

Kelita in concert at Full Gospel, Lightspot next week

I'm not looking for your sympathy. This is just one woman's story to tell, you see . . .

My father took his life, when I was just 11."
From Kelita's testimonial song,
Must've Been From Heaven

By MIKE MULLEN
Times Globe staff writer

Singer/songwriter Kelita, who will give concerts at both Full Gospel Assembly and the Lightspot Christian Club here next week, never lacks for material for her songs.

But then, why should she?

The earthly existence of the talented and feisty daughter of an Alberta rancher, at least up until a serious car accident in 1989 that caused her to put her life back into the hands of Jesus Christ, reads not unlike a long-running soap opera.

There was the alcoholism and mental instability of her father, the elder brother who sexually molested her when she was a preschooler and the breakup of her parents' marriage, followed by her father's taking of his own life.

She was still only 11.

At 15, her mother died of breast cancer leaving her in the hands of a tyrannical stepfather, who soon remarried bringing a new wife and four more youngsters from yet another dysfunctional marriage.

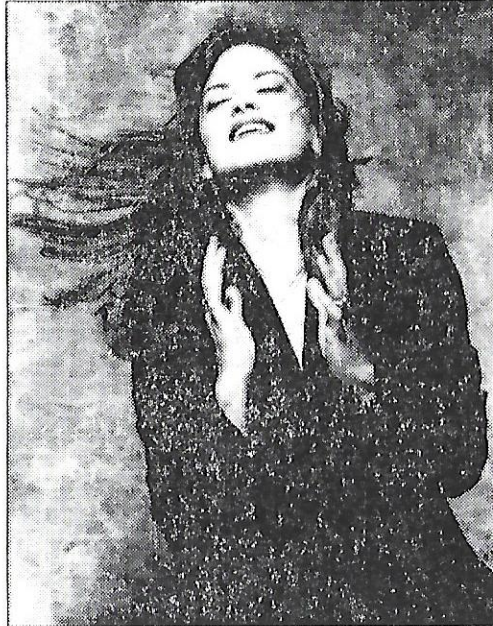
Then, an accidental overdose took the life of the brother, Jimmy, who had violated Kelita Haverland at such a young age. A brother toward whom Kelita's love and forgiveness are powerfully demonstrated in her beautiful ballad *Unusual Child*.

In the midst of all this, she sought comfort at church and found peace in surrendering her life to Christ. But with too much pressure at home and not enough support from other Christians, Kelita began to compromise her faith and began to lead a double life — one in the church, the other experimenting with drinking, drugs and an unhealthy lifestyle.

It was the beginning of more tragedy

and pain.

But Kelita's God-given giftings continued to grow. She developed into an all-around talent while attending the York University theatre arts program in Toronto.



Kelita says she's a different person.

Singer, songwriter, actress, comedienne. She had it all.

God was soon replaced by a man she met at York, who would become her everything for the next 13 years — husband, mother, father and manager.

Kelita's career blossomed.

"We took the Canadian country music scene by storm, garnering numerous awards and nominations along side Anne Murray and k.d. lang, sharing stages and TV cameras with Reba [McEntire], Randy [Travis], George [Jones] and Waylon [Jennings]," says Kelita.

"Amongst the success and struggle, not a glimpse of my former spiritual self could be found.

"The marriage was not healthy, but rather, possessive and controlling. My husband was extremely manipulative, hot-tempered and sharp-tongued with me. The more I travelled, the more I was growing and changing and discovering myself. There were traces of a whole other person, perhaps the one I used to be."

Feeling stunted, trapped and unloved, Kelita says she sought fulfillment outside of the marriage: "Drugs, booze and sex played a big part in numbing the anxiety and insanity of leading a desperately unhappy double life. I so needed to escape, and for three years tried to untangle myself from this web."

Her marriage, as she knew it, ended with the same 1989 car accident — she was driving at 4 a.m. — that led her back to an altar of repentance.

"I was suspended by the seat belt that saved my life . . . That night, I asked the Lord into my life again."

Today, Kelita is remarried, has a young son, and is serving God both in her local church and in her revived musical career. Appealing to both secular and Christian audiences, Kelita powerfully weaves her story and songs in an honest and dynamic manner.

"I experienced a complete about-face," she says of her life. "It is miraculous what the Lord can do in a life when the reins are handed over to Him. The inner peace, the joy and love I feel are overwhelming, and I am anxious to share my story with others."

Kelita's past is now a well of learning from which she draws much of her material, her transparency touching

TICKET INFO

● Advance tickets for Kelita's 7 p.m. concert (with Final Exodus opening) at Full Gospel Assembly, Mount Pleasant Avenue East, next Thursday, Nov. 6, are selling in advance for \$5 apiece at The Baptist Bookroom, Morris Music or Full Gospel (633-4956). Tickets are \$7 apiece at the door.

● On Friday, Nov. 7, Kelita (Tracy Gallant will open for her) will give two concerts — at 7 and 9 p.m. — at the Lightspot Christian Club, now located at 37 Hanover St. Advance tickets are \$7.50 while admission will be \$10 at the door. For details, call Dorothea McLaughlin at 642-7576.

people's lives at a deeper level than before.

"I guess the Lord has given me the courage to do that," she said in a telephone interview this week. ". . . When I started to sing it, I had never received that kind of response before. Now, it is hard for me to write songs that are just fun."

The songs aren't all about God or Jesus, but they are inspirational in nature.

"My work really is a ministry," she says. "I hope to encourage people in my ministry. By being open and vulnerable it may strike a chord in them, or allow them, to be vulnerable themselves. There are a lot of people out there hurting like I was, living with shame."

Eight years after coming back to Christ, she is started to spread her musical wings again, confident she can avoid the pitfalls that once hauled her down.

"I had to pull myself away from the spotlight and get myself together spiritually, mentally and physically," she recalls. "Then I got married and had a baby. My career was not the most important thing anymore. My husband, Gordon, is also a musician. He toured on

the road with George Fox and Frank Mills. I had time during that period to be at home and concentrated on writing songs. But now my son, Keldon, will soon be 5, allowing more time to travel."

Music, she says, will "kind of consume you, if you let it," but with her "priorities straight" she is determined to use her music to magnify God and help others.

But how does she know she won't be enticed by the bright lights again?

"Because I'm a totally different person than I was back when music was my priority," says Kelita. "I realize now that I've dealt with a lot of things in my past — dealt with who I am, what I need. I realize family is important to me. I think because of what I went through, and a lot of healing hadn't taken place, I was looking for fulfillment. And that fulfillment was being recognized through my music. I guess I felt loved and wanted."

Her latest CD single and video success, *The Strong One*, doesn't speak of Jesus or God directly, but is inspirational in its message. "*The Strong One* is coming to a point in one's life where they feel they don't have to be someone who they are not," says Kelita. "It is about taking off the mask and dealing with real honest feelings of who you are, not taking the weight of the world and what you have been through on your shoulders."

As a songwriter, she has had several songs nominated for the Canadian Country Music Association's Song of the Year. She co-wrote *Kathy I* and *Breaking Down* (top 10 pop AC hit) from Susan Aglukark's critically acclaimed CD, *This Child*, selling 300,000 units in Canada.

Two of her albums garnered four Juno nominations in the country female vocalist category, she won the CCMA's Vista Rising Star Award and her *We Can Do Anything* duet with Terry Kelly was nominated two years in a row for CCMA vocal collaboration.

Her most recent CD release, *Lucky Ones*, is on PEG Music, distributed by Son Music Canada and CMC (Canada only), which includes *The Strong One*. ■