

# EMU

## INTERNATIONAL

Evangelical Mission to the Unreached

Evangelical Mission to Uruguay

PROCLAIMING THE TRIUMPHS OF THE GOSPEL

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Ken & Joan Jensen  
Assistant Director

### ALONG THE WAY . . .

My original plans for this Newsletter were radically changed after October 18. I trust our readers will understand the reason for the lengthy article about **Marilyn Jensen** that fills the issue. I would venture to guess that well over half of those who receive this paper have met or know of my mom through her years of travel and ministry. So, I wanted to share this memorial writing with you and trust that you will join us in praising the Lord for His grace in and through the life of Marilyn Jensen. If any of you would like to make a memorial donation to EMU, we siblings and spouses have decided that the funds will go towards the **Camp Emmanuel Sponsorship Fund** for 2025 - unless you designate otherwise.

Missionary-wise, the **Farmers** arrived home in Cambodia on Monday, October 28.

The **Hancocks** welcomed their seventh child into the family on October 1. **Ezra Boaz** and **Becky** are doing great. The Hancocks will fly back to Cambodia on November 9.

The **Espinels** arrived Stateside at the end of September for a short furlough and will return to Uruguay on January 7.

**Tim Chapman** has been in Peru during October for the theology retreat (with Sam Horn and 2 others) and a pastors' retreat. He returns home the beginning of November.

Thank you for your prayers and interest. Please notice the **Christmas Fund** article on page four of this paper - the last article on MailChimp. †

## Matriarch of EMU & The Jensens

OCTOBER 18, 1931- OCTOBER 18, 2024

by Ken Jensen

With the passing of Ursula Thiessen in September in Uruguay, Marilyn Jensen (aka Mom) became the oldest surviving missionary with EMU International. Marilyn and her husband, George (aka Dad), joined the mission in 1967 and served faithfully until they were forced to cease their travels and ministries due to health - Alzheimer's for my dad and dementia for Mom. The many missionaries they served, and the churches and camps they ministered in attest to their love and fervency of the Lord's work.

A family party was scheduled for Sunday afternoon, October 20, to celebrate Marilyn Jensen's 93rd birthday. Arrangements were made to meet at my sister's (Cindy) house. Most of Marilyn's children, grandchildren, and great grandkids were planning to attend - with the exception of Joshua Jensen's family living in Cambodia and Trey Mickler's family in Raleigh, NC.

Mom had had a rough year beginning with a fall resulting in a broken pelvis in November 2023. Other physical problems landed her in the emergency room several times thereafter. But in recent weeks she seemed to be doing fine, and we kids and our spouses had had good visits with her at Brookstone Terrace assisted living, a five-minute drive from Cindy's house in Simpsonville. On Wednesday, October 16, Cindy received a call from Brookstone indicating that Mom was not doing well. After arriving at the facility and seeing Mom's condition, she called Joan and me. We drove the 30 minutes from our house to Brookstone. Mom looked terrible and was generally unresponsive. When we saw her the next day, she was no better.



Marilyn (seated center) with most of her offspring at her 92nd birthday - one year previous

On Friday, her actual birthday, Joan and I visited again, but this time the room was full with Cindy, Rick (my brother) and his wife, Kathy, Rick's daughter Tish and her family, and the hospice nurse. On occasion, Mom opened her eyes and made some sounds,

but not talking. She was given presents, and some in the group had taken cake and cookies, enjoyed by everyone except Mom, who was unable to partake.

Her blood oxygen level had been dropping since Wednesday and reached the 60s at times. She was put on oxygen which brought her numbers up, but even with that, her numbers were continuing to drop. The hospice nurse told us that this is often a sign of the final decline of a patient. Mom had rallied so many times before when it looked like she would not live out the night, so we were cautiously optimistic that she might rally again.

However, just after midnight Saturday morning, Cindy received a call from Brookstone saying that Marilyn had passed away. After calling Joan and me, Cindy immediately went to Brookstone. Cindy talked to the lady on night staff who was with Mom when she passed away. She said that Mom actually died just before midnight - on her birthday. However, the nurse who signed the death certificate did not arrive until after midnight, so the official day of her death was listed as October 19.

Many years ago my parents made arrangements for their burials with a mortuary and a cemetery in Greer, SC.

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## **Matriarch of EMU & the Jensens** (continued from page 1)

We dealt with them when Dad died in October 2019, so we were familiar with the process. Cindy and Mick, Rick and Kathy, and Joan and I met at the funeral home that Saturday (the 19th) afternoon. We had already discussed how we wanted to proceed with funeral plans before we met with the mortuary staff. We had decided that because our families were already scheduled to come on Sunday, we would have the graveside service on Sunday afternoon at 1:00 with just family. (My parents had chosen mausoleum interment, so there was no real graveside.) The mortuary and cemetery personnel worked with us to make this happen.

