



June Rowlands

December 21, 2017

JUNE ROWLANDS (née Pendock)

1924 – 2017

Surrounded by her loving family and dedicated caregivers, June passed away peacefully at Wellesley Central Place in Toronto on December 21st in her 94th year.

June Rowlands was a true force of nature, a community activist, a trailblazing politician and Toronto's first female Mayor from 1991 to 1994. She grew up in north Toronto, attending Lawrence Park Collegiate and the University of Toronto, and began her career in the 1940s as a service rep with Bell Canada. There she met future husband, Harry Rowlands (1922 – 1989), who had returned from serving overseas as a pilot and navigator during WWII. Married in 1947, June and Harry had five children, including two sets of twins.

A lifelong activist, June advocated for the developmentally challenged, the elderly, the poor and victims of domestic violence. She sat on numerous boards, including the Association of Women Electors (AWE), the Family Service Association and the National Council of Welfare. As an active member, and later president, of AWE in the 1950s, she developed a strong interest in housing issues and the plight of underprivileged families in Toronto's poorer neighbourhoods. June was active in a ground-breaking effort to rehabilitate a run-down part of the city, known as Trefann Court.

In the '70s, June served as Research Director for the Liberal Caucus at Queen's Park, and made her first bid for public office in 1975, running unsuccessfully for a seat in the Ontario Legislature. The experience served her well, however, and the following year she was elected Alderman in the North Toronto's Ward 10. She excelled as a city politician, becoming Toronto's first female budget chief, first woman TTC Commissioner, and eventually, chair of the Toronto Police Services Board. In 2004, Davisville Park was renamed June Rowlands Park in her honour, an unusual tribute for someone still living.

June was a tenacious and outspoken advocate, willing to voice unpopular opinions and

stare down political foes. At 67, she was elected mayor of Toronto, while also serving as budget chief during challenging recessionary times. June was blessed with a youthful radiance throughout her long life, and enjoyed boundless energy and resilience. She had a zany side too, and a sense of the ridiculous – her campaign against pantyhose that disintegrated too easily, comes to mind.

The city politician was also a devoted cottager, spending weekends and summers at Lake Kashwakamak in eastern Ontario. She is survived by her children: Doug, Joyce, Murray (Gretchen Van Riesen), Bruce (Anne Bermonte) and Alec, and grandchildren Eryn Koncir (Zach), Taylor, Katerina and Rachel.

A Celebration of Life will be held to remember June on January 16th, 2pm, at Rosedale United Church, 159 Roxborough Dr. TTC: Rosedale bus 82 from Rosedale subway station; parking available on neighbouring streets. Wheelchair ramp. In lieu of flowers, donations would be gratefully received by Wellesley Central Place for their recreation and palliative care programs.

Never forgotten, forever in our hearts

Comments



“ I just heard of the recent passing of June Rowlands. I had the good fortune of meeting June while working with the City during her term as Councillor and Mayor. I was young and looked up to June Rowlands. She was a solid woman in many ways. Always pleasant and courteous to staff. She always had a great smile and still does. Rest in peace June and thank-you for all that you did for Toronto.

Flora

Flora - January 16, 2018 at 01:48 PM



“ recall this courageous woman's steadfast spear-heading- wish we'd been acquainted, belatedly..should've voted for June..extremely sorry to hear of her going- condolences to her beloved relations and friends- they must be pained..MR

Mali Roz - January 16, 2018 at 12:33 PM



“ Thank you and our condolences from Miguel Silvia and Mariana Bermonte across the Atlantic.

Miguel Bermonte - January 16, 2018 at 10:50 AM



“ June and Harry provided me with our first dog! My parents were very good friends and colleagues at Lawrence Park Collegiate. June became allergic to their purebred golden lab and our family was blessed to receive Tana and was my first love in life! Tana although adopted by us at a very young age always knew when June entered our house and would cry and jump all over her and was always a memory that stuck in my head! June had an amazing laugh and electricity that I admired from a very young age! You will be missed

Sheila Hewton - January 12, 2018 at 08:46 PM



“ Our condolences to Murray, Gretchen, Taylor, Eryn and the rest of the Rowlands family. May you be encouraged by all the great memories that are being shared and as you celebrate her life on Tuesday.

Gary & Heather Koncir

Heather & Gary Koncir - January 12, 2018 at 08:29 AM



“ Sorry to hear about June passing. My condolences to the Rowlands family.

Love

Marlene

marlene charmatz - January 16, 2018 at 11:54 AM



“ My sympathies to you all. It's sad to lose a parent but you will always have good memories to keep aunt June in your hearts.

All the best, Nancy

Nancy Fawcett - January 10, 2018 at 01:29 PM



“ Sending our thoughts and prayers. Aunt June has left you a lot of wonderful memories. The Purdys.

Marg Purdy - January 02, 2018 at 03:11 PM



“ Hello

I was saddened to hear about June's passing. I remember during her Mayoralty campaign we rented a streetcar and went through Toronto with her family and my young boy Alex and some other younger children. We had a loud speaker sounding out various political slogans. it was loads of fun for everyone. She was always in good spirits and a dedicated Mayor and Torontonionian. She will be missed.

Peter W Aziz

Toronto

peter w aziz - December 28, 2017 at 01:58 PM



“ June generously shared her time and knowledge with me in 1968 when I prepared a university research paper on The Association of Women Electors. It was a pivotal point in my academic life and in my selection of a future career in community planning. She demonstrated that women could have a significant impact and I have always remembered her commitment and her kindness.

Diana Jardine

Diana Jardine - December 26, 2017 at 04:55 PM