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Armstrong, Loma

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MRS. LOMA ARMSTRONG - HANDMAID AND SERVANT OF GOD

By Mrs. Linda LaBissoniere

Mrs. Armstrong became a woman whose impact on the church as a leader and an example in following can probably never be totally realized.

Mr. Armstrong in his autobiography states that "This commission from its beginning has been a team activity commission in which Mrs. Armstrong shared equally - even though it may not have been evident to many."

From the quiet farming community of horse and buggy Iowa to the jet age, the atomic age and the space age, Mrs. Armstrong's life spanned four generations. As a young woman, Mrs. Armstrong worked as a schoolteacher before marriage. She was very full of energy, good cheer and friendly warmth. Her brothers had nicknamed her "Shebang" and "Cyclone" because she was active, alert and whatever she did she did it quickly.

But Loma was more than an extrovert. She was a woman of high ideals. Mr. Armstrong states in his autobiography that she had superior intelligence and that there was a mental depth in her that most girls lacked.

From the time of their marriage, Mr. and Mrs. Armstrong always worked together as partners in whatever work he was in. While he worked as an advertiser, Mrs. Armstrong carefully went over his work before he submitted it. The surveys he conducted were discussed and planned together before he

conducted them. They were a strong team before conversion. When the call came for the ministry, Mr. Armstrong felt they were called together as a team.

Shortly after they were married Loma had a dream so vivid and impressive it overwhelmed and shook her tremendously. In the dream an angel told her that Christ had an important work for them to do, preparing for His coming. At the time they took no notice of the dream. It was much later however when God began to call Mrs. Armstrong into the Church over the Sabbath issue and then through her Mr. Armstrong, that they realized the dream had some importance.

In the early radio ministry, Mrs. Armstrong carried very responsible duties. She became Mr. Armstrong's right hand assistant. As he made his radio broadcasts, she sat near him and would give him various Bible translations when needed. Mrs. Armstrong did much of the work on getting the Plain Truth out. This involved keeping and updating subscription lists, mailing, etc. In those days Loma had to paste 1 cent stamps on every copy of the Plain Truth. Mrs. Armstrong would cook paste of flour and water at home and bring it to the office to paste wrappers.

Those were the lean years - years of severe trials and tests. Mrs. Armstrong struggled and fought as a true soldier alongside her husband. There were times that there was no food in the house, times they had to rely on God for even the most basic needs. God truly proved both Mr. and Mrs. Armstrong before founding the Philadelphia era of the Church with them.

By 1944, the Plain Truth had developed from a hand mimeographed little magazine of about 150 copies to a printed magazine of about 35,000 copies circulated nationwide when funds allowed. But January 1944 was a month when funds did not allow. The work was undergoing a serious financial crisis. In the dire predicament they decided to sell their home and put all the money in the work.

But this was a bigger sacrifice than we realize. For at that time which was near the end of World War II there was a serious housing shortage in Eugene. They were unable to find a house to rent. So they had to put their furniture in storage and move into a motel. But many of the motels were limiting guests to stay only three days. So the Armstrongs, with their two teenage boys had to move from motel to motel every three or so days. This ordeal went on for several months. Mr. Armstrong in his autobiography relates that this was a "troublesome experience". But to Mrs. Armstrong, this was probably quite a trial. It must have been quite a chore keeping all the family belongings together as they moved from place to place.

Finally they found two upstairs bedrooms in a boarding house for rent. They had to eat out in restaurants for there were no cooking facilities available. This living situation lasted for over two years.

Later on when they began rebuilding the college, Mrs. Armstrong helped conduct the first sit-in in the Church's history. This was done to legally gain possession of what is now our library building. The owner, a Dr. B, sold

Mr. Armstrong the property but never intended to let him gain possession of it. After consulting with lawyers Mr. Armstrong found that in order to gain possession of the property that they would have to be physically living on the grounds. He immediately instructed his wife to pack their suitcases and prepare to live at the new property night and day until they gained possession. Mr. Armstrong knocked on the door and upon entering began chatting with Dr. B. About 10 minutes later the doorbell rang and Mr. Armstrong said that he would get it. He quickly jumped up and let Mrs. Armstrong and one of their sons inside with their suitcases. From that point on at least two people remained on the property until Dr. B left.

The work began to grow and Mrs. Armstrong was on top of everything. She knew what was going on in every area. She kept track of all the mail that came in. Loma would edit her husband's letters and bring such things as word changes to his attention. At times, Mrs. Armstrong would even approve letters, because she understood Mr. Armstrong's thinking.

Even though she was a key figure in the work in the early years, Mrs. Armstrong always knew her place as a woman and stayed in the background. Yet at the Feast of Tabernacles, Mr. Armstrong would always introduce her on stage. He would express to everyone that she was half his ministry.

Mrs. Armstrong was a leader in many ways. She was strong willed and had a mind of her own, yet she was yielded and feminine. She was very competent and capable with whatever

she set out to do. She was very much an extrovert and had a good sense of humor. She was very interested in other peoples lives and enjoyed personal contact.

Mrs. Armstrong counseled with hundreds of Ambassador College students and was a very strong influence in giving advice. When speaking to the women's clubs, one of the key points that she would emphasize to the girls was to never answer back to their husbands. She said to be a peacemaker In a strong disagreement, she advised to wait until both parties had cooled down and then calmly explain what you needed to say.

Mrs. Armstrong became involved in student dating. When students became engaged, she often would go shopping with the bride to be. She helped many a college girl pick out her wedding dress. She always stressed quality in shopping.

Mrs. Armstrong was indeed the servant and handmaid of God. She was a woman who had vision. She knew the Kingdom of God was far greater than any physical pleasure or possession. She was will be sacrifice her all for the work even until her dying day. A few days before her death Mrs. Armstrong said to a number of leading ministers gathered at her bedside, "You men go on and get your work done, I'm going to be all-right." The work was paramount in her life. No human could be like that unless they were totally conquered by God. Mrs. Armstrong has given us a beautiful example of a woman who submitted her life to her God and her husband. Truly she has been an example of true womanhood to the women of the Church.