

Til We Meet Again



Sylvia's Story

Sylvia was born on July 10, 1927 by the shores of Lake Colta, near Ca-jabamba, Ecuador, at an altitude of 10,000 feet above sea level. Her parents, Orley and Lillian Shafer marriage together by among the Inca Indi-and into the Andes had an older brother, other siblings who a teenager, her par-boy, Billy, into their great grandparents, Martha Jane Simp-across the Great wagon. They fought wagon down the it was shallow and homesteaded in Wal-and Oregon City, a Seventh-day Ad-Sylvia's father and his gently to help main-farm. Her maternal grandparents, Mathias Shafer and Sarah Elizabeth Williams,



Ford, had begun their spreading the gospel ans in Peru, Ecuador Mountains. Sylvia Elden, as well as two died in childhood. As ents brought a little home. Her paternal Ninevah and Doctor son, came West Plains in a covered Indians, rafted their Columbia River when dangerous, and la Walla, Washington Oregon. He became ventist in his 80's. siblings worked dili-tain the family wheat



homesteaded in Kansas in a sod house and went through the hardships of making a success of their farm and keeping a family of 15 children cared for and fed. Her mother was the 14th child. Lillian never understood people who enjoyed horseback riding as entertainment, since she would often spend hours on horseback rounding up the family cows and coming home hot, dusty, sore and tired. Her older brothers read the Bible, which led them to love God, become Seventh-day Adventists and encourage most of their family to

choose for God.

Sylvia joined her parents and brother in their mission endeavors. They made friends, taught Bible truths, helped sick and injured, taught students to read and write, and managed the best they could to live and improve uncomfortable and sometimes hostile dwelling places. It was a family team. Sylvia was very social and loved God dearly. She had fond memories of the sundown worships in her parent's home. When her father held evangelistic series, the children happily fasted and prayed, set up chairs, handed out supplies to attendees, played piano for song services, and more. These were precious, happy times for Sylvia. She was involved in many miracles that occurred, such as when angels stood guard around their home as hundreds of maddened and intoxicated Indians ran past, murdering every white person in sight but leaving her and her family alive.

Sylvia's father was adventurous and wanted to go all the way from the head waters of the Amazon River, which was up close to where they lived to follow the river down through the dense jungles of Brazil to the Atlantic Ocean. As usual, the family went together, and Sylvia, who was two years old, could boast of being the first white little girl to travel the full distance of the river. They passed many beautiful flowers, hanging tree branches in the jungle, colorful parrots, monkey's, piranhas, wild boars, jaguars, boa constrictors as large as tree trunks, crocodiles, and the very frightening headhunters and cannibals. They did find themselves often wet for days, often sleeping in poor conditions, bit by hordes of mosquitos and sometimes being low on food. Overall, it was a wonderful trip never to be forgotten.

Pets were a part of Sylvia's childhood. She had dogs, cats, goats, cows, horses, monkeys, parrots and other jungle animals. One spider monkey and Sylvia were inseparable. He would wrap his legs around her and take a ride with her everywhere she went. She helped with chores in the home such as chopping wood with an ax and feeding the pets. One chore she did not appreciate was when she was required to wash the



dishes on Sunday morning after having many guests for Sabbath meals. One fond memory Sylvia enjoyed was climbing up in the family lemon tree and sitting there for hours, daydreaming and sucking on lemons. Unfortunately, the long exposure to her teeth had with the acid harmed the enamel of her teeth. Her mother taught her piano lessons and as she progressed she received lessons from celebrated teachers. She became an accomplished pianist, who taught piano students and who was willing to use her skills for her church up into her 80's. Sylvia was very close to her brother Elden, but did not appreciate him teasing and unmercifully tickling her. She adored her younger brother Donny, and after he died was thankful for a new brother, Billy. However, she was attending high school at



Costa Rica Junior College by that time, so didn't spend as much time with him as she wanted.



