

A Tribute

Charles Ernest Gibson

Charles Ernest Gibson was his name but we all knew him affectionately as Bun or Chas or Poppa Gibby. He died last Monday, 20 August 2001, with Ross and three of his harem beside him, making them smile even as he was about to join his treasured daughter, Jan, and his granddaughter, Kristen.

As my sister, Jill, said, they will be pleased to have him with them since they both adored him.

But so did we all. He was one of the world's special people; a man, a real man's man, but one who was much loved by all the women in his life. He was just two weeks short of his 91st birthday.

In many ways, he led an ordinary life: farmer, Father and family man; years at Watties working long hours; then the great joy of retirement and gardening and, best of all, endlessly, devotedly, happily caring for his extended family. All of us.

But the ordinary life only partly camouflaged the extraordinary impact this wonderful man had on those around him. As he said only hours before he went, what will Rod do without me - I have always been his chief advisor. For over 35 years, he provided me with the jokes in all my speeches. Today, like you, I am bereft.

I would ask him: "How are you?". He would respond: "Not bad for an old chap". I would say: "How's life" ... He would say: "Better than the alternative".

He made us smile and laugh; he gave us joy and insight; he loved us unquestioningly; he was integral to our lives.

As he slipped away, he was as splendidly lucid as ever, reflecting on his amazing 50-year marriage to Joy, our Mum and Nanna, and his love of his family. This was his obsession, his great reason for living, his abiding interest.

To use the modern idiom, Bun and Joy were an item, an item so abundantly in love but so abundantly unselfish. They gave each other great affection but they shared that deep affection widely and generously with us all.

Bun was warm, witty and wise. He never forced his views upon us, but he gave willingly of his wise counsel. He was secure in himself, and we all became more secure with him by our sides.

We are gathered here today from around the world to pay the warmest of tributes to him. His children, Gillian, Jan, Barry and Ross, thought the world of him. So did their partners. And of course, his Grandchildren were his special reward: Mike and Peter and Rachel; Guy and Kirk and Danny and Scott and Damien; Linda and David.

Chas cared greatly for all of you and shared his life with you. You gave him endless pleasure and an overwhelming sense of satisfaction in a life truly well lived.

He was a home boy. Gisborne was his place and MacDonald Street his home. Travel was not his inclination, although when he and Joyce travelled around New Zealand with Gillian and Kristen and I, we all had a great time together. There were never any cross words. There was always much laughter, even when our old Rover car broke down on several occasions.

He loved the countryside and the beaches. For years, we swam together, and had the most amazing family picnics at weekends at the beachside.

He was not a man given to material needs. He was modest and unassuming, never confrontational, always warm and supportive and tolerant, a person of incredible kindness and generosity, with a huge capacity to induce the best of responses in others. He understood us and we loved him for it.

Chas set an example to us all in how life should be lived.

His capacity for friendship was great. Many years ago, he stopped going to funerals as he could not bare to see his friends pass on. It was a problem at the age of 80, let alone 90. Many of his friends are

here today, encompassing all age groups. He told me once that he wanted me to thank you for your abiding friendship.

He especially wanted me to thank those wonderful caregivers who with such commitment and dedication have supported Chas and Joyce over more recent years: Mary-Lou, Nelda, Pat, Tai, Tracy, Jean and others ...

As their notice in The Herald said, Chas was their father figure, their confidant, their friend.

On behalf of Joyce and Chas, I salute each of you. You are the most incredible team, a team which will go on caring for Joy now that her great loved one has left us.

And to dear Joyce, to whom I once said, we will look after you for ever - and she replied simply, "I know" - we iterate our love and commitment to you. We could not have a better Mum or Mother-in-Law or Nanna.

Our hearts may be sad, but our spirits cannot deny Chas the freedom he finally sought. He relished life, but he decided his time had come.

He went peacefully, five minutes before Gillian got there, unable to be wound up yet again by the daughter he once called an avalanche. Ross was holding his hand. Nelda and Mary-Lou were there. Barry was on the other side of the world, and now from London via Tokyo

and Brisbane is here today. Jan and Chas are together again. On behalf of all the family, I thank Chas for sharing his life and himself so warmly; so generously; so unreservedly, with each of us; for always being there when we needed him; and for being such a wonderfully special person.

It is hard to imagine how much we will miss him.

Roderick Deane

August 2001