



Marjorie Elizabeth Day

July 6, 1926 - September 25, 2020

Marjorie Elizabeth Day, 94, of Sanford, FL passed away Friday, September 25, 2020 at Lake Mary Health and Rehabilitation Center in Lake Mary, FL. She was born July 6, 1926 in Minneapolis, MN to Thurber and Ruth Elizabeth Day and served as a missionary with New Tribes Mission (Ethnos360) in Bolivia for over 50 years. She is survived by her nephews, Michael Bussey and Larry Bussey, and by her nieces, Barbara Ringgold and Annette Sandell, and their families. Details related to Celebration Services in Sanford, FL and Minneapolis, MN have not yet been finalized.

The family invites you share a personal memory of Marge on the Tribute Wall and to enjoy reading about her remarkable life in the article below, written by Carol Sheffield and originally published on the Home of Ethnos360 website.

Marjorie E. Day

Who was that flying high over a lake in Fouts Springs, California, happily experimenting with loops and snap-rolls she'd read about in a magazine, unaware that Ken Johnston, one of her Mission directors, was fishing down below?

How can one tell in a few short paragraphs the story of a young pioneer missionary woman who spent 55 years, not as a pilot, but as nurse, teacher, and Bible translator with the Yuracare people in the Chapare region of Bolivia?

“When I went to Bolivia the Yura didn't exist for me, but since then they have been my entire life.” — Marge Day

Marge relates, “I was born in 1926 and grew up in the Minneapolis, Minnesota, area. I became a Christian when I was a senior in high school. One night, Paul Fleming, the founder of NTM, came to speak at my church and my heart was challenged to become a missionary to those who had never had a chance to hear the Gospel.”

After high school and a half year of Bible School, Marge trained three years with the Cadet Nursing Corps at the University of Minnesota, paid for by the military, and became an RN. But, before she headed to fulfill her obligated military service, the war ended. So instead, in the fall of 1949, she began her training with NTM.

“My parents and pastor were opposed,” Marge says. “People had a dim view of NTM. Five killed. The group was too new and radical.” But as she was leaving, not having thought of support, her pastor called and promised \$50 a month.

During her nine months at Fouts Springs Marge met Jean Dye (another NTM missionary – pictured here) who was on furlough from Bolivia. Her husband, Bob, and four others had been killed by the Ayore, a people group then hostile to outsiders.

“Little did we know that one day we would become partners,” Marge added. “In March of 1950, I flew to Robore, Bolivia on the DC3 named The Tribesman, which NTM had acquired to help transport its missionaries to South America.”

NTM was only working with the Ayore at the time of her arrival, but surveys had been done revealing a number of unreached groups—Yuracare, Chimani, Trinitario and others. Mel and Connie Wyma met the new missionaries, helped them get acclimated the first couple weeks in a new country, then Mel flew them two by two in his little single engine plane to the towns nearest these new groups. Marge and her partner Wanda Banman—with only a permitted 75 pounds of luggage each, including everything to set up housekeeping—were flown to the town of San Borja.

They rented a room, picked up the language out of necessity while making friends, and soon had a small group of believers meeting nightly. “But our hearts burned with the desire to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with the tribal people who came into town from the river and peered at us through the open windows.”

The following year, at the annual NTM field conference, Marge again met Jean Dye, who was beginning a new work with the Yuracare but didn’t have a partner. They decided to work together in this new venture.

The Yuracare people live in small widely scattered family groups along seven main rivers and many tributaries in a hot and humid tropical setting at the eastern foot of the Andes Mountains. They hunt and fish for their daily food and raise small plots of yuca, corn, and bananas.

In the past, the Yuras sold jaguar, ocelot and crocodile hides to river launches and were always paid in alcohol... hence were notorious for drinking to excess, even the children. They had no written language, no medical care, and high infant mortality. They were not hostile and welcomed visits from the missionaries.

Jean, who trained with SIL and had developed an alphabet for the Ayore language her first term in Bolivia, heard about a bilingual speaker whose help would greatly facilitate learning the Yura language. Marge and Jean traveled several days by river launch and eleven days by dugout canoe—paddled and poled by six sturdy Yuras—to the headwaters of the Isiboro River where this person lived, taking with them supplies calculated to last one year.

The surprised Yuras offered them a thatch-roofed, pole-walled hut to live in. (No “facilities.”) They worked there with their language helper under mosquito netting—the bugs were fierce—isolated from the outside world for ten months. During that time they developed an alphabet and described the grammar of the Yura language. Then returning to civilization, they prepared literacy materials.