On Sunday afternoon, we gathered for a time of remembrance at which everyone was encouraged to give their thoughts and recollections of Mom (and Dad). Some of the great grandkids provided music with guitars and a violin. The hour-long service was a wonderful family time with serious and humorous stories, with Rick giving a short Bible challenge. Following the service, we all drove to our house for a mid-afternoon lunch and fellowship. Again, the time together was precious. It is such a testimonial to our parents that all their offspring love each other and get along great – even the ones who were not able to attend.

In lieu of a memorial service at her church (Hampton Park Baptist Church), which she had not been able to attend for some time, we kids and spouses decided that I would write a memorial of Mom for the EMU Newsletter. With this, a greater number of her friends will be informed of her passing with a recount of her life. Though the following paragraphs are primarily about Marilyn's history, they are a testament to God's grace and leading in her life. God fashioned a multi-faceted jewel through her experiences.

Marilyn McMahon was born in Hollywood, CA, in the house of her aunt. She was the second born to Walter and Esther McMahon of San Gabriel, CA, after her brother, Lawrence. A sister (Carolyn) was born a short time later, followed much later by Ronnie. Both parents were devout conservative Christians, with daily family devotions in the home. The McMahon family attended San Gabriel Union Church, a Bible believing church. Marilyn made a profession of faith in Jesus during a Neighborhood Bible Time class when she was nine years old and was baptized in her church sometime thereafter. However, she never had the peace before God that she thought she should. Also, in her early years, Marilyn heard the testimonies of many missionaries who spoke at her church. In her prayers, she told God she would do anything He wanted, if that "anything" did not include being a missionary!

Marilyn had a very happy and loving upbringing surrounded by her parents, siblings, aunts, uncles, cousins, and many

friends. As she entered her senior year at El Hambro High School, her plan was to attend the somewhat local Pacific Coast College and remain close to home. However, her parents, concerned with the possible bad influences of a secular education, had other thoughts. Having been exposed to alumni from Bob Jones University through visiting speakers at their church, her folks wanted her to attend BJU for at least one year. Marilyn did not want to go so far away from home (over 2,300 miles distance) and balked at the suggestion. However, for some reason, her younger sister, Carolyn, very much wanted to attend Bob Jones Academy for her senior year, but her parents said no because of the distance. Finally, Marilyn told her parents that she would matriculate at BJU for one year if Carolyn could go with her. The deal was struck! The two sisters, in a station wagon full of nine young Californians, drove to Greenville, SC, to enroll for the 1949 fall semester as dorm students.

Early on in that first semester, she caught the eye and fancy of a fifth-year senior, George Jensen. (Let me pause for a moment here and explain something: my mother was a writer of many letters and journals, and a saver of both, along with filing years of budgets, trip expense ledgers, and travel calendars. When she moved from her house into Shepherd's Care assisted living a few years ago, she gave me all of her files! Dad had wanted the letters between the two of them destroyed, but Mom's desire to save everything prevailed. And Mom gave me permission to read all of her papers. The letters between my parents – before and after they were married – are not salacious or embarrassing but are actually a glowing confirmation of their deep and abiding love, devotion, and faithfulness.) Mom and Dad's notes

while on campus reveal how quickly they "fell in love," or as I prefer to label it "fell into infatuation"! She was a beautiful, classy, talented freshman from southern California, and he was a popular "jock," excelling at soccer, basketball, softball, and anything else he put his mind to. Sometime during second semester, they were determined to marry – preferably that year.

George, from Muskegon, MI, had few close ties back home and no job prospects there, so at the end of the school year, with an invitation from the McMahons, he accompanied Marilyn back to San Gabriel in order to find a job. The McMahon family fell in love with George immediately, and



*Marilyn at El Hambro High*

they invited him to stay at their house until he could afford his own apartment. The couple spent much of their free time helping with the young people at San Gabriel Union Church. George worked several jobs, even putting his hand to construction with Marilyn's father, who was a carpenter.

The couple decided their wedding would be on December 29, 1950, though George still didn't have a settled job or "calling." However, sometime that fall, George received a call from BJU offering him a job with the newly formed cinema department the university was starting. Dad had worked throughout his college career on the stage crew at BJU, so many of the faculty and staff knew of his strong work ethic and dedication. George and Marilyn accepted the offer. But first, the wedding!



*Marilyn & George*

They were married at San Gabriel Union Church on Friday, the 29th. George's parents and relatives were not able to attend, and only one or two of his friends from BJU were there. But it was still a big wedding. The ceremony was even recorded on a record – which I also

have. Monday was New Year's Day, which in Los Angeles meant the Rose Parade and the Rose Bowl football game. The couple attended both. Interestingly, the football teams that year were the Michigan Wolverines vs the California Golden Bears. Michigan won.

