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Meredythe Anne Scheflen

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MEREDYTHE ANNE SCHEFLEN

Meredythe Anne Scheflen, career missionary to Bolivia with World Gospel Mission (WGM), was the hostess for the CILA seminar team to the Bolivian Evangelical University (UEB). Here is more about this remarkable lady.

Meredythe, or *Senorita Mery*, as she is known affectionately all around Santa Cruz, is a native of New Jersey. She was raised in the community of Pennsauken, outside of Philadelphia. Converted to Christ as a young teen, Mery spent part of her summers at Delanco Camp Meeting, Delanco, NJ, where she became acquainted with many WGM missionaries. It was in her teen years that she received a call to the mission field.

Meredythe attended college at Asbury College, Wilmore, KY, graduating with an A.B. in Speech, and being certified to teach. She taught for two years at Mt. Carmel High School, a Christian school located at Vanceve, KY, near Jackson. She was then invited to work as librarian at Cleveland Bible College (now Malone College) during 1949-1951, while she completed a Th.B. degree there in preparation for work with WGM.

"Meredythe's dream was to go to China, but she was informed it would not be possible. 'Since China is closed to missionaries, where would you now like to serve, Miss Scheflen?' asked Chairman of the Board [of WGM] Dr. Hodgkin. 'If China is closed,' Meredythe responded, 'I would like to go to Bolivia.' Some of the board members gasped. The chairman replied, 'We can't possibly send you to Bolivia. It is a land of jungles and tigers – not a fit place for single girls. We will seek the Lord's guidance for your appointment.' Three days later, she was informed, 'Your appointment is to Bolivia!'"

After several months of language study

in Costa Rica, Mery arrived in Bolivia in 1952 as a missionary under appointment with WGM. Her first assignment was to teach the missionary children, an assignment that soon expanded to become a school for the children of the village, Asencion de Guarayos. In 1955 Mery took some of her young graduates to the small city of Santa Cruz de la Sierra and founded the Berea Bible Institute, a Bible school at the high school level, some seven kilometers from the downtown.

Mery's next step was to take the Bible school students to an area on the edge of the city called Rio Nuevo and conduct Sunday school. They first met on a vacant lot under a large tree, using a log as their seats. This eventually developed into another grade school and a church, all of the same name, Rio Nuevo. The Rio Nuevo school is still a vital influence in Santa Cruz, enrolling hundred of students each semester.

That same year, Meredythe's mother, Anne Scheflen, was widowed. "Grandma" was invited by the missionaries to come and teach English in Bolivia, so in 1956, "Grandma" joined Mery on the mission field, for what would turn out to be a forty-year stay.

By 1961 there was a need for a Christian high school to continue the education of the grade school graduates, and so Berea High School was founded. The story of how Mery came by the property where the high school is located is a miraculous one, which could only have been by God's provision. Today there are many graduates of Berea High School in high places of educational and government service in the Santa Cruz area. At the same time as the founding of the high school, the teachers of Rio Nuevo and Berea formed an educational cooperative. Berea High School is located near the Bible institute, and a church was

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