

Bouquets for Lady Lowy, the woman behind Westfield

Obituary

Sally Patten

In a touching tribute to his wife of 68 years late last week, billionaire Westfield founder Sir Frank Lowy said at her funeral that her life's agenda was to look after him and their three sons, never herself.

Shirley Lowy, who died in Tel Aviv at the age of 86 on December 9, was dedicated to her role as wife and mother and believed in traditional marriage. Even when she studied an arts degree at UNSW when her three sons, David, Peter and Steven, had grown up, Lady Lowy ensured she arrived home before any of the men so there was no disruption to the household and dinner would be ready.

Equally, Lady Lowy was determined to help those less fortunate than herself.

In the name of her parents, in the late 1990s she offered to establish a scholarship at Moriah College, a private school in Sydney's eastern suburbs. The plan was to award a child a full scholarship every year to cover 13 years of their schooling. When the school said it would be perfect for gifted children,

Having come from humble beginnings, she searched for new ways to improve the lives of others.

Lowy family statement

Lady Lowy replied: "Wait a moment. There are plenty of opportunities for the gifted. I want this for ordinary students."

The Lowy family in a statement said: "Her care and concern extended beyond her growing family to the wider community, where she quietly launched philanthropic initiatives to help those in need. Having come from humble beginnings, she searched for new ways to improve the lives of others."

Born in Sydney to immigrant parents (her father was from Poland and her mother from the United Kingdom) Lady Lowy met her future husband, at the time a sandwich-hand in Sydney's CBD, at a Hanukkah party. She told her best friend she was going to marry him or nobody. But her mother had her doubts. "What's this immigrant boy



Frank and Shirley Lowy in a scene from 2019 documentary *What Will Become of Us*. Lady Lowy passed away aged 86 in Israel.

ever going to amount to?" she asked.

The pair married in 1954.

By the age of 80, Lady Lowy was mentally frail and was later diagnosed with dementia. Sir Frank agreed to speak openly of the trauma of gradually losing his wife in a documentary, *What Will Become of Us*, screened at the Sydney Film Festival last year.

In the film, he tells director Steven

Cantor: "Nights are really very difficult because she goes to bed between 7 and 8 o'clock and then I don't exactly know what to do with myself. As her memory recedes more and more, I want to hold onto my own."

At the time of filming, Sir Frank was in the throes of selling Westfield Corporation, the property behemoth he founded with business partner John

Saunders, for \$33 billion. In a remark that is telling of his relationship with Lady Lowy, he says: "Where will I be without the company? It would have been nice to discuss this matter with my wife, but it's not possible."

Lady Lowy is survived by Sir Frank, David, Peter, Steven, Margo and Judy Lowy, their 11 grandchildren, their partners and seven great grandchildren.