Over the next several years Marge and Jean visited 30 – 40 Yura communities evangelizing and teaching literacy. As it became obvious that it would be impossible to spend enough time in each place, they believed the Lord was leading them to begin a boarding school where children from scattered ports could be brought together and taught for several months at a time. Just before her first furlough in 1955, Marge purchased a small plantation an hour downriver from Todos Santos for \$400.

In 1956, Jean re-married and Marge and her new partner Florencia Ferrel, a dedicated national missionary, worked together for the next 45 years. Marge and Florencia began ministering in the Todos Santos church on weekends and traveled back and forth during the week to the new property downriver—which they named Nueva Vida (New Life)—where they prepared to open a school.

Only four children came the first two-month term but as parents began to see how their children were benefiting by the classes in both Yura and Spanish, enrollment eventually reached 180 in grade one through junior high. Jungle was cleared and an airstrip and fifteen buildings were built, including classrooms, a dining room, girls’ and boys’ dorms, and, lastly, a worship hall seating 300.

Seeds of God’s Word were planted in the hearts of at least 1000 Yura children and many adults over the years. His Word shall never return void! The Yura church grew, though

spread out in many small communities, as students went home over the years and taught their people. Some became pastors. Trained young people taught primitive back-river Yuras. One student, Inocencio and his family became full-time missionaries to their own people in a remote village.

Others who helped in Nueva Vida over the years were Bob and Joyce Wilhelmson, Bob and Shirley Smith, Bill and Jeannie Cutforth, Art and Toni Barkley, Roger and Eva Jean Dockum and Howard and Karla Moss. Many former students became the teachers. One of the nationals, Judith Mendez, continues in the Yura work today.

In the 1980's, cocaine dealers flooded the Chapare area which had always been prime coca growing land. Even some of the Yuras began growing the plants that yielded such a huge monetary return.

After 40 years, the drug threat caused NTM to pull out their missionaries eventually closing the school. Marge had already moved to Cochabamba to complete the translation of the Yura New Testament and Old Testament passages relating to the chronological teaching. She regrets that her school was closed, but would she do it all over again? "Yes! In a moment!" is her reply.

Comments



“ I knew Marge as a missionary our church, Bethesda Free Church, in Mpls. had supported for many years, but until the fall of 1965 I did not know her personally. That year she came home and was a speaker at our annual missionary conference. I was seated next to her at an event and we became acquainted. I discovered she liked to play tennis so while playing a few tennis games we became better acquainted.

When she learned I was a school teacher and might have some time in the summer, she began talking to me about spending a couple of months in Bolivia. After she returned to Bolivia, we corresponded and I learned more about the school and how I might be able to be of some help as she was in need of teachers the following summer. There were 2 school terms.. one in Feb./ Mar.during the rainy season and one in June/July when parents were willing to allow their children to attend.

So, long story a bit shorter, I spent every other summer for the next 10 years teaching Yuracare children at Nueva Vida, the New Tribes Mission Literacy School. In the intervening years, Marge would come back and often I would drive down and pick her up in Miami to bring her back to Mpls. where her parents lived.

On one of those road trips, we stopped at her sister, Mary's, and there I met her and her husband and their children, Barb, Larry and Annette and had a good time with the girls, swimming and playing tennis. (Michael was out of the nest by then.)

I have many memories of our adventures getting to Cochabamba and then down into the jungle where the school was situated in a clearing by the Chapare River in the semi-tropics.

We would hire a trucker to take us over the mountains and drive across a river to a small village, Todos Santos, where we would wait for a couple of Yura boys to pick us up in a canoe and take us downriver to the school. (The trip in the truck took at least 12 hours and it was very cold going over the mountains.)

Around 1974 Marge bought a Jeep and no longer had to rely on a trucker.

Marge was totally devoted to the work of the school and evangelizing the Yuracare Tribe.

When school was not in session, she was working with Yura leaders who could help her with language accuracy as she translated the New Testament into the Yuracare tongue.

Marge loved these people and was completely dedicated to seeing them come to know Christ and understand what it meant to live for Him.

She spent her life...over 50 years.. doing just that and left them with God's Word in their own language.

The last few times I talked on the phone with her, she asked me to pray that the Lord

would take her home. I am so grateful that He did and now she is enjoying the rewards of her life of service and seeing the Savior she served face to face.

