

Elaine Murphy: Tribute

Elaine was born on the 31st May 1963, at her parents' home in Ballards Road, Dagenham. It was a Sunday, and she arrived at half past six in the morning – so there wouldn't have been any lie ins on that day.

Her father, Don, was a welder by trade and worked on oil rigs; her mother, Anna, did various jobs and has always been a very strong and forceful character – in fact, Elaine was by all accounts the only person who would stand up to her. Elaine also had an older brother and sister, Karen and Dennis.

Elaine's was a happy childhood. She was quite shy as a young girl, but at the same time very content in her own company. She went to Hunters Hall primary school, and Eastbrook secondary. However, school was never Elaine's favourite place, and when she moved up to a secretarial school aged about 14 her attendance can best be described as intermittent – the attractions of Romford town centre and getting up to various high jinx with her cousins and her mates was more like it.

Elaine started work when she was 16 at "Bubbles" – a children's clothes shop in Dagenham Heathway. She was very much at home there – enjoying the work and meeting customers, many of whom she got to know. Whilst there she also trained as a fitter for Start-rite shoes – measuring the kids' feet and making sure they got the correct footwear.

Elaine worked at “Bubbles” for about five years, before leaving to become a telex operator. Later she did some child minding, and she was a dinner lady at the William Bellamy primary school in Dagenham – an experience of school that I think she enjoyed far more than when she was a pupil!

And she was the sort of dinner lady that we’d all have loved to have. She had a variety of sweets in her pocket to hand out; she had a soft spot for the naughty kids; and she showed a great deal of compassion in looking out for those children that needed that extra bit of support – for example, where she could she would help those who were being bullied. And there was one particular lad in a wheelchair who loved football – so she bought him a football kit for a gift, and she went out of her way to look after him. These are lovely qualities to have, and they go to make Elaine the very special woman that she was.

And at this point, it will be nice to hear from Elaine’s sister Karen, with some personal thoughts and memories.

My Elaine

“Firstly I’m sure everyone in here today will have their own thoughts and stories of my Elaine. I would like to share a few stories of my funny, mad sister.

If ever Elaine met or was introduced to any of my friends or somebody for the first time, she would always say:

'Go round Karen's house and you get a cup and saucer and a doily; come round mine and you get a tea stained mug. On the back of her bedroom door is a satin nightie, pearls and a dead bird (just to let you know it is ostrich feathers); on my bedroom door is my tea stained dressing gown, dirty in one corner where I get the dust off my furniture as I walk about.' And she would laugh.

On one of our family days out my Dad, who travelled the world with work, got lost finding Southend. We ended up driving down the A13 when all of a sudden we pulled over - there was a big sand pit and a lake. He pulled in and said: *'this is it kids – you've got sand there and water there – get the picnic out Anna'*. My mum was not happy! We did have a great day though in the end.

Dennis had built an aviary at home and on the lake there were all ducks with ducklings. Later that day Dennis said: *'Karen take them two ducklings, wrap them in your cardigan and hide them in the boot'*. So I did. Just before we were going home Dennis told me to get the ducklings out of the boot and wrap them in the cardigan on my lap in the back of the car. Elaine was one side and Dennis was on the other. As we got back on to the A13 one of the little ducklings poked his head out of the sleeve of the cardigan. Elaine shouted *'Mum, Mum.'* Dennis leaned across and put his hand over her mouth to shut her up.

All of a sudden the other duckling poked his head out of the other sleeve. Elaine started screaming '*Mum, Mum, Karen has got two ducklings.*' My Mum turned around and said '*oh no she has as well!!!!*'. My Mum said we will have to take them back but my Dad refused and said to let the kids have some fun and we had the ducks for years as part of our family.

My Elaine's favourite things were crisps and tomatoes. When I told my cousin Teresa the sad news she said; '*Oh Karen I always remember Elaine as a little girl sitting on the settee with tomato pips all round her face*'. And Mitchell said – '*Mum always sat on the settee with a big tomato and a pot of salt*'. On one of our many trips to Ireland my Nan had bought a big bag of tomatoes. She said; '*that's funny there's only a couple of the tomatoes left.*'

We all looked at Elaine and she said, '*it's not me!!!!*' The next morning my granddad went to polish his shoes and there in the shoebox was Elaine's stash of tomatoes!!!

