

Funeral Service for Roger Shelton

Roger Shelton
1948 - 2018

Funeral Service

Saturday, August 4th, 2018

At the Festival Hall, Minister Graylin Ross's Introduction

Dearest friends, we gather here to honor and celebrate the life of our beloved friend, Roger Shelton.

Welcome to all of you. Welcome to Robert, our dear teacher. And let us welcome Roger's family: his brother Chuck and his wife Suzanne, his sister Joan and her husband Hank. And let us incline our loving thoughts to Sharon, Roger's wonderful wife and companion for so many years.

Let us stand and remember our friend Roger in silent presence.

Silence

Thank you, please be seated.

Our Teacher says, 'Ascending souls finish their roles very well prepared, having received the presence allotted to them in this lifetime.'

Through their being and efforts, each student forms a living stem on the blessed tree of our school. The life of each student, as he or she creates their true Self, raises our School, enriches our lives, while leaving a profound legacy. A legacy which makes us proud, yet humbles us as well.

Our Teacher says, 'Things do not go on indefinitely here, so that they can go on eternally there.' Roger's return to the divine source reminds us of our own journey. His leaving reminds us to treasure this mystical journey of life.

Reading: William Shakespeare, Sonnet 116, read by Rebecca George

Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments. Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove:
O, no! it is an ever-fixed mark,
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;
It is the star to every wandering bark,
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.
Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
Within his bending sickle's compass come;
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.
 If this be error and upon me proved,
 I never writ, nor no man ever loved.

Music: Vivaldi, by Justin McKay

Eulogy for Roger Shelton, given by John Craig (with Chuck Shelton)

Good afternoon. Plato wrote, "Different men practice different arts in different ways, but the best men practice the best arts." We in this room this afternoon know well what that best art is, and ever practicing it, we are here to offer our admiration and our gratitude for the life of another practitioner, our friend Roger Shelton.

I first met Roger in late 1991. Victoria and I had just moved north from Los Angeles to Chico with our two boys. Roger and Sharon were living in Paradise, from which he commuted to Sacramento to work and she to Chico to pursue a program in voice at Chico State. Thomas Neuschatz, who was also living in Chico at the time, introduced us. Roger and I became friends almost immediately, and that friendship deepened steadily through time, and it continues.

But let us look back even further -- 44 years, almost 45. Roger joined the School in 1973 after attending the first set of prospective meetings given at the new Seattle Center. He had been reading Yogananda but responded to an ad announcing the prospective student series, and that, as they say, was that. Sharon, who did not know Roger at the time, joined from the same set of prospective meetings. Later, she first noticed Roger when he asked a question at a regular meeting: as she remembers it, Roger asked, "Where do women's rights come into all of this?" Sharon was intrigued, and they enjoyed talking at events, but when he finally asked her out, their first date was to a cemetery -- because of its beautiful and expansive view of Seattle at night. Sharon wasn't quite sure what to make of the experience, and theirs was not a whirlwind courtship. They finally married in 1982 -- nine years later.

Included in those nine years were two years, 1976-1978, during which, still as friends, they opened the St. Louis Center.

Roger and Sharon's lives in the School were typically strange. I say strange because the movement and upheaval may seem bizarre to those not in the School -- multiple jobs, multiple addresses, multiple trips abroad -- but that is the way we lived, especially in the School's first four decades. Roger's jobs were always oriented to meeting the needs of people, individuals or groups, and he usually had an organizer's role. He knew both the bruising political tumult of Sacramento and the delicate lattice work of personnel needs and student skills here at Apollo. He was a great listener, and as a result he could talk to anyone and make that person feel warmly welcomed.

But now I'd like to focus on one element of Roger's being which has produced an enduring legacy and gift to the Fellowship, and I'm not talking about the stellar and very successful work he did with our library after taking over from David Tuttle. I'm speaking of Roger's love of Classical literature and philosophy, and especially of the works of Plato. When Roger worked in Sacramento in the 1990's, he arranged his day so he could have lunch with another excellent friend of ours, Robert George, whose insights into esoteric works were penetrating and from whom we learned so much. Those lunchtime conversations were actually the seed that germinated into Apollo University. Roger and Robert started the first Plato reading group, which spent two years examining Plato's Republic. Students came as they could, some of us lucky enough to attend regularly, and from those discussions of Plato's Ideal State, the experiment of a "university for those trying to awaken" drew its impetus. In fairly short order a board of directors was gathered, the Teacher blessed the effort and fitly installed Lucas Cambridge as the Chairman of that board, and Roger became the first president.

