

In Memorium: Sharon Gibbon 1962 - 1999

The Award-Winning Writer of *The War Between Us* Dies at Age 36

On 29 July 1999, just shy of her 37th birthday, our friend, colleague and former board member Sharon Gibbon died of cancer.

Glancing through the résumé faxed from Avanti Pictures, owned by her widower and creative partner, Tony Papa, I'm immediately struck by the long list of credits that speak of a formidable talent. Before the Cable Ace Award for *The War Between Us*, before the Leo Award for *Voices of Ayacucho, Peru*, Sharon's talent as a writer had won her recognition at the Toronto International Short Film Festival (*Traveler*), at the American Non-Theatrical Film Awards (*Going Green*), from Praxis (several of the much-coveted screenwriting workshops), from FUND (four screenwriting loans, all of which I hope she got to keep despite her success), even an award from the BC Student Film Festival for her first short, *Signed, Ian French*. She was one of the few writers I knew who actually paid the rent with her talent.

That alone is a feat worth mentioning. I wonder how far she would have gone if death hadn't come knocking.

Funny, determined, willful, beautiful, vivacious, sexy. Words that spring to mind when I think of Sharon. I think of her great smile and the way her eyes sparkled when she

laughed. I think of her wicked wit, her sense of irony. I remember girlfriend moments: Sharon trying on a dress of mine when she got bored of her own; frank discussions about sex, love and marriage; the worry over her pregnancy and the joy of Talia's eventual birth. I think of our work together on this very rag, the blood and sweat we put in to make our vision of the newsletter a reality—long days of editing punctuated by wisecracks, unrepeatable headlines (our private joke), lunch, the occasional glass of wine, and any good gossip that fell our way (handily passed on to the also dearly departed Bebé Démelo). I think of Sharon and I struggle to understand how someone so alive can really be gone.

The day after her funeral I woke up angry—at God, at life, at the blatant randomness and impartiality of death. After a week of feeling sorry for those most affected by her passing—Tony, 22-month-old Talia, Sharon's father and brother—I had finally got around to feeling sorry for myself. I had lost someone I admired, whose opinion mattered to me. I had lost a good friend, a beacon of light amidst the often impenetrable darkness of this industry. I miss her dearly. My heart goes out to all who loved her.

Michelle Demers

