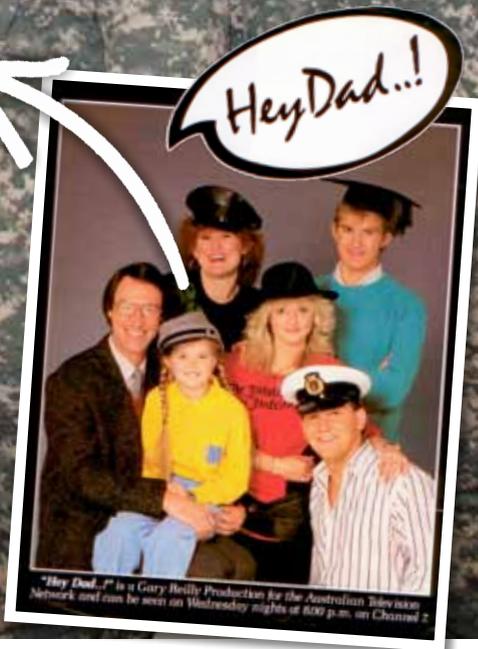


Proudly carrying on her family tradition of military service, Sarah's moving forward after the trauma she experienced as a child star (below, on actor Robert Hughes' lap).

Sarah Monahan HEY DAD, I'M IN THE ARMY



Taking control after a hellish childhood, Sarah is armed and ready for anything

Watch out world! Gutsy former *Hey Dad...!* favourite Sarah Monahan has achieved her life's ambition – to join the military.

At just 1.5m tall, Sarah, 34, may be dwarfed by colleagues in the Texas State Guard, but the Australian-born battler continues to stand up for what she believes.

'It's like all of my childhood dreams have come true,' smiles the girl who shot to fame playing Jenny Kelly on the hit *Oz* sitcom.

'I always said I wanted to be in the army or navy. It's taken a while but now I've achieved it!

'Life's too short to wait for help from other people. You just have to go ahead and do what you want.'

Pint-sized Sarah has always been brave. At nine, she became her family's breadwinner when her father died of a heart attack at 36.

Then, after 17 years of silent torment, she found the courage to step forward and accuse her on-screen dad – actor Robert Hughes – of repeated sexual abuse on the

set. Sarah claims the first incident happened when she was just six.

Her revelations, made over two years ago, sparked national outrage and a police investigation.

'He'd like touch my boobs... because I was always on his lap, he'd... grab my ****,' Sarah told *A Current Affair*, adding Robert used to drop his pants in front of her.

'In the dressing room he'd... tickle you on the bed, and be on the bed with you, and try to touch you. I was always trying to get out.'

Today, she is unable to discuss the case for legal reasons. Sources close to the investigation tell *New Idea* a brief of evidence has gone to the NSW Director of Public Prosecutions for consideration.

But Sarah – now a US citizen living on a ranch in Texas with IT contractor husband Matt Morris – is moving on, signing up with the part-time State Guard last year.

'I was sworn by one of my friends at a place called Enchanted Rock, which is about the closest thing we have to Uluru,' she says. 'It was a little bit Australian, a little

bit Texas, so it was quite special.

'I've joined the medical group – hurricanes, tornados, pandemics or zombie apocalypse, we're ready! The only problem was finding a uniform. I ended up with extra-extra-short, extra-extra-small.'

Sarah now has experience in handling weapons and has gone on manoeuvres with the National Guard and Special Forces.

Amazingly, she once wanted to join the Australian military full-time – but deafness in one ear and her diminutive size made it impossible.

'The armed forces were part of our family tradition,' explains Sarah. 'My mother's father

was a World War II digger and both her brothers served. It was something I always longed to do.'

For the future, Sarah can only wait for the next episode of the *Hey Dad...!* drama. Feisty yet still fragile, she is sure of only two things – her love for Matt and her resolve not to have children. She simply could not bear to see them scarred the way she has been.

'I see my main aim in this life is to protect others, especially the helpless or vulnerable,' she says.

'Mess with me now and I simply won't take it. Nobody hassles me anymore.' **NI**

By Jenny Brown



'The State Guard is like boy scouts for adults,' says Sarah, who trained in handling rocket launchers and operating military vehicles.