

Susan Connaughton Kelley
Class of 1961

Accomplishments after River Dell:

EDUCATION

Southampton College Writers Conference, 2004
Simmons College, Boston Bachelor of Arts, 1997
University College, Summer Session, Dublin, 1982
W.B. Yeats International Summer School, 1981
Hunter College, NYC 1961-1962

Susan Kelley is a nonfiction writer and a storyteller. She has had six books published; several television screenplays produced for "Kate & Allie" and Mike Nichols's "The Thorns"; and written dozens of magazine and newspaper articles. She won a "Charlie Award" for writing excellence from the Florida Magazine Association in 2008. Her last two books were humorous personal essays about life, ageism, and travel. Her books sell internationally and have been translated into several languages, including Japanese, Dutch, and Polish. She has most recently completed a screenplay for a major motion picture based on a real-life event.

A photogenic and articulate media personality, Susan has appeared as a guest relationship expert on The Oprah Winfrey Show, The Early Show on CBS NEWS, "Homepage" MSNBC, Fox TV, and on numerous other national and regional television programs throughout the country, as well as in hundreds of radio interviews in the United States and Canada. She has fifty years of experience as a model and actress, published author, and TV writer, and is a member of SAG, AFTRA, the Authors Guild, and the Writers Guild of America, East. She lives in Florence, Italy and Sarasota, Florida, where she has been the subject of frequent articles and profiles in the Sarasota Herald-Tribune, Sarasota Magazine, and The Florentine.

CURRENT PROJECT

In August of 2016, my husband was involved in a horrific accident on a major highway while the passenger of a car service. As he was riding from Tampa Airport to our home in Sarasota, Florida, the car burst into flames, and—on fire himself—he managed to leap out a window just before the vehicle crashed into a side wall. The driver was killed. He sustained third-degree burns over one third of his body. While the process has been grueling, fortunately he has recovered—though at first that outcome was not certain. The experience has granted new energy to the love we have for each other and a profound gratitude for every moment we experience.

In the aftermath of the accident, we learned that the car he was being driven in was at fault; but because the vehicle was more than twelve years old, by law the manufacturer has no liability in the state of Florida. This law is called the Statute of Repose. I want to try to get this statute, which does not protect the consumer, overturned.

I have recently completed a screenplay about the accident and recovery, "Miracle Maestro," which is with a producer in Hollywood. Aside from telling the story, I would like to inspire people to consider: How safe is the professional car/limo service you are using? For our own protection, when we call a professional car service, we should know if the driver is insured and ask the year of the vehicle. If there is a Statute of Repose, there also needs to be a Statute of Recall, so unsafe cars cannot be used commercially.

In conclusion: The longer I live, the more I come to recognize that our life is a series of opportunities to learn, create, celebrate, and appreciate. Even the worst things that happen to us and our loved ones make every day valuable and precious and can lead to unforeseen joys. And that is what you do with every experience.

