

Biography of Mary Symonds

Mary was born in Erie, Pennsylvania, on October 24, 1949, to Carl and Teresa Kuruc. Her father had immigrated from Czechoslovakia shortly after World War I, while her mother (nee Wilczewski) was an Erie native of Polish and German descent.

Growing up in Erie, Mary battled with medical problems from the beginning of her life. She overcame speech defects due to a cleft palate, and in school she made excellent progress in English, developing a great love for literature. Eventually she fulfilled her dream of going to Philadelphia College of Art (now the University of the Arts). During her college years, she made a number of lifelong friends. It was also at this time (1969) that she met and joined the Unification Church in Philadelphia.

Her art studies were interrupted after she was diagnosed with Hodgkin's Disease and had to undergo radiation therapy and chemotherapy. Surviving her illness, she dedicated herself to church missions in New York and again in Philadelphia. Because of her great love for children, she was asked to provide child care for the family of Dr. and Mrs. Ang.

In February 1975, Rev. Sun Myung Moon introduced her to Steve Symonds, from England, and they were blessed in marriage in Seoul, Korea. In keeping with church tradition, she embarked on an outreach mission in New England before eventually settling down to family life with Steve, initially in Barrytown, New York.

For several years, from 1979 to 1985, Steve and Mary both served with CARP, the church's campus outreach program, living in Ann Arbor, Michigan; Columbus, Ohio; Washington, D.C. and New York City. Mary put her artistic talents to use time and again in creating numerous banners and signs that were used by CARP members in rallies and demonstrations across the country.

The great desire of her life was to be a mother. By 1980 it was apparent that the couple faced an infertility problem. Over several years Mary sought out a number of different doctors and underwent surgery and other procedures. Finally a son, William, was born in January 1986 in Mary's home town – Erie, Pennsylvania.

The family lived in Erie until early 1990. In these years Mary took the opportunity to develop her interest in plants and gardening, growing flowers and vegetables in abundance. Upon moving to Alexandria, Virginia, she used her flower-arranging experience to assist at Michelle's Flowers, a business owned by Daryl and Ming Hsin Knott. Later, she developed her interest in planting and trimming bonsai trees. Her ability to encourage house plants to thrive and blossom was noticed by everyone visiting the Symonds home.

Despite health problems including pneumonia, pleurisy, and sinus infections, Mary travelled to Cheong Pyung in Korea in 2000 to participate in church training. In the spring and summer of 2001, she suffered brain hemorrhages caused by a rare kind of cancerous tumor. After a long struggle she ascended to the spirit world on November 14, 2002.