

“June chronicles her journey through life, both in good and bad times. She communicates wonderful testimony of God’s hand on her life and the victory won through her surrender to him and his will.”

—Melva Rahmann, Retired VP,
Suntrust Mortgage, Inc., Sorrento, Florida

“June Brown’s life is an example to us all that rather than blame God for our hardships, we should praise him and thank him for his blessings. *Broken No More: A True Story of Hope in the Dark* is an emotional page-turner full of tears, laughter, joy, and fear but mostly love—the love of the Lord. Instead of retreating and becoming bitter, each trial June faced caused her to work harder to form a closer relationship to God. Her story is truly inspirational.”

—Amy Hunter, Media Specialist,
Umatilla Middle School, Umatilla, Florida

“What a journey for the author of this book and what a testimony to those of us who have read it. Through her constant desire to develop a close relationship with God, June is now able to live her life with confidence, faith, and an inner peace. Her gentle spirit is conveyed in her book, and it is contagious! *We can* do all things through Christ who strengthens us!”

—Ada Emmert, Marketing Coordinator,
Waterman Cove, Tavares, Florida

“June pours out her heart, both the good and the bad, the sorrow and the joy, to impart to you the feelings of her life. Not once will you detect any bitterness, only gratitude to our loving heavenly Father, who never left her during her journey. Your life will be blessed as you read this incredible story.”

—Rev. Bob Walker, Retired Pastor,
Bay Street Baptist Church, Eustis, Florida

BROKEN

NO MORE

JUNE BROWN

BROKEN
NO MORE

**A TRUE STORY OF HOPE
IN THE DARK**



REDEMPTION
PRESS

Broken No More

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Re-published by Redemption Press 2017

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Several names, descriptions, entities, and incidents included in the story are based on the lives of real people.

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Published in the United States of America

ISBN: 978-1-68314-384-0

\$12.99

1. Biography & Autobiography, Personal Memoirs
2. Religion, Christian Life, Personal Growth

DEDICATION

To my Father,
from your loving daughter

This book is dedicated to my heavenly Father, who gathered me up in his arms when I was a young teenager. Without him this story would not be possible. From my birth and since I was placed in the orphanage until this present day, he has been with me in both trials and celebrations. There are not enough words to thank him for all he has done.

FOREWORD

Through her personal experiences, her poetry, and the Word of God, June inspires us to discover or rediscover the One who longs to have a relationship with us. One who will never let you go and who will always be there. June writes with warmth and sensitivity as she reveals to us a heart filled with gratitude and praise as her loving heavenly Father has replaced all the heartaches and the sorrow of her life with joy, real joy!

Donna Perman

Minister of Music and Senior Adults
Bay Street Baptist Church
Eustis, Florida

CHAPTER ONE

“You watched me as I was being formed in utter seclusion, as I was woven together in the dark of the womb. You saw me before I was born.

Every day of my life was recorded in your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed.”

Psalm 139:15–16 (NLT)

Physical life began for me in a small farmhouse in Princess Anne, Maryland, in June 1935. I was the last of six children born to my parents, Herman and Lillian Denston. Hilda was the oldest, then came Caroline, Doris, Edward, Harvey Dale, and finally me, Elinor June. Caroline and Doris died before I was born. Caroline died of a congenital heart problem when she was a teenager, and Doris died from a fall that ended in a fatal head injury when she was a toddler.

Hilda was fourteen years older than me, Edward was eight years older, and Harvey Dale was six years

older. For many years, I believed the story that the doctor brought me in a suitcase. I even kept my favorite doll "Julius" in a small suitcase.

When I was about one year old, the family moved from Maryland to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. One of my father's five brothers, Uncle Durand, owned a Nash car dealership on Frankford Avenue in Northeast Philadelphia. My father and another brother, Uncle Ott (Otis), both worked for Uncle Durand in the car agency.

My parents moved us into a row home on Solly Avenue, not far from the car showroom. I remember climbing up into a chair in front of the large window and would perch there, waiting for my daddy to come home, then squeal with joy when he came up the steps and through the front door. I remember a big man with dark hair picking me up and holding me tightly.

The first time I voiced this memory, I was told it was impossible for me to remember that. They told me I was too young to have a memory that vivid, that I was just picturing in my mind what someone told me. But many years later, when I drew a floor plan of that house and the placement of the chair in front of the window and door, my mother was amazed at the accuracy, because you see, my father was killed in an accident when I was two.

He was taking a customer on a test drive in a new car. The customer was driving, and they collided with a trolley car. My father was killed. The customer was severely injured.

My mother was suddenly left to provide for four children. She had been a farmer's wife and had never worked outside the home. In those days, there were no government programs, and she had no work force skills.

My dad and his brothers were members of the I.O.O.F., the Independent Order of Odd Fellows, a national fraternal organization. The Odd Fellows had an orphanage in Philadelphia for children of their members who had lost a father or mother.

