

It's Our History, Our Country

June Rose Callwood ~ June 2, 1924



BY RONALD WOLF

There never seems to be an end to the long list of Canadians who truly make a difference in our country. Actors, directors, activists, journalists and even politicians are amongst the list of professionals who shaped and keep on shaping this ever-changing world.

I heard of this next inductee in It's Our History, Our Country throughout the years but never learned of her life until now.

June Rose Callwood, (1924-2007) was a Canadian journalist, author and social activist. She was born in Chatham, Ont. and grew up in Belle River.

Callwood began her journalism career at high school where she was editor of the school paper. She dropped out of school to work for the Brantford Expositor. In 1942, she was offered a job with The Globe and Mail and moved to



Toronto. She married journalist Trent Frayne two years later, but continued to use her own surname because The Globe and Mail at that time did not employ married women. She ultimately left the Globe and Mail to raise a family but later resumed her career by becoming a freelance journalist, writing books and magazine pieces for Maclean's Magazine. Callwood ghostwrote close to 10 autobiogra-

phies for such prominent Americans like broadcaster Barbara Walters, film director Otto Preminger and Dr. Charles William Mayo. Callwood entered television journalism, hosting the series In Touch on CBC Television from 1975 to 1978. She also hosted two series, National Treasure and Caregiving with June Callwood, for Vision TV.

Callwood's career was marked by a strong concern for social justice, especially on issues affecting children and women. She became one of Canada's most famous social justice activists, founding or co-founding over 50 Canadian social action organizations including youth and women's hostels. She founded Casey House (a Toronto hospice for people with AIDS), PEN Canada, the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, and Feminists Against Censorship.

In 1978, she was made a

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member of the Order of Canada. She was promoted to Officer in 1985, and promoted again to Companion in 2000. In 1988, she was awarded the Order of Ontario.

In 2004, the City of Toronto noted its intention to name a street in Callwood's honour. Callwood requested that an existing street not be renamed for her, and specified that it be a new or currently unnamed street near a school or a playground. The street is June Callwood Way and is in the neighbourhood of Queen Street East and Broadview Avenue.

In 2004, Callwood went public about her battle with cancer. She refused treatment and continued to be active, but ultimately succumbed to the disease in the morning of April 14, 2007. Callwood was last seen on TV on April 2, 2007 in the CBC show The Hour, interviewed by George Stroumboulopoulos.

In July 2005, a Toronto park was named after Callwood. A professorship in social justice was also established at Victoria College, University of Toronto in her honour. A biography, written by Anne Dublin and entitled June Callwood: A Life of Action, was published in March 2007.

Callwood and Frayne had four children together: two daughters and two sons. The daughters are noted authors Jesse and Jill Frayne, and the elder son is Brant Frayne. The second son and youngest child, Casey Frayne, was killed on April 19, 1982, when he was 20 years old, by a drunk driver on Highway 401 as he returned home from Queen's University. Callwood's death came only days before the 25th anniversary of her son's death.

Some of Callwood's books include: Love, Hate, Fear and Anger (1964), Canadian Women and the Law (1974), The Law Is Not for Women (1976), Emma (1984), Emotions (1986), Twelve Weeks in Spring (1986), Jim: A Life With AIDS (1988), The Sleepwalker (1990), Portrait of Canada (1991), Trial Without End (1994), June Callwood's National Treasures (1994), The Man Who Lost Himself: The Terry Evanshen Story (2000) (about CFL player Terry Evanshen).

Callwood, like most people had her emotional highs and lows. Most people will agree that she left this world on a high note and her life can be read at It's Our History, Our Country.