Sylvia was very social and enjoyed her boarding academy experience with simple accommodations and crowded quarters of three bunkbeds per dorm room. She made many friends and did well academically in her Spanish classwork. She enthusiastically sang alto in the school choir and excelled as a flute player in the band. She was accustomed to Latin American food and enjoyed the beans and rice, and rice and bean diet, besides tortillas, yucca, mangoes, fried plantains, etc. While at Costa Rica Junior College, a certain handsome young man, named Marvin Larson caught her attention and interest. He was her age and in her grade. He was also a son of American missionaries, Aaron and Lela Larson, who had lived in countries such as Panama and Columbia. Though the school didn't allow dating relationships, these two knew they had a great interest in each other. Marvin played saxophone in the band with her. He arranged several visiting times where they could meet in the dean's office. However, he was shy and their conversation was limited. In 1946, by the end of their Senior year, Marvin was sure Sylvia was the girl for him. But with parental input, it was advised that since they had been the only two American students at their school, they go to separate colleges in the United States and meet other American young people. Sylvia attended Union College in Nebraska and Marvin attended at Pacific Union College in California. She was not up-to-date on American



customs. Her hairstyle, clothing and topics of conversation were different than the other students. She often felt lonely and missed her parents and Spanish friends. Though she spoke and could read English well, she struggled in the American academics. As an accomplished pianist, Sylvia was pleased to be able to play for church services and played a rendition for the Amateur Hour. Meanwhile, Marvin, believing the relationship was over, was courting a young lady in California and became engaged to her. Upon hearing this, Sylvia wrote him a short note telling of her interest in him. That was all

Marvin needed. Besides letters and phone calls, he hitch-hiked several times to Nebraska to determine Sylvia's interest. As he would be hitch hiking along a road with his thumb out, he would often sing. His favorite was, *In the Garden*, which has become a family-favorite. With Sylvia's interests high in him, he broke his engagement and transferred to Union College their senior year. Sylvia and Marvin became sweethearts again. By the end of the school year they were engaged. In June of 1951 Sylvia graduated with a BS in nursing and Marvin with his ministerial degree and in September they married at La Sierra, California. She laughed as she told later how her slip fell off under



Back Row: Marvin, Bob, Kathleen, Vanessa
Front Row: Sylvia, Nancy, Orley, Verna, Lillian Medgy, Pat, Elden, Dan

her wedding dress while marching up the aisle in the processional. Marvin quickly took it up and slid it into his pocket. Marvin first pastored a little church in Mission, Texas. They moved into a tiny rental house and were proud to own their first car. In 1953 a beautiful brown-haired Verna June was born. Her proud and very protective pastor-father made sure all admirers could only look

but not touch her.

Next the Costa Rican Junior College requested Marvin and Sylvia to come teach Bible and Science respectively, among other tasks. About two-years later in 1955, as Sylvia was teaching a piano lesson, labor contractions began, she finished the session and just got to the hospital before their second daughter, Nancy June, was born. Sylvia felt so sad as she would leave her little girls and go to work. But she was fortunate to have kindly students who cared for them and kept up the house. A third little girl, Marilyn June (Medgy), was born to the very busy family in 1957. The middle name, June, was Marvin's for the girls to have a common name even if their names would likely change at their marriages. After a few years of teaching classes, Marvin could see that this was not his strength. However, he had



built up the school's bakery and poultry businesses.

