

Reflections on Kate Cudlipp by Kate Lang

Reflections on the Life of Kate Cudlipp

Kate Lang

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Eating lobsters or crabs can with someone can explain alot about a person. Most of us use crackers and mallets energetically, with debris flying all over the place, in the instant gratification of whack a bit, eat a bit. Kate on the other hand, was always patient, slowly dissecting the crustacean, carefully extracting all of the meat, placing it in a pile. Once all the meat was out, and only after she paused to consider the feast as a whole, would she then start to eat, with a side smile to all of us who were left looking on in envy at her treasure revealed.

When I met Kate 20 years ago, we were both in transition. I had just arrived in DC and was just beginning Federal service; she had just finished hers. I had earlier in my journey received degrees in theology; she was just starting at Wesley. As I entered the frenzied world of DC political institutions; Kate sought to more fully embrace her hunger to reach for something more, this hidden gravitational pull of the Great Other, of Holy Mystery.

This is the Kate I knew...from the beginning, she was a seeker.

Kate's was a deliberate, mindful, purposeful journey, one clearly revealed in the person she was: calm, measured, pondering, thoughtful, open-minded, curious, evolving. Early in her studies, we dubbed her "Rev", a name that not only stuck, but fit.

Over the years, it would be Kate who would invite us to pause and give thanks before a meal, or to remember to pray. I remember on our trip to Israel, while we were climbing up Masada, Kate with her long legs and gazelle-like stride became a tiny dot ahead of us, leaving Lisa and me praying to survive the hike! Probably not the kind of prayer she had in mind, but it worked!

On that same trip to Israel, Carole, Lisa and I would have animated debates in the evening about the day's adventure. Kate, not infrequently, would listen, keep her powder dry, knowing she needed time to ruminate, to allow the deeper experience to reveal itself.

Kate's was not an insular journey. Her spirituality was not private, but grounded in community, community of both faith and service. Her quiet witness grew into other gifts. As I look around the

room, I am not surprised to see so many of us here today who reached out to Kate to ask her to officiate at our weddings.

Kate was also a traveler, and again, I know many of us in this room can remember adventures and crazy road stories with Kate and Carole...Paris for the Billenium, Rehobeth for the millennium, lost luggage and crazy water taxis in Venice, intense first person conversations in South African townships and edgy walks through Hebron in the West Bank. We are blessed with so many great memories.

Twenty years later, it seems Kate and I would once again be on tandem transitions. With my Federal service winding down, two

years ago, inspired by Kate, I returned to my theological studies. As classes were about to begin this Fall I felt the real sense of loss of Kate as a companion, cohort, mentor. Then Carole invited me to go through Kate's considerable library, and I am very grateful, Carole, to have Kate's books and notes coaching me along on the journey ahead. Thank you for that.

Kate's transition was not one we or she expected. During the six days in the ICU, I struggled to discern, in theological terms, meaning in the random, freakish nature of her accident. Was this an ultimate test of faith, a lousy sort of final exam? Or, was it something more?

In the days and weeks since the accident and Kate's death, another meaning has revealed itself, and that is one not of test, but gift. Bill Courville observed, I think rightly, that Kate taught us all about intentional, purposeful living, and in her passing, showed us how to die with grace, dignity, courage, and great peace. This is a gift she leaves us all to ponder.