

Len Evans

Tributes read by Caitlin Thwaites

We've had many family members send messages of condolences from the UK and Australia in showing how important Len was to them and how much they will miss him. They described him as cheerful, positive and kind, with such a friendly nature and great at keeping in contact with family through many letters, newsletters and phone calls over the years.

I will be reading four tributes from four people and their families that could not be here today.

First is a tribute from Christine, Len's Niece, Daughter of Ted, and she is living in the UK.

I was so sad to hear that my Uncle Len had passed away. We were only having one of our regular chats on Monday. These calls had become very amusing, as Len like me struggled to master his new phone. One wrong button pressed and he got me on the other end of the phone much to his surprise, as he thought he was ringing a friend. Time differences could be a problem!

As long as he was keeping up with all the family news he was happy and he never forgot my birthday.

Over the years his Christmas cards usually contained his newsletter, this reminded us that the weather was lovely and his vegetable patch was thriving.

I know he and Vivienne had many trips around his adopted home Australia, but I recall their last trip to the UK when my Dad, who was Len's brother Ted, and I picked them up at Heathrow. They spent a couple of days with us in London before going off to visit the rest of their families.

After so many years of having no close family around, Len often told me how happy and thankful they were to have his great-nephew Greg and his family not too far away and to be included in their lives.

Rest in peace Uncle Len, I'll miss our chats

With love from your niece Christine.

The second tribute is from Neil and Lynette, Viv's Nephew and Niece,

Uncle Len was a true gentleman (except when Australia were playing cricket against England)! Len was a person who always thought of other people ahead of himself, even when giving myself & my sister Lynette lollies.

We believe he was a good husband to Aunt Vivienne & the pair were inseparable, we will always remember you!

May you rest in peace, your loving Nephew Neil & Lynette and Niece Lynette and Robert.

The third tribute is from Bernadette and the Carter family.

Our Dearest Mr Evans, Len.

I speak on behalf of the entire 'Carter Clan' in thanking you with all the love and sincerity in the world for the many, many wonderful years of friendship we all shared. Such friendship is one of life's

greatest blessings. Your kindness, spirit of generosity, honesty and integrity along with your loving and gentle nature left a lasting impression on all. You set the benchmark for all the qualities that a fine and honest gentleman ought possess and all that a good moral and compassionate person ought to be.

All the Carter family held the greatest consideration, regard and respect for yourself and your lovely wife Vivienne. My mother, Patsy was always so grateful to you for offering help in mowing lawns and bringing our bins in (whenever you beat me to them). Anytime mum would insist you take payment for petrol for the lawn mower, you would always return a few days later with a receipt for a donation to one of the many charities you supported – testament again to your kindness and generosity. My father Keith was also always so very fond of you and with your shared great love of gardening, the both of you always had much to discuss.

My brothers Gerard, Chris and myself, and later my own son Jesse, all grew up with the greatest fondness and respect for you and Mrs Evans, always knowing and feeling assured that our friends were nearby if ever we were in need.

Thank you for your friendship and support over the 37 years we shared.

Thank you for your great compassion throughout life's hardships.

Also you were always so genuine and caring.

You will never be forgotten Mr Evans and I personally will always strive to live a little better when I recall the high example you set for all a good person ought to be.

You will be missed!!!

The fourth tribute is from my mum, Barbara Lord.

My family has had a warm and enduring friendship with Len and Viv since the early 1960s.

We lived in Cheltenham and got to know them well through St Matthew's church, and as patrons of their milk bar at the Follet Road shops.

I was ten years old and remember the thrill of finally being allowed to go on my own to spend some of my pocket money on a bag of lollies; probably driving them nuts taking ages to choose between raspberry jellies, brittle bananas, mint leaves and multi coloured chewy snakes. Dad would call there on his way home from work on Friday nights for our treats. Len and Viv were such kindly people, warm and welcoming, interested in our lives, and always greeted us with a ready smile.

They became closer friends over the next years, with Mum and Viv both being members of the Young Wives and Mothers Union groups. They put on theatrical and musical performances to crowded halls. Len was an integral part of the Men's Society, and as a kid, what I remembered were the exciting car rallies they organized..... following the clues through back roads for a couple of hours to end up at a huge picnic site with loads of people. The congregation was enjoying a boom time then, and we experienced the transformation of the site of St Matthew's, from a sprawling collection of kinder and scout halls, tennis courts, a spooky old vicarage and lots of trees... to the design and construction of today's unique building, hall, and memorial garden. The sense of community was a powerful influence on my early life.

My Mum and Dad, Gwen and Phil Stamps retired to the Murray, but kept the connection with Len and Viv. They were a great comfort to me at the passing of my parents and when my sister Jen passed away and attended their memorial services. Jen's ashes, now with Mum and Dads, are interred here in the memorial garden, soon to be joined by Len's.

By the late 1980s, myself, Jeff, Caitlin and Phil, were living in England, a source of many future conversations reminiscing with Len on return trips to Australia.

Imagine my surprise, when Caitlin and Greg thought it was funny that Greg's mother Jan said she had an Uncle in Melbourne and wondered if we knew him. Caitlin joked that Melbourne was a very big place and was probably unlikely. Jan located her address book and there were Len and Viv's details in Dingley!!! It was a wonderful reveal . . . we were all so excited about our previous history, and the possibility of greater contact, as we became part of the each other's extended family! Caitlin and Greg moved to Australia and lived not far from them in Chelsea.

Len and Viv's great, great nephew and niece, Taio and Ella, were born and they all shared many family gatherings, celebrations, Christmas dinners (with Greg's generous full English roasts with all the trimmings) that Len loved and were enjoyed by all. The children loved visiting their home, playing in the garden, hearing about the cat and learning about growing excellent veggies!

Last year, Caitlin made a huge cake for Lens 90th birthday..... and this year the children still wanted to make him cards for his special day , this special day today, the 17th of July.