

Eulogy – Helen Shannon – By Jan Cass

I first met Helen Shannon in 1963 when I was teaching one of the two reception classes at Loxton Primary School. Tom Shannon was in the other class and each day at 2.30 most of the reception children went home if their parents could collect them. Each day one of the reception teachers had to stand at the gate with the children to make sure that only those whose parents collected them got out the gate. Of course it was a wonderful opportunity to meet and speak with the parents – hence I met Helen.

Over the years we became involved with the Shannons at many social functions. Helen loved a party, loved a drink and especially loved a good joke. She could remember and tell a very good joke and if the family ever come across Helen's joke book we would love to have a copy!!

She was a member of the Ladies Dinner group that meets monthly at the hotel and only last month she attended the 25th anniversary dinner. She was always a popular attendee often providing a lighter moment.

Her jokes were famous! When Peter Jackson was Mayor of Loxton during the lunch break on council meeting days, he would always tell the councillors a joke. One day he was asked where he heard all of these jokes and his answer was "May plays bridge with Helen Shannon and I must admit most of them are ones May heard from Helen and has come home and told me". I, personally am hopeless at remembering jokes – I could not even remember them long enough to tell John when I got home from council but Helen was a master at remembering them.

Helen has been teaching bridge for over 50 years and as we have heard it began as a fundraiser for the Hospital Auxillary. The Hospital Bridge Club raised and purchased and donated goods worth many thousands of dollars over the years. A couple of years ago we purchased about 7 high backed arm chairs with adjustable leg heights for the Nursing Home residents. Helen had one of the chairs in her room for the last 2 ½ years of her life and sat in it all the time. We were pleased she benefitted from her own fundraising efforts. This year we purchased 3 large screened smart televisions for the lounge rooms in Accacia, Banksia and Corria Houses. Only this week one of the staff told me these are now being used frequently and appreciated by the residents. These facilities and many more are all thanks to Helen, her bridge lessons and afternoons. The Ladies of the Hospital Auxillary who made the decision to start the Bridge Club would be amazed to know it is still going 52 years later – and even more amazed at the amount of money that has been raised.

Until a couple of years ago Helen played bridge three days a week. More recently she has only played Monday Hospital bridge and Fridays in her room or Flora Tonkin's and she played right up until the day before her fall. Fridays she also enjoyed the homemade afternoon teas.

After bridge which we played 1-4pm Mondays and Fridays we would always have a drink with the two ladies and they enjoyed that part of the afternoon too.

As I took her back to her room after Monday bridge, she would always say "Would you like a drink – I hope there is something in my fridge" There always was – thanks to Tom and Bill. They looked after Helen very well indeed as did Sally in more recent times and Helen appreciated it. I would like to pay tribute especially to Tom and Bill for their wonderful attention to Helen ever since their father died. They have been outstanding.

Helen's birthday is only 2 days after mine and Russell Smith and Trevor Castle both have birthdays that same week as well. For many years we have had what we have called "the May drop birthday dinner" held sometime during that week. This alternated between Smith's, Castle's and our place and for the last few years it has been a luncheon as we felt that was easier for Helen. We have had a lot of fun on these occasions and I am sure we will drink a toast to Helen next May.

Helen was a lady who always dressed immaculately, took pride in her hair and make-up, was a great hostess, an extraordinary ginger fluff cook, a joke telling and bridge playing maestro and could drink most of us under the table – but importantly she was a loyal friend who will be sadly missed by all of us.

Helen's legacy to Loxton is not only the money that she has enabled to be raised for the Hospital but the pleasure, friendship and fun she has given to many people – not only in teaching bridge and organising bridge days but in her entertaining jokes creating much laughter wherever she went.

Her bridge legacy will live on for many years. She will be missed enormously.

Eulogy – Helen Shannon – By David Shannon

I first want to thank you all for your attendance. My name is David, number one grandchild – you may take that to mean the first born or the favourite ... no, Nan had no favourites. We all shared a special place in her heart, as she did in ours. I am privileged to speak on behalf of the grandchildren.

It is hard to comprehend that I was only in Loxton, a little over a month ago, to remember the life of our great aunt Linley Shannon. For that time to have also been that last with Nan.

