

LORNA JUNE CHAMBERS - A Tribute

I would like to talk to you about Lorna June Chambers - her life and her legacy.

Her Life

Lorna June Chambers was born Lorna June Barclay on the 1st of June 1924 in Stawell, the second child and only girl in a family of four children. From the day she was born till the day she left us, she was known simply as "June". A good thing probably, as she was never a fan of the name Lorna!

June's father was a policeman and the family moved around along with his postings. She spent most of her formative years in the Coburg district and also spent a lot of time with her grandmother in Stawell where she attended school.

During the 2nd World War she received a pen pal letter from a chap serving with the RAAF. He had selected her name from the list as she hailed from the same area as he did. After some months of corresponding, Stanley Frederick Chambers arranged to meet his pen pal on the Flinders Street Bridge while on leave in Melbourne. The meeting did not eventuate as neither were sure who the other was and they ended up walking past each other. The next day, June's mother answered a knock on the door, looked at the young man nervously standing there in his RAAF uniform and said "you must be Stan!" That was the beginning of a classic war-time romance, the kind they make movies about. Not long after, June and Stan were married in Hamilton on the 15th October 1943 and began a lifetime together which spanned over 63 years.

June and Stan lived almost half their married life in Pascoe Vale, raising their two children in the house they bought in Bendigo Street. In 1977, they moved to a unit in Parkville and during their time there joined the Salvation Army. They were assigned to what was then the Mount Royal Home for the Aged as Chaplains and brought much joy and compassion to those they visited. I will never forget their loving care of my grandmother while she was there.

In 1984, June and Stan made the move to Bethany Retirement Village in Camberwell, where they spent many happy years together. They became somewhat of an institution there, known initially as the "youngies" and putting their efforts into running the kiosk, devotions and many other activities.

Sadly, around eighteen months ago June lost the love of her life, Stan. The severing of a loving partnership that had spanned decades left a huge void in her life, although June, being June, managed to move on and get on with the daily business of living, loving and caring for those around her.

Her Legacy

For June, her family was her life, her love and her legacy. She was the loving mother of Robyn and Russell, and mother-in-law of Fred and myself. She was the devoted grandmother of Brendan, Narelle, Danni, Katie and Ben and the adoring great-

grandmother of Bethany and Thomas. She was also the great-grandmother of Jack, who sadly she never got to hold, but who we know she is watching over. Loved as well by the partners of her grandchildren, Dani, Scott, Dave and Ryan, it came as no surprise when she welcomed with love Fred's children, Jacquie & Scott, Janine & Nick and their children Caelan and Georgia into the family fold.

Her love and support over the years has sustained us all through the good and the bad. She was always there to laugh with us, cry with us and hold out her arms when we needed her. I remember the first night Russell took me home to meet his parents. The next morning she said to him "who was that nice little girl you brought home last night", to which Russell replied, "Mum, that nice little girl is nearly 20!" From that moment on, she opened her arms and heart to me and accepted me as a part of the family. She became the mother I never really had. That unconditional love remained until the day she left us and it was the same unconditional love she gave all who were fortunate enough to have been a part of her life.

June Chambers was unquestionably the most inspirational woman I have ever known. To her family, she was not only our mother, grandmother, sister and aunt, but she was our friend as well. To her friends and associates within the Salvation Army, she was also a caring and compassionate friend. I received a condolence message this week that described her as a "beautiful soul" - for me that is just about the perfect description of a woman who has left her mark on so many people. The void she leaves in the lives of all those who knew her and loved her can only be summed up in one word indescribable.

She has been reunited with her beloved Stan and I believe they are together, hand in hand, smiling down on us now. And I think they would probably want us to smile back.

God bless you Mum.