

HONORARY GRADUATE

Lorna Jean Marshall

Lorna Jean Marshall is the doyenne of southern African ethnography. Throughout her long and distinguished career she has blended acute observation and analysis with compassion and an intense concern for the lives of the Bushman (San) people, with whom her life and the lives of other members of her family became inextricably intertwined.

Born in Morenci, Arizona in 1898, Lorna Marshall was awarded a Bachelor of Arts degree by the University of California, Berkeley, in 1921. In 1928 Radcliffe College conferred on her a Master of Arts degree. Both degrees were in English literature. Through the 1930s she taught English. In 1938 she was appointed Assistant Director, Shady Hill School, Cambridge, Massachusetts. In the 1940s she was actively involved in philanthropic work, being on the Board of Directors of the Cambridge Community Centre from 1942 to 1948. In association with the League of Women Voters, she strove for electoral reform in 1942 and in 1943. The work for which she is now so admired did not, however, begin until the 1950s.

After the Second World War, Laurence Kennedy Marshall, Lorna's late husband, arranged for his family to visit the Kalahari Desert. Lorna prepared herself by studying social anthropology and ethnographic method. In 1951 Laurence and Lorna, together with their children, Elizabeth and John, left the United States of America for their first expedition to the Kalahari Bushmen.

After the initial expedition, the family returned in 1952-3, 1955, 1959 and 1961. They worked principally with the !Kung Bushmen of Nyae Nyae, a small area of present-day Namibia, but they also got to know the /Gwi, the !Ko, the Nharo and the Tsaukwe of Botswana. On these expeditions Laurence attended chiefly to logistical matters while Lorna concentrated on ethnography. John began making the now famous series of films of Bushman life and ritual, and Elizabeth began writing the influential and sensitive book *The Harmless People* (Secker and Warburg, London, 1959).

Lorna's first publication on the Bushmen was written in collaboration with her husband; it was a comparatively brief contribution to the *South West African Annual* (1956). Thereafter she started the celebrated series of seven papers in the journal *Africa*. The first is a lucid exposition of the elusive Bushman concept of *now*, the supernatural essence that can lead to changes in the weather. This paper was followed by three on kin terminology, marriage and political organization. Together these papers laid the foundation for all future work in this field. Lorna Marshall returned to belief and ritual with two papers on !Kung religion and the medicine, or curing, dance. Perhaps her most influential paper in this series is the one entitled 'Sharing, talking and giving: relief of social tensions among the !Kung Bushmen'. It looks beneath the surface of the apparently casual exchanges of daily life to discern social mechanisms that dissipate discord. This series of papers in *Africa* still constitutes the cornerstone of Bushman studies.

In 1976 Lorna Marshall collected some of these papers, and adding much important new material to them, published her first book, *The !Kung of Nyae Nyae* (Harvard University Press). That major publication dealt largely with social structure and subsistence. She has recently completed her second book, *Nyae Nyae !Kung Beliefs and Rites* (Harvard University Press, in the press). Today it would be impossible for any scholar to write on hunter-gatherers worldwide, let alone on the Bushmen specifically, without using Lorna Marshall's work.

The Marshall family's involvement with the Bushmen has not been exclusively academic. Moved by the plight of the Bushmen, the family established a trust to help them to adjust to the modern way of life that, even in the 1950s, was transforming their traditional life and reducing them to poverty, landlessness and political impotence. This involvement led to the establishment in 1982 of the Ju/'hoan Bushman Development

Foundation in Namibia. Lorna's son John was a co-founder of the Foundation. Since then the Foundation has become a farmers' co-operative that is effectively articulating the views and needs of the Ju/'hoan (!Kung) people in their struggle for land rights. A number of researchers from this university have been closely associated with the Foundation and latterly the co-operative.

Lorna Marshall's influential role in both ethnography and social concern was recognized in 1986 by the publication of a two-volume Festschrift, *The Past and Future of !Kung Ethnography: Critical Reflections and Symbolic Perspectives. Essays in Honour of Lorna Marshall*, edited by Megan Biesele with Robert Gordon and Richard Lee (Helmut Buske Verlag, Hamburg). Contributor after contributor pays tribute to her influence, encouragement, commitment and compassion. In the same year Toronto University conferred on her an honorary Doctorate of Laws. A great many of the researchers who have followed in her footsteps joined to honour her on this occasion. No one, it is widely recognized, has done more for Bushman studies and for the Bushmen themselves than Lorna Marshall.

Today at the age of 96 she still takes an active interest in the lot of the Bushmen. Younger researchers turn to her for guidance and wisdom. The University of the Witwatersrand has long maintained an interest in Bushman researches of various kinds, and numerous members of the University owe her a great debt of gratitude. It is with deep pride and pleasure that the University seeks to pay tribute to Lorna Jean Marshall for her magnificent contribution to knowledge in an area of such importance to our country and its people, by conferring on her the degree of Doctor of Literature, *honoris causa*.