Lorraine Stevenson
aka "Stevie"

Lorraine Stevenson - October 31 at 05:06 PM



“ My memories of Aunt Marge span a life time. Here are some of my fondest memories of Aunt Marge... When I was a little girl and she was home on furlough she shared the Salvation Story of Jesus Christ with me. I accepted Christ at a very young age which has greatly influenced and impacted my life immensely! One of my last times visiting her we talked about the time that she led me to Christ. When we move to Virginia when I was 12, Marge and her friend Stevie ,would come and visit us when Marge was home on furlough. Our family always looked forward to their visit.Lots of fun times when Stevie and Marge came to visit. I am forever grateful and thankful to Marge who came and took care of mom after her hip surgery in 2001. Different family members came to be with Mom, but because of jobs, kids, and distance, we could not be with Mom throughout her entire recovery process. Marge came and stayed with Mom for weeks during her recovery from hip surgery. I am so grateful she came and helped Mom at this time. It was so special when she came out to visit us at Christmas. Thanks to Mike and Marcia in bringing Marge out so we could celebrate together as a family. Even though she did not like the cold, she loved the warmth of family being together. We talked about these Christmas visits on one of our last times together. She loved going to the Cowboy Christmas. One year just she and Keith went and she enjoyed having Keith as her date! I loved going down to visit her in Sanford- sometimes with Mark and sometimes with Barby. You could always count on going out to eat and playing lots of cards. We would often stay up to the wee hours playing cards. She said she felt no pain when she was playing cards- hence the late night card playing. It was just about this time last year that Mark and I drove down to see her. We were so blessed because Judith was visiting her at the same time. We had heard so much about Judith - and now we finally met her. Marge had talked so glowingly and lovingly about Judith- and now we know why- a true angel here on earth. When we were there, Marge and Judith were working on a book together about Florencia. This was so wonderful to see Marge so excited about being so productive and having such a great purpose in her later years of life. Of course, it was so hard seeing Marge's body slowly decline-even though her mind was sharp as a tack! With Covid there was no way we could see her. Although many phone calls and cards were sent. There was always a hope that we could get down there to see her and to be with her. God had other plans. As much as she will be missed, we are rejoicing that she is reaping the rewards of her labor here on earth. What a wonderful reunion it must be when she was greeted with open arms with the words of Jesus saying, "Well done good and faithful servant," and then being reunited with all the loved ones that went on ahead of her. She definitely will be missed but her legacy and the impact of leading people to Christ will be everlasting.

Annette Sandell - October 25 at 05:06 PM



“ Marge was one of my all time favorite people. She was a great friend and influencer. I met her when I was fifteen. I was lucky to spend four years and five different summers working with her in Bolivia. She often stayed with me when she was on furlough. Marge brought change to the lives of people in many ways. She used her nursing skills to help them physically. She translated the Yura language and got it into writing and taught several generations to read and write their own language as well as Spanish. Spiritually, which was her main purpose, she introduced a whole people group to the Lord and helped them grow spiritually. Marge created her own literacy materials and translated the New Testament into Yuracare. Marge loved to play games and she enjoyed travel. She loved pets and always had several. She was a pioneer missionary, adventurous, creative and willing to live like the people. Marge loved living in the jungle and we often laughed at how people would admire her for “giving up the modern things of life to live there.” She thought it was so funny because she much preferred the jungle life to the hectic busy life in the States. One day she and I were at a little garden we’d planted picking vegetables. We looked up and not six feet away was a giant anteater! Life in the jungle was exciting! Best of all the Yura people were wonderful friends. Many lives have been changed-enhanced-because of Marge and her love for the Lord. I’m already missing her so much. She will be in my heart forever.

Anne Crowe - October 11 at 02:05 PM



“ I have many great memories of my Aunt Marge, both from my childhood and during the past few years. I always had such a good time with her when she was on furlough. She would usually visit us in Virginia with her friend, Stevie. We had such fun, whether it was swimming, playing tennis, playing card games or cooking. I particularly remember the time she brought this special Bolivian chocolate back from the cacao trees they grew in Nueva Vida. We decided to make a chocolate cake for my mom's birthday and it was the worst looking and tasting cake I've ever had. We laughed so hard; I still have a picture of it. I also remember being with Marge at my grandparent's (her parents) house in Minneapolis. We'd make a mess of grandma's kitchen, frying chicken wings and steaks. We'd play tennis, go to concerts and services with her friends, and just have fun. In the past few years my sister and I would visit Marge in Florida...no more cooking, but lots of great meals out at Marge's favorite restaurants. AND lots of card games, mostly Five Crowns. Marge almost always won! I've also had many, many phone calls with Marge in the last year. We'd often talk sports, and she encouraged to keep up my golf when I had pretty much given up. I had a good round the other day, and SO wanted to tell her. I miss her so much. Her dedication to isolated tribes in Bolivia for so many years was an inspiration to me and so many others. Barb Ringgold

