

Farewell to a serial smartass

■ With *Seinfeld* about to go into its last series, **Jillian Abbott** pays tribute to the show's unsung hero, Elaine

HEY! What's the deal with Jerry, George and Kramer being a unique mirror of our times? Like there's never been a television show about sex-crazed bachelors? Get out! Those guys are as old as TV, probably older. It's not the boys that made *Seinfeld* different, it's the equally sexually crazed single woman, Elaine Benes.

If Elaine had existed in Doris Day's day, she'd have been exposed as a social problem on the ABC! She's slept with more men than any woman on TV and we love her (at least I do). Now that's progress, and Elaine was there first.

Seinfeld is coming to an end, and it's probably just as well. After all, Elaine's really the last relic of the generation that came of age in the 1970s, that post-Pill, pre-AIDS golden age. But it's still sad, like saying a final goodbye to your youth; indeed, it's sometimes hard to tell where she stops and the rest of us start.

Elaine speaks for us. There she is on the subway, on her way to a wedding where both the bride and groom are

women. She's telling this to a woman who's so disgusted (because she thinks Elaine is a lesbian too), she storms off at the next stop. What does Elaine do? Apologise? Blush? Get out! Abandoned in a crowded carriage, she shouts, "I'm not a lesbian!" then adds, "I hate men, but I'm not a lesbian." Go Elaine!

Elaine is everywoman. Take breasts. Like they're not an embarrassment? I'm down at the pool the other day and get it in my head to dive off the board for the first time in years. So what's the first part of my torso that surfaces — my suddenly fully exposed breast. Get out! No, really. "Our whole life you go through painstaking efforts to hide your nipple then boom, suddenly hundreds of people get their own personal shot of it," says Elaine. She's been here before me.

It was the time Kramer took her photo for her personalised Christmas card. She hadn't noticed her nipple was in the photo until Jerry pointed it out, after she'd sent hundreds of the cards.

Did she slink away ashamed like I did? Get out! When George complained

about being the only person who didn't get a card she said, "You want a Christmas card? You want a Christmas card?" She grabbed his big bald head, thrust it against her breast and shook it! Elaine... my hero!

She's vulnerable. Even George gets the better of her sometimes. How did he get Elaine to help him get revenge on an old boss by "slipping him a mickey"? Easy. He just told her that the old boss was a sexist pig who cheats on his wife. Like she could resist after that!

Elaine knows a thing or two about men. How did she get the old boss's attention? Easy. She tells him that she's going to a nudist colony. That she works naked, cooks naked and eats naked. By the time she says, "Naked, naked, naked," the old boss is eating out of her hands.

Tell me about it. There I was at the Terminus Hotel in Abbotsford, Melbourne, playing Writersports (a pub version of the board game). I'm reading my entry and everyone's telling me to put my mouth closer to the mike. But



Get out! Elaine Benes, as played by Julia Louis-Dreyfus, has slept with more men than any other woman on television... and we love her

greeted by a chorus of knowing "Hi, Jill's". No kidding!

I do love Elaine, but I'm happy to leave her behind. She's had her day. Even Julia Louis-Dreyfus, the actor who plays Elaine so brilliantly, is married with two kids.

I'll miss her though. Who gets to the heart of the matter like her? Take *English Patient* fever. America went mad! Some guy at Time magazine actually said the film represented the dialogue of mature love. Excuse me? An adulterous couple who've just met? The dialogue of mature love? Get out!

I was despairing that not a sane word would be written or spoken about that film and along comes Elaine. She's cast out and ostracised because she hates the film. Finally, even a waitress walks off on her over it. Was she beat? Not my Lainy. She separated the wheat from the chaff. "Hey," she yelled to the empty restaurant, "Give me somethin' I can use. Everyone knows it doesn't work in the bath!"

Goodbye Elaine, I love you.

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how can I? It looks just like a dick! Suddenly Elaine's spirit possesses me. I throw embarrassment to the wind, grip the mike and began licking it. The room fills as men from the public bar down billiard cues and pour into the lounge. Get out!

Later, I walk through the bar gripping my prize for the night's most popular story, looking for the exit, and I'm