With Marvin's business successes, the family moved to a new Adventist hospital in Nicaragua with Marvin the business manager and Sylvia as a nursing instructor. The mission divided a one-bedroom space out of the maintenance building until a home could be built. The girls slept in the bedroom. Other

than the tiny bathroom, the other small room functioned as the kitchen, dining room and living room (with the couch being Marvin and Sylvia's bed). The hospital campus housed several missionary families, who have become long time



family friends – the Fred Moor's and the Wayne Alvarez's. The mission children had a safe and free-style time to play. Sylvia found herself chasing Jimmy Moor and Waynito Alvarez when they enjoyed throwing rocks on her aluminum roof to hear the raucous it made. Mrs. Alvarez taught Verna, Nancy and Medgy fancy needle stitching. The girls met with all the other children for Sabbath School in the Moor's carport. When the pounding rains came, they would enjoy



crowding tightly in the center, hardly able to hear anything other than the downpour. Marvin played his saxophone for church song service due to no available piano, yet. The three sisters began praying insistently for a baby brother. And low and behold, a surprise brother was born- Ronley Victor in 1961. The proud father again would only allow admirers to look but not touch his precious child.



Very soon Marvin realized that he was not a "desk" person. Besides, the promised school teacher for Verna would not materialize. So the family made a major decision for Marvin to make a career change and to become a Physical Therapist. They moved to Loma Linda, California in 1962 for the two year program, staying with the Larson grandparent's in Mariposa, California now and then. Sylvia became the wage earner and worked nights as a labor and delivery nurse in the Loma Linda Hill Sanitarium, while Marvin studied for his classes and cared for the children. She would later say that it was one of the most difficult times of her life, but that God took care of them. With much relief, the ordeal was over and the family moved to Portland, Oregon, where Sylvia now only worked part time as a nurse at the Portland Sanitarium and Hospital beginning in 1964. She began realizing the dreams she had with her children. She spent much time reading Bible stories to her four children - though she often fell asleep before the story was complete and her children would giggle and wake her up or sneak away. She taught them to clean house, how to sew dolly-dresses and then graduate to sewing clothes for themselves. She was very interested in healthful living and taught



the girls to cook healthful foods. Much joy was spent in teaching them to play piano. In addition, she realized the importance of country living and began taking



steps to buy property and design a house. The family moved outside the little city of Boring, Oregon, on their private five-acres and home with



bedrooms for all the children, cousins, aunts and uncles, grandmas and grandpas and any one else who needed a place to lay their head and have a good meal. Sylvia's friendly, kindly, organized way of being a hostess produced many happy Thanksgiving and Christmas meals in Boring - where there were sometimes up to 40 friends and family. She kept her home neat and orderly, though not lavish. The families of Phyllis Larson Asgeirsson and Don Larson lived in the Portland area and they all spent many happy times together. Sylvia and Marvin took their family to the Colorado River with his brother,



Bill & Nancy, Sylvia, Orpha, (Orley's sister), Lillian, Aunt Mildred

Norman, and wife, Grace and family. Marvin was an energetic husband and helped put in an abundant orchard (with the help of Don Larson) and made gardens that were lush and enormous. This gave the

family much valuable outside work and skills in preserving food. The move to the country also jump-started the children to rededicate themselves to God and improve their behaviors and academic efforts. As the children's Adventist education became more and more expensive, Sylvia began working full-time and the girls began part-time jobs to supplement the family income. Sylvia was known for her kindly attention to her patients, taking extra time to make them comfortable and praying for them - which didn't give her a reputation of efficiency. At home, Sylvia continued putting great emphasis on family worships, attending Prayer Meeting, in-home youth Bible study groups, helping at church and going to camp-





meeting. There was always much religious and classical music in the home-whether produced by the family or from recordings. She and Marvin were very adamant that the TV, which had only recently been introduced in the home, was only used for geographical or nature travelogues, Lassie and the news. As the girls went to

boarding academy, Sylvia made sure that she wrote weekly letters and attended most every school family function, such as band concerts, mother-daughter weekends, etc. She was thankful for Marvin's lucrative Physical Therapy career choice and his willingness to diligently work many evenings and Sundays-especially when all three girls were in college and Ronley was in academy in 1976.

Sylvia enjoyed the boyfriends and girlfriends her children brought home to introduce to the family. Many luscious meals were prepared and served in addition to providing many fun activities for those special times. Most of the activities she planned were physically active events such as playing in the snow, going to the beach, camping or taking hikes by waterfalls. Sylvia was also friendly with all her neighbors and passed out Christmas candies and cookies every year.