Barb Ringgold - October 09 at 04:41 PM



“ Marge has been one of my childhood heroes for over 65 years. In November 1955 my family was asked to move to Marge’s ‘chaco’ (later named Nueva Vida) to take care of it while Marge took a 3 month mini-furlough. After she returned, my brother and I went back to boarding school while my parents and younger sister moved to a small village upriver from Nueva Vida. During vacations we loved going downriver to visit Marge and her partner, Florencia. My sister and I wanted to be missionaries, like Marge and Florencia when we grew up. I could probably write a whole book about Marge and many other missionaries God used to impact my life. One of my favorite stories is the one about Marge and Jean Dye (Jean’s husband, Bob Dye, was one of the five men killed by the Ayoré in 1943). Back in the early days of the Yura work, before Nueva Vida became a boarding school for Yura children, Marge and Jean were partners and were assigned to learn the Yura language. They bought their supplies: 100 pounds of flour, 100 pounds of sugar, a case of oatmeal, a case of powdered milk and a few other staples and headed up the Isiboro River. Marge said, “Finally we were packed and ready to begin what would be the most memorable year of my life.” A deaf man name Chávez agreed to take them in his canoe. Marge writes: “We took turns standing in the bow of the canoe, helping push our way upriver with a long pole. It was about dusk when Chávez indicated that we should stop on the beach for the night. Jean wanted to go on a while longer. She was standing in the bow with her pole and turned to indicate to the deaf fellow that we should continue on. Somehow she lost her balance and disappeared over the side of the canoe. Her big straw hat appeared first, followed by a sputtering Jean. Needless to say, we stopped for the night, midst hilarious laughter, so Jean could dry off.” They were cut off from civilization for 10 months, learning the Yura language, writing an alphabet and breaking down the grammar. They finally decided they should head out to the city for a break because they were almost out of supplies. Marge continues, “Meanwhile, in Cochabamba and back home in Minnesota, rumors had been flying... Finally two friends traveled to Trinidad, rented a boat and motor and started a rescue operation. Oblivious to all of this, we had been traveling slowly down river for six days when we heard the distinct sound of an approaching outboard motor. Imagine our surprise to see [our two friends] and be told that we were ‘lost’ and that they had come to rescue us. It was sort of a ‘Dr. Livingstone, I presume’ moment in the middle of the Sécore River. It didn’t take us long to transfer from our dugout to the motorboat and finish the trip to Trinidad in style.” Marge pushed herself hard. She was passionate about the ministry God had entrusted to her. Besides running the school in Nueva Vida, she translated the New Testament and many other things into the Yura language. Because of her faithfulness, there are many Yura believers now, some of them missionaries to their own people. She has joined so many of my missionary heroes in heaven and heard the Master say, “Well done, good and faithful servant...” (Matthew 25:23)

It will be worth it all when we see Jesus,
Life's trials will seem so small when we see Christ;
One glimpse of His dear face all sorrow will erase,
So bravely run the race till we see Christ.
(Esther Kerr Rusthoi)



“ The memories of Aunt Marge are so precious to me! I met her just after her nephew Mike Bussey and I were married. I loved playing tennis with her when she was in the Minneapolis area on furlough. She was a good player!

I always enjoyed reading letters from Marge - she was a matter-of-fact person who really knew what was needed to be done. She was happy to bring things back down to Bolivia, blessing the people there, and never taking any for herself.

Two of our sons, Matthew and Andrew, decided to go visit her in Bolivia after college. They totally bonded with Marge! They thought that she was the coolest ever! Marge was a great jeep driver, going over rivers without slowing down, with just two pieces of wood to take her across the river! Yeow!

Of course, our best memories of Marge are the times when she shared her faith with us, and listening to her sharing with others. I have always said that there are a lot of people in heaven because of Marge!! What great memories we have of this wonderful woman!!

Marcia Bussey

Marcia Bussey - October 07 at 01:12 PM



“ 4 files added to the album Memories Album



Mike Bussey - October 07 at 12:35 PM



“ Marge told me that I, 6years old, was on the mission plane with her in 1950 heading back to Bolivia with my mom,Audrey Bacon. She was such a testimony of God's sufficiency.

Avis Bodin - October 10 at 03:39 PM