



June V. Reid

February 5, 1928 - September 4, 2020

June V. Reid Memorium Feb. 5, 1928 – Sept. 4, 2020

June Verzyl Reid died peacefully in her sleep early Friday morning, September 4th. She had been struggling with COPD and advanced dementia. But she never lost her smile or sense of humor. She made it to 92 without new hips, new knees, glasses or contacts. She was married twice and survived both husbands. She had a great head of thick white hair always perfectly coiffed in a stylish cut to her very last day.

One of her best friends once described her as “quite a gal,” a perfect phrase for her as a child of the 1930s and 40s: fun-loving, a great dancer, a wine lover and a beauty. When she had her portrait painted – her husband insisted – he thought she looked like Rosalind Russell. So he sent the actress a note saying so with a photo of the portrait. Rosalind Russell wrote back saying “I should look so good.”

June created miraculous parties seemingly from thin air. In the summer, it was outside with tablecloths and lots of flowers picked from the garden, a backdrop to perfectly concocted, bite-size hors d’oeuvres. In the winter, she held a large “open house” on New Years’ Day around the Christmas tree. The egg nog was spiked with rum and there was a large pan of homemade lasagna.

“We had many good times and she was so talented and quick witted not to mention a fabulous cook and a superb hostess” said her cousin Carole Judge.

“My husband Roy and she traded recipes -- and both were enamored with wine.’ We miss those wonderful years.”

She was born in the first building of Huntington Hospital and named June Carol Convery. She graduated from Northport High School in 1946. While there, she starred in the class plays and would often say, “I was quite a good actor you know.” Of course she was a cheerleader, up front and center. What she didn’t fess up to was she couldn’t hold a tune – but she would try loudly. Upon graduation, she commuted to New York to Parson’s School of Design to study advertising.

She married Kenneth H. Verzyl on March 6, 1953 when she was 26. It was a short courtship. You might say it was love at first sight. Even before they were married, he built her a small shop in Northport from which she would sell gifts, wallpaper and other goods and called it the Tom Thumb Gift Shop because it was so small. She drove to Manhattan weekly in a red convertible to Manhattan’s “gift district” looking for new items for her store.

Always the rebel, she ruled out a big white dress wedding, in favor of her parents’ living room in the house that her fiancé had built for them – and where they met. “The bride wore a tan silk pongee dress, a matching straw hat, brown alligator accessories and a corsage of white violets,” according to an article about the ceremony in the local newspaper.

Adventurers both, they went on a two-and-a-half-month trip to Europe, taking the Queen Elizabeth there and back. In Germany, she had a soup that she thought was so good she asked for her bowl to be refilled several times. Then her husband gently told her they had to pay for every bowl. When they came back, they were broke.

June never stopped traveling -- flying in a hot air balloon in the southwest, riding a donkey in Greece and a camel in Egypt. There were also trips to the U.K., Mexico, Italy, Hawaii, France, Canada, China, Japan, Switzerland, New Zealand and more. She was always ready for a new adventure. “I’ll be ready in 15 minutes,” she would say to a spur of the moment invitation.

The Verzyls had a wonderful marriage and Kenneth adored June. Through the

years people told her they envied the strength of their commitment to one another amid so many divorces around them. They also made a strong team at bridge, with June often “taking the risk” and making grand slams left and right. She would playfully gloat about it the following morning.

Their only daughter, Kimberly, was born three years after they wed. “I was quite old you know (29),” she would tell Kim, who would be an only child. June was an only child herself.

Kenneth became ill in the mid-1970s and June was beside him every step through a three-year fight with cancer. She took the Long Island Railroad into Manhattan every day to see him, taking a cross town bus from the station to the hospital on the other side of Manhattan. She would stay with him until he had his dinner and then made the reverse commute home. It took more than three hours each way. She took the same railroad car each morning and formed a bridge group with three other commuters. “She demonstrated strength through thick and thin,” one of her friends recalled. Ken died in 1978. They had been married 25 years; he was 56, she was 50.

The Tom Thumb Gift Shop was not her only entrepreneurial venture. When her daughter was seven years old, she opened an art gallery, one of only a handful on Long Island at the time. Kim used to say her mother used a special “gallery voice” when she was there – deep and sonorous as she outstretched her hand to introduce herself to a customer. She kept up the business for more than 20 years, hanging a new exhibit every three weeks.

She married her second husband, Arthur G. Reid, in 1984, having met him while going door to door handing out political flyers. He said he opened the door and said “wow” to himself. They were married in Bermuda by a local judge. Even at that, there was something to laugh about – the young ringbearer, a little boy, dropped the rings in the fountain. They stayed together for 28 years, traveling the world and living part-time in Florida.

When June and Art went to her 50th reunion they pulled up and parked their white convertible across from the high school, dressed to the nines as always.

She squinted at the crowd across the street and asked “who are all those old people.” Her classmates from 50 years ago, of course. In her mind, she was ageless. When her grandson was born, she was reborn as “Gigi.” No grandma for her.

Always creative, June sewed many of her stunning outfits. She did macramé and painted. When she was in her late 70s, looking for something new to do, she settled on making jewelry. She crafted fabulous bracelets out of buttons and large, “statement” necklaces from semi-precious stones. Her work was sold at Saks Fifth Avenue.

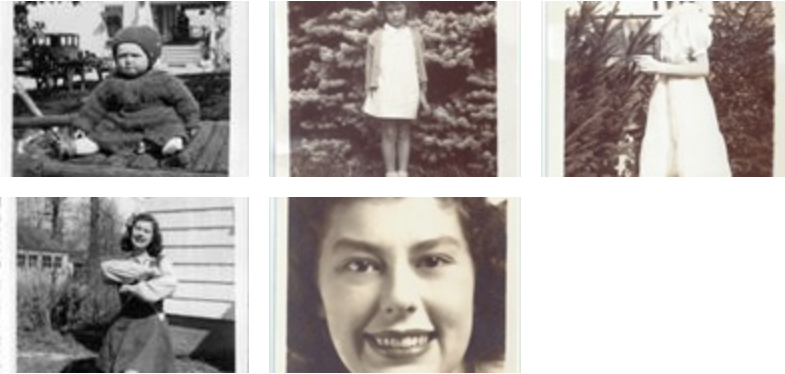
And she loved anything sweet. She could not resist candy and would have an ice cream cone in bed at night, hiding the treat behind a book, thinking she was fooling us all.

June will be missed: For her laugh. For her enthusiasm. For her loyalty. For her friendships. For her entertaining. For her flower arrangements. For being a loving wife. For being a terrific mother. She was the life of the party and her life was a party. She was quite a gal. She was everyone’s Auntie Mame.

Tribute Wall



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