I am however grateful that those memories are still fresh in mind of a person full of life, laughter, love and spirit.

What is harder is knowing that a person who has been there with me from the days I first walked on this earth, watching me grow up and start a family of my own, is here no longer. But to have known, to have loved and to have been loved by such a remarkable person makes each and every moment, those memories all the more special.

To have grown up with Nanny, and Poppy, close by. I mean to go out to the farm was to be with Nanny and Poppy.

Helping out in the kitchen preparing scones and bacon savouries for morning tea and lunches for “the men”, calling out on the two-way “7-4 to Mobile” seeking an update on their happenings and movements, counting coins from “winnings” following bridge on the kitchen table, which were to be donated to the hospital, as well as chauffeuring her around the district to run errands. It was time we got to spend together, to share together.

Speaking of driving her around. I remember one time out on the farm, when Nan received a call from the men, who were over at Meruna. It must’ve been one of the busy times of the year – around seeding or harvest – as they were shifting equipment between the properties. They needed a ute to bring them back to Meramba and they needed Nan to do it.

It doesn’t seem such a strange request, what farm doesn’t have a ute!

The problem was that ute was a manual. Nan couldn’t drive a manual. I recall when she got off the call she exclaimed “Buggered if I know how to drive a manual!”, but she had committed to helping out. It was the person she was. She devoted her life to serving her family and the community.

Now I didn’t believe there was an issue, certainly with me there to help. I could teach her to drive a manual and we could take the ute over together...

So there we were “bunny-hopping” down Shannon Rd, the ute jerking and jolting and not because of the corrugations. There I was sitting next to Nan coaching her in driving the ute. Repeating the same instructions that Dad had used when he taught me to drive, “engage the clutch, put it into first gear; now slowly release the foot pedal and apply pressure to the accelerator.”

It wasn't a great ride and we didn't think it was any good for the ute either. We were about half way down Christie Road and I thought here is my chance – what if I drove instead? It would certainly be quicker and smoother.

Now it's probably worth saying that I couldn't tell how old I was, but it was a time where neither of us were barely tall enough to see over the steering wheel, let alone have a drivers licence!

Nonetheless, I was able to convince her – on the condition we stay on the backroads. I certainly didn't want to push my luck. Our journey continued, this time with me in the driver's seat, with a smile stretching for ear to ear, and Nan in the passenger's seat, breathing a sigh of relief and not to get behind the wheel of a manual again.

It was moments like this – helped on by her supporting and trusting nature - which I still treasure today.

More recently, Nan made the journey over to Sydney in 2016 for my wedding to my wife Lucy. I know the car ride over wasn't an easy trip for her – but for her to be able to celebrate our special day with us, with her dressed to the nines with her fox fur coat is truly unforgettable... Well as least Lucy and I believe so. Nan just needed a bit more prompting to recount those memories, more so in recent times.

Reminiscing became more difficult with her memory on its way out. She knew it, but it didn't stop her from enjoying her life surrounded by friends and family.

You could sit with her chatting away for hours on end. The topics of conversation may not have strayed too far and you may have been asked the same questions time and time again – like what are the men up to? How long are you up here for? When are you going to come back (to see me)?

Occasionally it was, “Are you spoken for?” Or “When are you going to get hitched?”, “When are you going to start a family?” (Nan, I am, to Lucy. You came to our wedding in Sydney. We have a daughter; you've met Vivienne.) - She would then reply with a smile and quip “Oh yes – I know that dear,” or “You don't need to remind me!”

None of that bothered her. What truly mattered was the time we spent together. What didn't change was her kind and pure heart.

I am glad that she lived long enough to be a great-grandmother to Vivienne. Whilst their time together was brief, the delight in Nan's eyes during each encounter – each time may have felt like the first – was of pure love.

In closing, I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to everybody here and to those who was part of her life.