During the first few years of the University, Roger taught a course in Plato's Symposium. Here is the brief description he wrote for the schedule of course offerings in 2001.

Of all of Plato's dialogues, The Symposium is the most closely related to Robert Burton's teachings concerning the attainment of higher states through beauty and love. Just as we sometimes glimpse our Teacher's efforts to be the words, so, in one of the most vivid portraits of a Conscious Being in all of Western literature, are we allowed a similar glimpse of Socrates.

Apollo University of Divine Presence continues to serve the School. Some of the founding board of this enduring organization continue their service. The day after Roger was hospitalized, a new Plato discussion group was scheduled to begin. Add it all up and Roger had been leading students in the study of Plato for nearly 25 years, always remembering that, as Plato wrote, "the true lover of knowledge is always striving after being."

To close, the fires besieging California used to be seasonal. Now they seem permanent, like something out of Revelation. It is a stressed and stressful time, but we have been well instructed and we know our jobs and take seriously Plato's reminder to "look for the divine in all things." We keep marching, slowing only briefly as we're doing here this afternoon to honor departed heroes. And so, hail and farewell, for a while, dear friend.

Music: Over the Rainbow, by Justin McKay and Michael Golding

Reading: Walt Whitman, Crossing Brooklyn Ferry, read by Rebecca George

It avails not, time nor place—distance avails not,
I am with you, you men and women of a generation, or ever so many generations hence,
Just as you feel when you look on the river and sky, so I felt,
Just as any of you is one of a living crowd, I was one of a crowd,
Just as you are refresh'd by the gladness of the river and the bright flow, I was refresh'd,
Just as you stand and lean on the rail, yet hurry with the swift current, I stood yet was hurried,
Just as you look on the numberless masts of ships and the thick-stemm'd pipes of steamboats, I look'd.

Appearances, now or henceforth, indicate what you are,
You necessary film, continue to envelop the soul,
About my body for me, and your body for you, be hung out divinest aromas,
Thrive, cities—bring your freight, bring your shows, ample and sufficient rivers,
Expand, being than which none else is perhaps more spiritual,
Keep your places, objects than which none else is more lasting.

You have waited, you always wait, you dumb, beautiful ministers,
We receive you with free sense at last, and are insatiate henceforward,
Not you any more shall be able to foil us, or withhold yourselves from us,
We use you, and do not cast you aside—we plant you permanently within us,
We fathom you not—we love you—there is perfection in you also,
You furnish your parts toward eternity,

Great or small, you furnish your parts toward the soul.

Minister's Conclusion:

A king of ancient times said, 'But a child in the eyes of the Gods, I act in harmony with heaven, without ceasing, day and night.' Roger is now part of the light that beckons from above. He forms part of a new succession in the celestial world, made lovelier still because he bore his part. From his example, we are changed for the better.

Dear Roger:

Let your love of the classical learning inspired by the Gods deepen and inform our own minds.

Let your considerate ways remind us towards gentleness with our fellow students.

Let the memory of your warm embrace teach us of the invisible welcome that surrounds each one of us.

Dearest Roger, we thank thee. Now and forever.

Candle ceremony

'Our body is just a shell, our soul will continue.'

Extinguish and light the candles.

Please stand.

Funeral procession, to the reception area.

At the Cemetery, Minister's Introduction

Dearest friends, here in this sacred place, consecrated by those here present, and by those whose bodies lie here, we witness the completion of a cycle. In grateful presence, we release Roger to his and our true home, even as we return his remains to the earth from whence it sprang.

Reading: Roger Shelton, 1974

Peace through understanding, through knowledge, through pain
And the cycle closes round,
And the circle turns.
Joy through confidence, through fear, through misconception
And the cycle closes round,
And the circle turns.
Realization through acceptance, through dissatisfaction, through self-hate
And the cycle closes round,
And the circle turns.
Peace through joy, through dissatisfaction, through realization
And the cycle closes round,
And the circle turns....
Into each other,
Into a sphere,
And the sphere becomes a point on another circle
And the cycle starts anew
And the circle turns.

Minister

As the earth returns to the earth, ashes to ashes and dust to dust, we look toward eternal life.

Urn is lowered, with orchid spray.

Minister's Conclusion

Rabia said, 'Love comes from eternity, and returns into eternity'. A divine flame returns to its divine source. The circle of life is complete. We part, only that we may meet again.

Minister guides funeral party in placing rose-petals into the grave.

Let us withdraw to Apollo d'Oro for a toast to our Beloved Friend Roger.