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*The President*



Court of Appeal  
Supreme Court  
Sydney

GLORIA BOES

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### GLORIA BOES

We are here today in the presence of each other, and for the last time in the presence of our sister, aunt, great aunt and friend, Gloria.

Her long journey through this life came to a close last Saturday at the Concord Hospital. To the very end, she was hanging onto life. She was lively to the last. Despite near blindness and serious pneumonia, she resisted death. The nurses remarked to my father last Friday about her sharp intellect, even when she was very down. It was as if she was making it clear to everyone who cared to notice that despite her age, many disabilities and health problems she would not go gently into the good night of death:

*"Do not go gentle into that good night,  
Old age should burn and rave at close of day;  
Rage, rage against the dying of the light."*

I gladly speak today because there was much in Aunt Gloria's independent spirit and lively intellect that I admired and emulated. For me she was Aunt Glory when I was a boy and later Aunt Gloria. She neither encouraged nor permitted closer familiarity from a mere grand nephew. So I am here to say goodbye to her and to say thanks for her life.

Glory Gray was the fourth of seven children of Annie Elizabeth and John Emanuel Gray. She was born in Merrylands, New South Wales towards the end of the year in which the Australian Commonwealth was established and in which Queen Victoria died. She was thus exactly the age of our modern nation. She saw its history unfold.

Perhaps the momentous events of the century - as the global tapestry behind the facts of her own life - influenced this most unusual woman, Gloria, even from her early childhood, to question the world around her with its many clear hardships and injustices. She was always sceptical about the powerful - "the haves". She was always the friend of the powerless - "the have-nots". She was especially a vigorous proponent of the rights of women. In this respect she was far ahead of her time. Nowadays the world is full of the assertions and champions of womens' rights. But when Glory first gave them voice, it was an unusual message, at least in Australia.

At the age of 13 her remarkable mother, my great grandmother, was widowed. But she was a person of indomitable spirit. They were days when there was absolutely no assistance for women or men whenever tragedy or adversity struck them or their families.

Gloria's elder sister, Ruby, was a most intelligent young woman. She had a great love of, and thirst for, the treasury of English literature: of Shakespeare, Dickens, the Brontës, Jane Austin and Wordsworth. This she passed on to Norma, my grandmother, Glory's other elder sister. And to Glory too. Their brother Jack, like many of his generation, put his age forward to join the Australian Imperial Force. He went to fight for King and Country in the Middle East. He was greatly damaged by the experience. The other three younger children were left in the care of Gloria whilst her mother, a lone battler, went out to seek work in the thing she knew and did best - nursing others. Anne, Frank and Lilian were

often in her care - as later was my father with whom she would slip away to the movies or to whom she would read the classics and history.

In her own working life, Gloria found the industrial conditions of the time, particularly for women, terrible. This fact motivated her to contribute her indignant energy to the causes of women in Australia and in a wider world.

It was her responsibility as a member of the United Associations of Women to arrange speakers for the Association's meetings. She worked with, and became a close friend of, Lady Jessie Street. Their association endured not only in Australia but also overseas. Each of them was dedicated to the improvement of the condition of all women. Each was ahead of their time. Each stayed the course. In the journal of the Associations appeared a warning about politicians still sadly appropriate:

*"In dulcet tones your vote he'll woo  
And everything he'll promise you,  
But after - that's a different case -  
He'll tell you home's your proper place."*

During my own childhood I came to know Glory as an "aunt" and a very definite personality. In the 1930s she had married Gerardus Boes (or "Uncle Jerry" as I knew him). He originally came from the Netherlands. He was a great supporter of Glory's interests and ideals. They lived together for thirty-one years with the constant intellectual exchanges that were involved in any close encounter with Glory. One thing can be said: it was never dull in her company. She would be the first to have admitted that she had a streak of the counter-suggestible. She put everything - even love and friendship - constantly to the test.

When I was young Glory and Jerry seemed always to be travelling the world. Her postcards and messages from far-away places lifted my sights - as they doubtless did those of other recipients in the family. They took me in my mind's eye from my little desk in Concord to the great world beyond our own confines. Conversations with Glory also lifted me into the realisation of the wrongs of the world and of the need to fight injustices and to work for reform of the wrongs affecting women and men in my own time.

When I was appointed a Judge, I am not sure that she approved. I think she regarded this as a member of the family deserting the workers and joining the Establishment. Indeed, when, as a boy, I told her I wanted to be a lawyer her response was typical: "Lawyer! Lawyer! Aren't there enough lawyers? Why don't you do something useful with your life?" She soon came to forgive me for this move when I joined the Law Reform Commission. She was a supporter of any proposal for reform of the law.

Glory leaves a family which greatly admired her. Her sister Anne is now the last remaining of the seven children of Annie and John Gray. This is her lonely fate today. Liliän, her lovely younger sister, predeceased her as did Frank. All of them but Anne have now seen out their journey through life. Aunt Anne's daughter, Angela, always had a special place in Glory's heart. So did Ruby's daughter Norma. So also, do I believe, did my parents, both of whom were frequent visitors to Glory in recent times. They took her out of her home which could become lonely in her near blindness. It is true that she was sometimes querulous and difficult. She would certainly agree with that comment. But she was never boring. She would agree with that too. Other true friends included Shirley and Max Mytton. They constantly attended to her practical needs. I know that Shirley was most upset when finally Glory's life ended. It was

the loss of a constant friend.

The other members of the family who are here bear testimony to the impact which this strong-minded, strong-willed woman had on us all.

To the end she was fighting and struggling. In the darkness of near total blindness she insisted on her independence: living virtually to the last day in her own home at Mona Vale, where I stayed as a boy. Surrounded by her own furniture - her memories of Holland, of Jerry, her cats - a long life usefully spent. Resisting the nursing home to which doctors - who knew her poorly - would have consigned her. She said that such a place would make her get up at a regimented hour. She would not be regimented! Indeed, when finally she received the call from this world she was still resisting: in total harmony with her life of struggle and brave assertion.

*"And you, my father, there on the sad height,  
Curse, bless, me now with your fierce tears, I pray.  
Do not go gentle into that good night.  
Rage, rage against the dying of the light."*

May Glory rest now in peace.

MICHAEL KIRBY  
Northern Suburbs Crematorium  
Sydney  
Thursday 3 June 1993