And to take some words from one of her favourite songs, Time to Say Goodbye by Andrea Bocelli

(the English translation, not Italian)

When I am alone I sit and dream
And when I dream the words are missing
Yes I know that in a room so full of light
That all the light is missing
But I don't see you with me
Close up the windows, bring the sun to my room
Through the door you've opened
Close inside of me the light you see
That you met in the darkness
Time to say goodbye

EULOGY OF HELEN SHANNON By Tom Shannon

HELEN AND HER TWIN SISTER MARJORIE WERE BORN IN GYMPIE QUEENSLAND ON THE 16/5/1921 AND WERE THE ELDEST OF 6 CHILDREN OF JACK STEPHEN AND MARJORIE MEHAN. WITH 2 BOYS PAT AND BILL FOLLOWED BY 2 GIRLS JUDY AND MARY.

IT IS WONDERFUL HAVING MUM'S SISTER MARY HARRIS PRESENT TODAY. MARY IS THE LAST SURVIVING MEMBER OF HER GENERATION. A REAL FAMILY TREASURE.

THE MEHAN FAMILY ARE VERY CLOSE. IT WAS NOT SURPRISING WHEN THE 4 GIRLS WERE TOGETHER, NO ONE COULD GET A WORD IN EDGEWAYS. THERE WAS MUCH HILARITY, MANY STORIES AND OF COURSE THE MANDATORY JOKES COMBINED WITH A GLASS OF WINE IN HAND.

DAD ASKED MUM TO THE RED AND WHITE SCHOOL BALL IN 1938. WITH THE OUTBREAK OF WAR AND DAD'S FATHERS DEATH THAT YEAR. THIS PROCLUDED ANY CONTACT WITH MUM UNTIL 17 YEARS LATER.

MUM TRAINED AS A THEATRE NURSE AT THE ADELAIDE CHILDRENS HOSPITAL WITH HER TWIN SISTER MARJORIE. IN THOSE DAYS IN THE NURSING PROFESSION ONLY ONE FAMILY MEMBER COULD TAKE ON THE FAMILY NAME. MARJ BEING THE OLDEST TOOK THAT OPPORTUNITY. AS AN ALTERNATIVE MUM WAS ASKED TO TAKE ON HER MOTHERS MAIDEN NAME WHICH WAS CUPPAIDGE. FOLLOWING THIS SHE ENDURED VARIOUS NICK NAMES LIKE CABBAGE, CAULIFLOWER AND SPRING BEAN TO NAME A FEW UNTIL HER NURSE TRAINING WAS COMPLETED.

MARJORIE AND HELEN JOINED THE ARMY AND WERE POSTED TO QUEENSLAND. THE ARMY OFFICERS WERE CONTINUALLY CONFUSED AS TO WHO THEY WERE TAKING OUT ON A DATE AS MARJ AND HELEN WERE IN CONSTANT CONTACT WITH EACH OTHER'S PROGRESS FOLLOWING EACH LIAISON. THEY ENJOYED A LOT OF FUN WITH THESE ANTICS.

FOLLOWING THIS MUM RETURNED TO ADELAIDE ASSISTING VARIOUS DOCTORS IN THEIR BUSY SURGICAL PRACTISES.

IN 1955 MUM WAS BRIDESMAID TO HER SISTER MARY AND DR. DAVID HARRIS' WEDDING. DAD BEING THE FIRST COUSIN TO DAVID WAS ALSO INVITED. MUM AND DADS RELATIONSHIP REKINDLED AND BLOSSOMED AND THEY WERE MARRIED ON 7TH. APRIL 1956.

I WAS CONCEIVED ON THEIR HONEYMOON SOMEWHERE BETWEEN MOUNT GAMBIER AND LAKES ENTRANCE. I WAS BORN THE FOLLOWING JANUARY WITH BILL SUBSEQUENTLY 2 YEARS LATER. BILL AND I COMMENCED PRIMARY SCHOOL AT LOXTON AND THIS IS WHEN MUM REJUVINATED HER BRIDGE PLAYING CAREER WITH WHICH SHE HAD LEARNT DURING HER EARLIER YEARS.

SHE PLAYED WEEKLY IN LOXTON WITH JOAN DEED, JOYCE CHRISTIE AND BARBARA TROWBRIDGE AND ALSO TRAVELLED TO RENMARK TO PLAY WITH RAY STOECKEL, RUBY PENDLE AND BRONNY COCK FOR MANY YEARS.

