

# *Jane Russell*

1921 – 2011

Operation:Children would not have existed without Jane Russell. In the early 1950's, after years of fighting the frustration of attempting to adopt a child in the United States, Jane looked to Europe for a child. What she found there were children as old as five who couldn't walk because they had been left in their cribs, while other children died in the streets of malnutrition. The majority of the unwanted children were half American, yet overseas adoption still wasn't easy.

With the help of a handful of women, Jane wrote letters, sent telegrams, addressed Congress, and succeeded in making sure that a provision for the adoption of refugee children was included in the Refugee Act of 1953. Jane then asked Greta Peck to help with a luncheon to raise funds to process as many of these adoptions as possible. Hundreds of people responded, and in 1955, Woman's Adoption International Fund (WAIF) was formed. Children came to the United States from over 48 countries. Chapters of WAIF were formed in Palm Springs, New York, Honolulu, Louisiana, San Francisco, Chicago, San Diego and Seattle.

By 1982, things were changing as fewer and fewer children were available for adoption in other countries, while in our own country, more and more children were thrown into the adoption system - The products of drugs, abuse and discrimination. Some of the WAIF members belonging to the Los Angeles Chapter decided to devote their full time and energy to helping the children of the Los Angeles area, and Operation:Children was born.

To the world Jane Russell was a glamorous, sexy movie star. To many members of Operation:Children, she was an inspiration, and a dear friend. We shall all miss her very much.

We have honored her in the past, and were blessed to have her present at our October 2010 fundraiser, where she presented the 1<sup>st</sup> "Jane Russell Award" to Willie Garson.



**Although a famous star, Jane was Jane!!!** No pretense, no nonsense. Just Jane...who told it like it was...a matter of fact! She has been an adoption trailblazer, my roommate, my houseguest and friend for over 50 years. If you needed her she would be there for you if possible. She loved the Lord while here on earth; now the Lord is still loving and taking care of her in the expression of her next life. She will be sorely missed but her spirit and legacy will live on.

Blessings, Elaine “LaLa” LaLanne



### **I Shall Never Forget.....**

As a Provisional Member at my first WAIF meeting, I was deeply touched when beautiful, gorgeous Jane Russell told us her story of her search to adopt a baby. During the U.S.O. tours in Europe, she managed to sneak away to visit orphanages, and was appalled at the conditions of the lifeless babies. A short film called “Precious Cargo”, narrated by Helen Hoyal (actress-member) was shocking. As all 34 new members walked out of the room with tears streaming down our faces, I knew I was hooked. When I was installed as President at a formal evening affair at Ray Tischlsnil – I was both surprised and delighted when Jane showed up. Jane attended many of our major fundraising events and leadership conferences at WAIF chapters. Over the years, I have grown not only to respect her, but to love this lady for her dedication and genuine concern for homeless children. Jane and Bob Waterfield adopted two boys and one girl. I will really miss her.

~ Mary Robertson