She loved them so much that on my 50th birthday I had a garden party – Elaine phoned and asked the dress code. She said – '*I'm sure there is one!*' On the evening of the party I looked out of my kitchen window. I saw a green stalk and leaves walking past! I heard someone say '*Oh is it fancy dress?*' I ran to the back door and there was Elaine dressed as a great big tomato. I said: '*what are you doing?*'; and she said, '*garden party – I'm a tomato !*' She was just so funny.

Elaine was such a family person – she was a home bird who was always waiting for Dave, Kelsey and Mitchell to come home to her. Elaine would always say, *‘my Dave - I love him Kal’*.

My sister was amazing – she was more than an aunt to Ross. She was his second Mum. She was also a Nan to my grandchildren - Millie, Sonny and Jaxson. She was first on hand with Danielle if ever they needed her.

To me she was my everything. She was: my counsellor – we had so many heart to hearts on her settee and although there were tears it always turned to hugs; she was my divorce lawyer – there throughout for me 24/7; she was my removal firm, when we had to move three times in the space of four years; she was my comedian – so quick and so funny – we always ended up laughing whether we were sitting on her settee or on the other end of the phone. But... most of all she was the other half of me – my little sister - my Elaine.”

Now before we hear from Dave, it’s worth mentioning how he and Elaine first met in 1986 – which was at the Ilford Palais, a legendary dance venue back in the day. Elaine was taking the mickey out of one of Dave’s mate’s clothes, when Dave came out with the immortal chat up line: “you look like a bus seat” – on account of the brown and yellow dress Elaine was wearing. Well it worked! One thing led to another, he asked her out and they were together for the next 31 years – something to cherish.

They started out in a flat in Shafter Road, Dagenham East and, with a few moves in between, ended up in the current family home in Crescent Road since 1999. They had three children along the way: Kelsey, in 1990; Connor in 1992, who very sadly died after just nine days but who was treasured and loved; and Mitchell in 1994.

In her mid twenties, Elaine damaged her back – it was a prolapsed disc, which is a nasty injury – and she was laid up until about 1988, when finally an injection to dissolve the disc did the trick. It is a testament to Elaine's strength of character that during this time – although unable to work – she just got on with life and was a good homemaker.

And let's now hear from Dave, with his special thoughts and memories of his beloved Elaine.

My missus

“First of all I would like to thank everyone here for coming to celebrate my Elaine whilst I can before I turn into a puddle of snot and tears.

Those of you here who truly knew her knew she was an absolute nightmare; she was obstinate, stubborn, difficult, wilful and could be down right pig headed whenever she wanted to be. And I wouldn't have had her any other way. Any request from doctors, friends, mum, brother and sister, kids and especially me to take better care of herself, stop smoking, eat better, take more care of her diabetes... was met with a shrug of her shoulders only to be told: 'if you don't like it you know what you can do'; then light up a fag and crack open a can of Carling.

Her language was what you could call 'colourful' at best. She used swear words like punctuation but she didn't do it to shock or offend; that was just how she was, and never apologised for it. But if you needed her she was also the most caring, helpful, supportive, friendly and loving woman I have ever known. If you needed help she would instantly volunteer her services... or mine for that matter, even if I didn't want to; and when she offered help it wasn't just words, she meant it and would do it. I think she quietly loved being needed even though she might moan about it afterwards.

We were together 31 years and for most of that time apart from work we were together because I actually liked her company. She was funny, sarcastic; yes, she could moan for England usually about trivial things but had more common sense and level headedness than most people I know, and was far more intelligent than she thought she was.

But she wasn't a saint. Her sense of humour was truly downright wicked and cruel, but I knew her so well; when something inappropriately funny came on the telly or news I would just look out the corner of my eye and see her shoulders bobbing up and down trying to stop herself from laughing out loud but in the end she never could and I never wanted her to. I loved her sense of humour because it was so like my own.