ON ONE OCCASION SHE WAS TRAVELLING TO VERNA TRIPNEY'S, WHILE CROSSING RAL RAL AVENUE TOWARDS FATHER PAULS DOMAIN SHE COLLIDED WITH A CAR TRAVELLING FROM COOLTONG CATAPULTING MUMS CAR INTO THE MURRAY PIONEER BUILDING. PAUL TAYLOR WHO KNEW MUM ASSISTED HER OUT OF THE CAR RETREIVING HER GLASSES FROM THE AIR BAG ASSEMBLY.

THE AMBULANCE OFFICERS REMARKED THAT SHE WAS THE FITTEST 87 YEAR OLD WOMAN THAT THEY HAD SEEN AFTER WRITING OFF A CAR. HER REMARKS WERE, JOHN WILL GET ME ANOTHER ONE AND I AM LATE FOR BRIDGE. SOMETIME LATER THE POLICE KNOCKED ON VERNAS DOOR REQUESTING TO BREATHALISE MUM. VERNA SAID IT WAS TOO LATE AS SHE HAD ALREADY DOWNED A HEART STARTER BRANDY.

THE LATE JOAN SCHOLZ WHO WAS PRESIDENT OF THE LOXTON HOSPITAL AUXILLARY ASKED MUM IN 1967 IF SHE WOULD ON A VOLUTARY BASIS TEACH PEOPLE IN THE LOXTON COMMUNITY WHO WERE INTERESTED IN PLAYING BRIDGE AS A FUNDRAISING SOURCE FOR THE LOXTON HOSPITAL. THE CURRENT AUXILLARY MEMBERS AT THAT TIME WERE TIRING OF ORGANISING MONTHLY TRADING TABLES, THE ANNUAL HOSPITAL FETE AND THE MELBOURNE CUP LUNCHEON.

MANY IMPROVEMENTS HAVE BEEN MADE FOR THE HOSPITAL AND ITS ENVIRONS OVER THE 52 YEARS THAT THE BRIDGE CLUB HAS BEEN IN EXISTANCE.

IT WAS UNFORTUNATE HOWEVER THE HISTORY AND THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE LOXTON HOSPITAL AUXILLARY AND THE HOSPITAL BRIDGE CLUB WERE OVERLOOKED IN THE LOXTON HOSPITALS HISTORY BOOK.

MUM WAS A MEMBER OF THE RIVERLAND BRIDGE CLUB SINCE ITS INCEPTION HAVING BEV DALZELL AS HER PARTNER. WITH SILENCE PREVAILING DURING COMPETITION IT PREVENTED HER HELPING NOVICES UNTIL GAMES HAD FINISHED.

MUM ENJOYED COOKING AND WAS RENOWNED FOR HER GINGER FLUFF AND BLOW AWAY SPONGE MAKING. DAD, BILL AND I ENJOYED HER FAILURES EVEN POLISHING OFF A GINGER FLUFF AT MORNING TEA TO MUM'S DISGUST. SHE DID HOWEVER HAVE A LOT OF SUCCESSES AT THE CAKE SECTION AT THE LOXTON SHOW. I BELIEVE NOT USING FRESH EGGS WAS THE ANSWER.

MUM AND DAD HAD MANY LOYAL FRIENDS WITH MUM REMEMBERING GETTING HOME WITH DAD FROM A TENNIS PARTY AT HARRINGTONS EARLY ONE MORNING AS THE BAG SEWERS WERE ARRIVING TO SEW BAGS WITH GRAIN HARVESTED THE DAY BEFORE.

THE ANNUAL MAY DROP BIRTHDAY WITH SPECIAL FRIENDS WERE ALWAYS A WONDERFUL CELEBRATION. IT MAY HAVE CONTINUED THROUGH TO THE MELBOURNE CUP WHERE THE SWEEP LOSER HAD TO RIDE A HORSE BETWEEN ONES LEGS ACROSS THE STREET. FROM ALL REPORTS MUM RODE EXCEPTIONALLY WELL EVEN NEGOTIATING WITH HER WALKER ONE YEAR.