So our mother decided to put Ed, Harvey Dale, and me in the orphanage until she could find a job and a place to live. Hilda was past the maximum age to be accepted. My brothers were placed first, and shortly after, my mom took me to "visit" my brothers. I was so excited. It was a Sunday afternoon, and when we arrived, I got busy playing with toys in the boys' playroom. Later that hour, I realized my mom was no longer in the room. I hurried out of the room into the long hall and saw my mom way down at the end of the hall. As I started after her, someone held me back. I began crying and calling for her.

I can imagine what she must have been feeling at that moment. In my mind's eye, I can see the tears pouring from her eyes. Her heart must have been breaking. She had lost her husband and two daughters by death, and now she had to place her two sons and baby daughter in an orphanage. My mother was a sweet and gentle woman who suddenly found herself in a difficult and unbearable situation.

I continued crying, and when suppertime came, I was put into a high chair in the large dining room. When they placed my food on the tray, I threw it on the floor and screamed for my mother. That night, and every night for weeks, when my housemother put me to bed in the crib, I cried inconsolably. Ed was brought into the little girls' dormitory every night, and he would hold me and rock me to sleep.

There is not much I remember about my very early years in the orphanage. However, one memory is vivid. Janet entered the orphanage about the same time I did. We were the same age; my birthday was in June, and hers was in August. She was a pretty, blonde-haired girl with naturally curly hair, outgoing, and adventurous. I was a quiet, shy brunette with hair straight and fine. We became close friends and sisters as we grew up. One thing was different about us, though. Janet seemed to push the envelope, often getting into trouble.

Early one summer evening when we were small, we had just been bathed and were supposed to be getting ready for bed. Our dormitory was on the second floor. While our housemother was occupied doing something else, Janet and I climbed up on top of the radiator cover. The radiator was under a window. Because it was summer and a beautiful night, the window was open. There we were, dancing away, both of us as naked as the day we were born. Fortunately, God's angels were watching over us. We didn't lose our balance and fall through the screen to the concrete below.

That is the only time I can remember being spanked in the orphanage.

Life in the orphanage was not highly regulated. When I was placed in the orphanage there were about sixty children ranging in age from three to high school seniors. We were grouped according to age and gender, up to eight children under the care of a house-mother or housefather.

When we were old enough to go to school, we walked several blocks to the local elementary school with the other young children in the orphanage.

I got along well with my schoolmates, and in most classes over the years, I became the teacher's pet. I loved school and soon became acquainted with a whole new world: books!

In the basement of the orphanage, there was a very large room (directly under the first-floor dining room) lined with bookcases filled with books. We called this the "Rec" room. There were tables and chairs, table games, toys, puzzles, eventually a television set, but most importantly for me, *books!*

Most of the hundreds and hundreds of these books had been donated. I couldn't wait to get my homework done on school days or for weekends to come. When I opened the cover of a book, I escaped from the orphanage. I became the characters in the book, living a fantasy adventure. I devoured *Elsie Dinsmore*, *Tarzan*, *The Bobbsey Twins*, *Nancy Drew*, *The Hardy Boys*, *Freckles*, *Girl of the Limberlost*, *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine*, *Grace Livingston Hill* novels; just about anything I could get my hands

on—children's books, adult books—I would read it or attempt to read it. When I came across a word I didn't know, I would look it up in the dictionary. To this day, I still love books.

In school, I loved history, geography, English, spelling, most all the subjects, except math. I didn't have much of a problem with math, I just didn't like it. Music and art were also favorites.

Our teachers were all aware which of their students were from the orphanage. In fifth grade, my teacher must have decided I was not getting the proper nourishment in the orphanage. All the students went home for lunch. That teacher made me stay after school was out every afternoon. She had saved her milk from lunch so I could have it. Unfortunately, the milk would sit on her desk all afternoon, and when I had to drink it, it was warm. It took me many years until I overcame my dislike of milk.

I was a very quiet little girl and kept my emotions and thoughts bottled up inside. I had some good friends at school, but Janet was my best friend. I never knew how to talk to new people. It would take me a while to open up to someone after I met them.

One day at school, I was in a stall in the girl's bathroom. Two girls walked in. They couldn't see me because the stall door was closed. They began talking about me, saying how stuck up I was. I was heartbroken. I wanted to shout, "I'm not stuck up! I just never know what to say to people." Instead of trying harder, I wanted to retreat into myself even more.

I entered junior high school, which in those days was seventh, eighth, and ninth grades.

The junior high was right across the street from the orphanage. By that time in my life, I was overly conscious of "being different."

The orphanage took up a whole city block in a wealthy and predominately Jewish neighborhood. The girls at school were very well dressed and always seemed to have spending money. They talked about their fun weekends, clothes, and boys. My clothes were usually hand-me-downs or donated. But my feeling of "odd girl out" was only in my mind. No one in junior high or high school ever put me down because of the clothes I wore. I had many friends in junior high but none I really confided in.

Besides having a voracious appetite for reading, art soon became an important part of my life, followed by music (mainly singing). I loved the art classes and singing in the choir.