Slowly, Sylvia's children began marrying and leaving home. So, she and Marvin began having more time to relax, organize and pick up the pieces of their busy lives. Sylvia happily began playing the piano more often. She and Marvin toured Alaska with Marvin's brother-Norman. They visited their former countries of El Salvador, Nicaragua and Costa Rica with Sylvia's brother-Elden. As their parents began to fail physically, Sylvia spent time caring for them, sometimes keeping them in her home. Then Marvin began showing signs of diabetes and suffered a stroke. Sylvia faithfully cared for him through these times. Though busy, she continued sharing her time and home, and hosted many birthdays and holidays. By this time she had 11 grandchildren. After Marvin passed away in 1992 due to congestive heart failure and diabetes, she started making plans to downsize their home. She was still very active in the Spanish church, playing piano for them and giving Bible studies. She also interpreted for the Spanish at the Portland Community Service Center (PACS) and became the office nurse, where she assisted the volunteer physicians, as they provided medical care to the clients at the Portland Community Services Center. Her busy life included many mission trips, where she led out in the children's meetings every afternoon, as well as interpreting for English speaking evangelists each evening. Sharing her life with many friends while traveling in her



motorhome, on her many mission trips, she felt it was important to also share these experiences with several of her grandchildren. She toured Israel with an old-time missionary friend-Ellen Larrabee. While in the Netherlands she attended the Seventh-day Adventist General Confer-

ence sessions.

Sylvia moved from Boring, leaving her dear friends, to McMinnville, Oregon in 1994, where Nancy and Ronley's families lived. She moved into a pretty, and comfortable home built by Ronley and she quickly made new friends. As in Boring, she continued hosting family holidays, adult Bible study groups, playing piano at the local Spanish and English churches, teaching piano lessons and giving Bible studies. Ronley's home-schooled children, taught by



their grandmother Sylvia enjoyed their Spanish and piano lessons. College class reunions were joyfully attended in Nebraska and other senior citizen outings were participated with much enjoyment. She attended most of her grandchildren's school programs, graduations and then all of their weddings. As the years went by she began having more aches and pains. One day while delivering a care-basket to a neighbor, she tripped and fell on some stairs, breaking her hip. Though she recovered well, she began looking at alternative-living for her future. With her children's encouragement, she moved to a senior living-center in Gladstone, Oregon. There she continued joining family activities, made many friends, helped needier people, and prayed and studied the Bible with fellow-residents.

Sylvia loved to study her Bible, Sabbath School Quarterly, and the Adventist Review and Gleaner, periodicals posting news of past, present and current happenings of other Seventh-day Adventist workers. Often she would set her hair in pin-curls while reading these.

When asked in her later years what stood out in her mind as her proudest

moments, she would state they were when she, her husband and children were sitting in church all together, as a family. She thanked God for all His care throughout her years, all the different circumstances she encountered, and the blessings she received while raising her children. As her eyesight diminished, she had difficulty doing her two-mile-walk each day and began failing physically. When Ronley and Rhonda invited her to live in their home, she was able to again attend the McMinnville church and was able to be closer to the grandchildren whom she loved dearly. After a few years, she was failing to the point that she required full-time care. So she moved to Medgy's home, who devoted her whole time to Sylvia's care. On the day she passed away, September 28, 2018, she had weakly but happily sung *In the Garden* and *Kum Ba Ya* at the age of 91. At this time she had 12 great-grand children. Her spiritual advice and friendliness is greatly missed. Her wish was that she would see her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren in heaven. In addition, she wanted to join the great banquet in heaven, with all her relatives and friends.



**Ronley & Rhonda, Nancy & Bill
Sylvia, Verna & Tony, Medgy & Carl**



**Vanessa & Three Siblings
Elden, Billy & Sylvia**