BRIDGE CONTINUED EACH FRIDAY ALTERNATING BETWEEN FLORA TONKINS AND HER ROOM. JAN CASS, SHIRLEY PFIEFFER, CAROL MAPEL AND BARNEY ABBOTT COORDINATED THIS VALUABLE WEEKLY OCCASION.

LIPSTICK, POWDER, PERFUME WHICH I THOUGHT SHE DRANK AND MATCHING DRESS COLOURS WERE THE FIRST ORDER OF THE DAY. SHE ALWAYS PRESENTED WELL. HER OUTLOOK AND HER POSITIVITY IN LIFE AND OF COURSE HER SENSE OF HUMOR WERE HER WONDERFUL ATTRIBUTES.

MUM WAS ORIGINALLY A CITY GIRL WITHOUT ANY SENSE OF GEOGRAPHIC DIRECTION. SHE MADE FARM LIFE A SUCCESS, SUPPORTING DAD AND GUIDING BILL AND I ON THE RIGHT PATH.

DAD WAS ALWAYS RELUCTANT TAKING MUM SHOPPING. HE MADE SURE HE COLLECTED THE MAIL AND PAPERS AND WHILE WAITING FOR HER. HE COULD HAVE REPLIED TO ALL MAIL AND WRITTEN A LETTER OR TWO TO THE EDITOR. MUM WOULD BE TALKING TO EVERY PASSER BY GENUINALLY INTERESTED IN THEIR WELFARE AND THEN ONLY COLLECTING A CARTON OF MILK.

MUM WAS WELL SUPPORTED FOLLOWING DADS DEATH IN APRIL 2006. HER LOYAL FRIENDS AND FAMILY INCLUDED HER CONTINUALLY IN VARIOUS ACTIVITIES AND DINNERS.

WE LOST LINLEY 7 WEEKS AGO AND NOW WITHOUT MUM THIS WILL LEAVE A BIG VOID IN OUR HEARTS.

MUM ADORED HER GRAND CHILDREN AND WAS ALWAYS EAGER TO SEE THEM. SHE LOVED TO SEE THEM PROSPER AND GROW INTO FINE ADULTS. IN RETURN THEY ADORED HER, THE RAPORT WAS AMAZING, FROM BUBS TO NOW, ULTIMATELY A KINDRED SPIRIT WAS PRESENT. MUM ASKED MANY TIMES MAINLY IN JEST WHEN THE GIRLS WERE GETTING MARRIED. NO DOUBT SHE WANTED MORE GRANDIES. HOWEVER DAVID AND LUCY HAD A LITTLE GIRL JUST OVER 12 MONTHS AGO CALLED VIVIENNE. MUM WAS OVERWHELMED BUT SHE DIDN'T WANT TO BE CALLED A GREAT GRANDMOTHER AS THE GREAT SOUNDED AS SHE WAS TOO OLD.

WE THANK THE LOXTON HOSPITAL COMPLEX AND ITS DEDICATED PERSONNEL WHO WORK WITHIN ITS BOUNDARIES FOR THE CARE, SUPPORT AND ATTENTION THAT THEY GIVEN TO MUM DURING THE PAST 3 AND HALF YEARS.

WE WERE VERY IMPRESSED WITH THE NEW RAH AND ALL IT HAS TO OFFER. I KNOW SALLY WOULD LOVE THE STAFF RATIOS AT THE BERRI GENERAL HOSPITAL.

MY WIFE SALLY HAS ALSO BEEN A TOWER OF STRENGTH ACCOMPANYING MUM THROUGHOUT HER JOURNEY, CONSTANTLY LIAISING WITH RAH STAFF TENDING TO ALL MUM'S REQUIREMENTS. A BIG THANKYOU.

THANKYOU ALSO TO BILL AND LISA, VICTORIA AND ELIZABETH WHO SPENT MUCH TIME WITH UNTIL FRIDAY TOGETHER WITH TREASURED FAMILY MEMBERS AND FRIENDS WHO WERE IN CONSTANT COMUNICATION.

THANK YOU SINCERELY.