When I entered high school, art, English, and music soon became the most loved part of school. The high school was quite a distance from the orphanage, and it took riding on two different trolley cars to get there. Once a week we were given money to purchase the trolley tickets. Buying weekly tickets was cheaper than paying a single fare.

I was still very embarrassed about my clothing, so occasionally I would not purchase the trolley tickets and would walk to and from school. I saved the money and put it together with my small weekly allowance and would buy a new skirt or blouse. I

never used the money to buy underwear, because I knew no one could see them anyway, and the other clothes were more important. You could buy a nice blouse for two or three dollars. The biggest problem with that arrangement was if it rained or snowed, I had to walk because I wouldn't have the money to purchase a single ticket. The walk to and from school took almost an hour.

In high school, I was introduced to oil painting. I was very interested but could only paint in school because I didn't have money for paints, brushes, canvases, and an easel in order to paint at home. Mr. Duffy, one of the board members at the orphanage knew of my love of art and painting, and once a year he would take me out of school for the day, and we would go downtown to the Philadelphia Museum of Art. I am very grateful and will never forget his kindness.

We were not allowed to join any of the after-school clubs or organizations, but we were allowed to attend school football games. We could not go out on dates; however, we could attend school dances if we desired.

In high school, I sang with the school choir and the Acapella choir. As a member of the Acapella, went on choir trips to different locations in the city. I really loved singing in that choir.

When I was a teenager, the 124th annual convention of the IOOF was held in Philadelphia, and part of the convention was held at the orphanage. I had to sing "The Lord's Prayer." I was terrified. Looking out over all those faces, when my music teacher played

the introduction, I forgot the beginning words and just stood there silently, hoping the stage would open up and swallow me.

There was a large visiting choir behind me. The organist played the introduction again, and still I just stood there. Then I heard someone in the choir softly begin to sing, so I was able to remember the words. I was also chosen at that convention as “Miss Convention of 1950.” I even got to see my picture in the newspaper, with the president of the orphanage introducing me to the Sovereign Grand Master of the IOOF.

English class was always a highlight of the day, especially during my junior and senior year. I was in eleventh grade accelerated English when we worked on a booklet of our original essays and poetry. My artwork design was chosen for the cover, and a poem about the death of my sister Doris was included in the booklet. I think my love of poetry was born in that class.

Even though Doris died before I was born, I used my imagination and wrote the following poem:

Two Years of Life

Long years ago in a small farmhouse,
Content in the meadow and the
brook that plays by it,
Sheltered in the graceful arms of the willow,
A little baby was born.

A little girl with golden hair like
the heart of the daisy,
With soft blue eyes, taken from the sky,
And dimples in the little chin where
the cherubim had kissed,
Ah, how well remembered!

The childish laughter as it echoed through the
Quiet stillness of those rooms;
The patter of tiny feet as they
came in from the meadow,
Chubby little hands held out for cookies;
The bright eyes twinkling in the wide sunlight.

Then one day the daisy withered,
The sky turned black with the coming storm;
The little girl traveled on to heaven,
On golden angel wings transported
through the sky.

Oh God, I pray! Watch over my little sister.

The little chair is vacant now,
No more the laughter echoes through the rooms;
The little feet are hushed as the
stillness of the night.

“Keep her safe, Oh God!” I pray.

All of the children in the orphanage had to take music lessons, some on band instruments, some on piano. We all sang in the choir, and a couple of us were given voice lessons. I began piano lessons when I was six years old. I was excited when I started, but as the years went by, I hated it. Most of the other children were allowed to stop music lessons when it was determined they didn't have the talent for it.

Our piano/choir teacher came once a week to give lessons. She was my teacher from age six until I graduated at seventeen.

When I was fourteen, and my piano lesson was finished for the day, Mrs. Mathias took me into the chapel for lessons on the organ. I loved playing the organ. It was a huge electric pipe organ with a beautiful, full sound. The problem was my size. When I sat on the high organ bench, my feet couldn't reach the foot pedals. So Mrs. Mathias decided to improvise. Part of my lesson would be just work on the pedals. To do this, I would move forward as far as I could, so I was sitting on the edge of the bench (which was very uncomfortable), using my hands to hold on so I wouldn't fall off. That way my feet could reach. But if I didn't hold on, I would fall. After many unsuccessful tries, I managed to get the hang of it. This way I learned to play both the pedals and the keyboard but couldn't use them both together on that organ.

I would play the organ at every opportunity. The chapel was well insulated from the sound going into the main building. Since I couldn't hear the dinner bell, I was late getting to the dining room on several occasions.

Even though I loved playing, I hated the lessons. I found a way to rebel. I would play anything but my lessons when I practiced. I thought I was being smart, but I guess Mrs. Mathias felt since I *was* playing, even though it wasn't my lesson, that I was learning, and she didn't fuss at me too much. One day, she told me her dream for me was that I would become a church organist. I told her I'd rather scrub floors!