She always got her own way in our relationship whether I thought it right or wrong - from having the most terrible taste in tv, any type of murder mystery from the 40s to the 80s, b sci-fi's from the 50s old westerns, Carry On films and virtually any film as long as it was in black and white and made decades ago, watched again and again every weekend. She would try to save money on the electric by demanding lights being turned off instantly but thought it ok for the central heating to be set so high most people could barely breathe in; didn't like spending money on herself but thought it nothing to buy a pram for Kelsey back in 1990 for £400... £400, that's twice what I paid for my first car.

Back to more recently she wanted new leather sofas last year. There wasn't anything wrong with the old ones but again she got what she wanted, only to find out just after she passed away from Karen and Bernie our neighbours that she didn't like them. She never told me but that was another thing about my Elaine... she was never in the wrong; but £400 for a pram - come on!

I hope for all those here who didn't know her too well don't think I'm painting her in a bad light; and for those that did know her will know that I'm speaking out of love and fondness, and what I've said about her was Elaine to a 't'. And I've kept it short because she wasn't one to go on about herself – I've let Karen do that for me. So once again thank you all for coming to see my darling Elaine laid to rest. Goodbye sweetheart, I loved you so much and give Conner a kiss from me. Bye babe.”

So we've heard a bit about Elaine's childhood, her work and her family – and we've had two wonderful tributes which capture her personality, and which show just how much she was loved. What else can we say about Elaine?

Well, along with the bad TV and old black and white films – which Dave told me he had to watch as well, by the way – Elaine liked 1960s soul and Motown music, and dance music from the 80s.

She enjoyed some good holidays – including to the Canary Islands, Turkey, Cyprus and Thailand. And a particular favourite was a trip to the Capuchin Catacombs of Palermo, in Sicily.

In terms of her character, Dave and Karen have already painted a vivid and loving picture of Elaine: she was strong willed, quick witted, smart, sarcastic, stubborn; and in equal measure she was, funny, compassionate, supportive, caring and loving. It is these qualities that were the mark of the woman.

Elaine's sense of fun was never far from the surface. Whenever she went shopping, she would always be the one to try on a stupid hat – just for a giggle. When Karen's son Ross got engaged to Danielle – which happened to be on Boxing Day – Elaine marked the occasion by dressing up as one of Santa's elves. And, like many parents, she fulfilled her duty of embarrassing her kids in front of their mates – with her wicked sense of humour and an inappropriate remark of some sort. She also liked to play tricks on the kids – hiding and jumping out, to scare the living daylights out of them. These are all good memories.

Deep down, although perhaps not readily apparent, Elaine retained her childhood shyness. If truth be told, she didn't really like going out that often – she was more of a home bird. But when she did go out, she was the life and soul of any party. She would light up any occasion with her personality, her humour and her sheer uniqueness. Who else would go to a garden party dressed as a giant tomato!

Above all, though, Elaine was at heart a family woman. Dave and her children were so important to her, as were her brother and sister; and as we heard from Karen, she was like a second mum to Ross, and like a Nan to Ross and Danielle's kids. And of course I should not forget to mention that Elaine adored the family's pet dog – Harvey – who was like another child to her.

In short, Elaine was a wonderful homemaker, and was content and fulfilled in that role. And I hope you can take a degree of contentment and comfort yourselves from knowing that.

With all these things in mind, it is now my privilege to read Kelsey's words about her mum.

**Elaine Murphy—The Most
Predictable Woman in the World.**

“Think of Elaine and what do you see?

A woman with an understated beauty with a beer in one hand a fag in the other and my dad not far behind. She was the most predictable woman in the world but if anyone said, 'I need you' she would drop anything and be there as soon as she could.

She would talk for hours to anyone that said, 'I need to talk'. She loved anyone that deserved to be loved. She was forever the rooster for the downtrodden. She was the voice for those who couldn't be heard, and anyone that knew her knows she could be heard! And what did she want for being the person that everyone relies on? Love.

Please remember my mum with love and if you need her she will always be in your heart."

Elaine's life was truly one that was well lived. We will not dwell on her final days – I'm sure she would not want us to do that. After falling ill on holiday, she died from heart disease on the 28th September, in Sri Lanka, with Dave by her side. Elaine was much needed, much appreciated and much loved - and the world will be that bit sadder without her; but it was so much the better for her having been here. She will be missed.