

June Kegg's Violin Story.

In 1935 my sister, June Fielder was 14 years old and a competent and experienced musician who obtained her Cap and Gown from the NSW Conservatorium of Music in Sydney and had played violin under the baton of Yehudi Menuhin.

Our mother felt that this was a future career for June and with this in mind she negotiated to buy her a good quality violin. We were not a rich family and the cost of a quality instrument would have been a burden to the family. However, a second hand violin made by the Australian musical instrument maker, Albert Edward Smith (1880-1978), was located and purchased for £20 (approx. \$40.00) which my mother could not afford outright and negotiated to pay off at a few shillings a week.

June continued with her music career through her teenage years until she met her future husband, Robert Kegg a young man from Bexley who was a very good tennis player who played in the Blackwell Cup Competition.

They were married in 1942 during the 2nd World War and they purchased a block of land in Annette Street, Oatley for around £300.00 (approx. \$600.00) and built a home there. This took some time as labour and building materials were in short supply at that time.

June and Robert, known to most as Bob, had two children, the war had not long ended and with a growing family June's musical career lapsed, but she adored her treasured violin and played for her own and the family's entertainment. The instrument was cherished and cared for, wrapped in a pure silk scarf and lovingly maintained.

In the meantime Mr A E Smith who made this violin became known internationally as a master maker of stringed instruments and in 1949, after entering a couple of violins and a viola in a competition in The Hague, Nedderland, was asked to become a member of the International Society of Violin and Bow Makers who then certified him as a Master Luthier. In the early 1970's Mr Smith was awarded the M.B.E and then in the 1970's was honored with the O.B.E. for his achievements in the Musical Industry.

In about the year 1989 I was attending an exhibition of musical instrument makers in Sydney and noticed a display of A. E. Smith instruments on one of the stands and remembering that my sister June owned one of their violins I approached the staff at their stand and told them that my sister owned an A.E.Smith violin.

They responded that this would not be so as the company knew who owned all of Mr. Smith's violins and I was quickly dismissed. Intrigued by this and knowing

that the exhibition was to continue, I phoned my sister, told her of my experience and suggested that she should take her violin in to be inspected

The next day June took her violin to the exhibition and had it inspected by the

A E Smith staff who, after having carefully inspected the instrument were surprised and verified that yes, it was an original A E Smith manufactured instrument. It had been lost track of when our mother had bought it second hand.

The staff were interested in the history of the instrument and questioned June as to where she kept it and how she had been maintaining it, to which June replied that she kept it under the bed and had been advised to rub butter into it now and again.

This astonished the A E Smith people who told June that the violin was in excellent condition, suggested that she stop rubbing butter on it and after a fruitful and interesting discussion they asked June in passing ,”do you know what this violin is worth?”. June had no idea and was very surprised when they came up with a figure of \$20,000.00.

That was some 25 years ago now, and during this time the violin has continued to live under the bed in Annette Street, Oatley, lovingly cared for and often played.

In August 2014 June Kegg passed away after a short illness and after having lived in her Annette Street home for the previous 70 years. Her estate was then assessed and the violin valued with the official valuation as follows:

A. E. Smith

Sydney Australia

Dated 1926

Body Length 355mm

AUD\$ 40,000.00

Violin Bow

Albert Nurnberger

Markneukirchen, Germany

AUD\$5,500.00

Rod Fielder.

