and the need for growth. Her last center included a membership of 4,000+ people.

A warm smile, encouraging nature, curious mind, and commanding knowledge of her work were the tools she used for gaining and building trust in her patrons. Sheila was blessed with a gift – the capacity for effecting meaningful (often radical) change in the life of others – and shared it well. Sheila was an expert – on fitness, on training, on exercise, on diet. An avid reader and researcher, she was a lifetime student of wellness and, thankfully for us all, an educator brimming with information and eager to share it.

The wisdom she imparted was priceless and enduring. Stories abound of how her fitness instructions were passed along to spouses, friends, family members, BP colleagues, etc. There was nothing “cookie-cutter” about her health/fitness advice and counsel. Everyone got one-to-one accounting and guidance based on her personal observation. Her aptitude for sizing up an individual and discerning their capabilities made it seem like anything was possible. And while Sheila was skilled about knowing when to apply the carrot or stick in physical fitness pursuits, above all, she would counsel – have a plan and keep at it.

Her faith and confidence in the necessity of good health and the wisdom on how to maintain it was infectious. Possessed of an “off the dial” resolve, Sheila believed in people who sought her assistance and that helped them believe in themselves. That’s a fine legacy.

Sheila had a real zest for life – and was always fun to be around. Among her many unique traits and talents: she was a marvelous cook (her breakfasts alone represented “fine dining”); she had exceptional organizational skills (her being unprepared for parties or professionally was unheard of); she treasured exploring great cities (her deal was to grab a drink at great hotel bars); she knew how to make and be a friend (her “good-buddy” list was uncountable); she was proud of the home she made (her comfy-decor style ruled inside and out); she thought that first impressions were enduring (her early morning good cheer at the gym provided incentive to others for decades); she connected with young people all her life (her son’s bevy of buddies considered her a “second mom.”); she loved music and read the bios of all the greats (but was herself unable to carry a tune); she was known for marking important events for others (her card and gift-giving touch was distinctively classy); she honored her mother and father (and her quest to comprehend their strengths and weaknesses brought her acceptance and humility); she

practiced “praise with a purpose” (all her compliments were true as well as motivating); and she liked to get to the point (her habit for direct talk was mostly on display).

Sheila’s battle with her cancer diagnosis mirrored the way she lived her life. Fortified by knowing that education, attitude, and effort can provide understanding and wisdom, she valiantly battled and lived with cancer for nearly 15 years. Always learning about her condition, maintaining a positive attitude, and gifted with a body that responded well to unique cancer drugs, she got more time and used it to the fullest -- getting to enjoy two beautiful grandchildren along the way. In the final months of her illness Sheila was tenderly cared for by her loving sister, Shannon. Her guardian, protector, and blood buddy to the last breath. Shannon’s measure of love, devotion, kindness was unmatched. Older by a year, Shannon put her life on hold so that Sheila had an ending with some pride, comfort, and sense. The affection and respect exhibited by the two sisters – during very sad and trying times -- on display for the family made the loss more bearable.

Sheila is survived by two sisters, Shannon Ann Booth of Long Branch and Joan Elizabeth Kelly and her partner, Rick, of Eatontown; and three brothers, Owen Ward Kelly and his wife Jennifer of Red Bank; Gregory John Kelly of Sea Bright; and Charles Ward Kelly, Jr., and his wife Lisa of Long Branch. Sheila loved, cherished, and lost two beautiful sisters, Claire Elizabeth Kelly (1952-1971) and Alice Ward Kelly, RN, (1953-1974). She leaves 16 nieces and nephews: Alexandria, Andrew, and Robert Kelly; David, Shaun, Paul and Charlie Booth; Kyle and Lauren Kelly; Elizabeth, Alexander, Catharine, and Margaret Kelly; Claire, Virginia, and Katherine Strobe. Sheila was also part of the Sheehan family on her mother’s side which included 14 aunts and uncles and 80 first cousins.

Quotes:

“Life isn’t about finding yourself. Life is about creating yourself.”
—George Bernard Shaw

“The best way to know God is to love many things.”
—Vincent van Gogh

“You live once, but if you do it right, that’s enough.”
—Mae West



Spiritual Siblings – Sheila Kelly and Greg Kelly at her First Holy Communion at the Precious Blood Church in Monmouth Beach, 1965. It’s a 60-year old bond that no one or nothing can ever shake or break. As sister and brother, we’re bound together as family – then and forever.

Greg Kelly is Sheila's brother. A local writer and historian, he is publisher of MonmouthBeachLife.com, a website covering Monmouth Beach, Sea Bright, and Long Branch. Launched in 2017, he seeks local facts by searching the digital archives of the Long Branch Daily Record, Red Bank Daily Register, and Asbury Park Press – with 350+ years of combined area news coverage. A former reporter, editor and columnist for the Atlanticville News (1985-2006), he wrote Monmouth Beach: A Century of Memories (2009), a history on his native town. His email is monmouthcountylife@gmail.com.