The very next day, George and Marilyn loaded up their 1940 Studebaker and began a 4-day drive to Greenville, SC. Their living conditions at BJU were stark at the beginning, but they were happy and soon settled into their new routines. Dad worked with Unusual Films, the new cinema department, and Mom engaged in several jobs including seamstress in the BJU costume department, oil-coloring black & white portraits, secretarial work, making wedding cakes, and eventually the bookkeeper for Unusual Films.

Their first child, Rickey, was born on December 15, 1951. I followed in July of '53, and Cindy in January of '57. Thankfully, BJU increased our living space accordingly. Growing up on campus was more fun than any kid



*Marilyn & Rickey*

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## *Matriarch of EMU & the Jensens* (continued from page 2)

should be allowed to have, and Mom was a huge part of that joyous era.

In those early years at BJU, Marilyn was still spiritually miserable, though no one would have suspected it. She eventually realized it was because she never actually surrendered to Jesus as her Lord. When she finally made that commitment, the doubts and fears went away! Many years later, while my folks were the missionary speakers at the Wilds of North Carolina, I asked Dad to re-baptize me since I realized my first “profession” was just a “fire insurance policy,” something the Scriptures pointed out to me during my college years. Cindy also asked to be baptized. And Mom was led by the Lord to join us. So, along with some other young people at the Wilds, Dad baptized us in the “pool” below the 2nd Falls.

At the end of February 1959, Marilyn almost became a widow. While working at the sound stage, the enormous room designed for indoor filming, George climbed a ladder to a catwalk 15-20 feet above the floor to make adjustments to lights. Someone had not secured the planking on the catwalk, and George fell to the concrete floor – on his head! The news spread around campus that George Jensen was dead. But he was just unconscious. Amazingly, no bones were broken. But his recovery did take a while.

In 1953, Fred and Seva Dabold, the founders of Evangelical Mission to Uruguay, took their daughter Donna from Montevideo, Uruguay, to Greenville, SC, for her to attend BJU. While there Fred wanted to find someone who could and would edit the many reels of film he had taken in Uruguay and transform them into a missionary presentation. George heard about this need and volunteered to do the editing. Eventually, he would make several updated versions of “The Challenge of the Purple Land.” George told Marilyn that if they ever left BJU and went into missionary work, he would like to go with the Dabolds’ mission. (After Mom actually became a Christian, she amended her prayer and told God she would be willing to be a missionary.)

My folks left BJU in the summer of 1964 for Dad to take a job with the cinema department at Lockheed Aircraft in Marietta, GA. This move was rather strange as our family was very happy at BJU, and Dad’s job was secure. But George and Marilyn were convinced it was the Lord’s leading. In Marietta, our family immediately got involved in a small independent Baptist church. Dad became the adult Sunday school teacher and a deacon, and Mom took on the role of the church secretary. After a year, my folks bought a new house in a growing neighborhood. After another year, the Martins built a house next to ours. They had a cute daughter named Joan! Our “Lockheed-years” were financially comfortable with a growing circle of new friends.

After a few years working at Lockheed,

Fred Dabold contacted my parents and asked if George would be willing to serve on the mission’s Board of Directors. And shortly thereafter, Dr. Dabold asked if he would become the mission’s Field Representative. After much prayer, my folks accepted the position, and they began deputation at the end of 1967. They were fully-funded after two months! For Mom, this was a huge step of faith. The salary from Lockheed was high, especially for people having worked at BJU! My folks’ new salary with EMU would be half of the Lockheed income!



*Our first “prayer card” when we entered EMU: Cindy, Rick, Marilyn, George, & Ken*

I did not realize what an extreme change this was for my mother. But in perusing some of her writings about those years, I am amazed how well she handled everything. As a Field Rep, George travelled constantly presenting EMU in churches and homes, seeking to raise support for the work in Uruguay. Though she didn’t show it, Marilyn hated being separated from her husband, separations that were often months long. The dramatic decrease in income required that she be even more frugal than she already was. Besides almost immediately becoming the office secretary for EMU, she took on outside work to make ends meet. When Seva Dabold died in 1970, Marilyn was also asked to join the Board as the secretary/treasurer of the mission and served in that position until I was placed on the Board in 1976. Our family moved back to Greenville in 1970 for us kids to attend BJA & BJU.

In 1971 George was asked to be the missionary summer speaker at the Wilds Christian Camp, a tradition that continued for most of the 1970s. Those were busy months with Dad preaching and counseling, and Mom was put in charge of the craft store. But at least they were in one place for an extended period. They made so many dear and lasting friends during those summers.

Mom’s life became even more complicated on New Year’s Day 1974. The night of New Year’s Eve, my sister had a slumber party at our house with several of her BJA girlfriends. That night, Marilyn had her first grand mal seizure. Dad and the girls were petrified, not knowing what to do. Dad actually thought Mom was dead after her body stopped jerking – a common misperception. As a result, she was not allowed to drive for one year! But Dad was still travelling for the mission, so, Mom bought a bike and rode along Wade

Hampton Boulevard to the grocery store and the accounting firm where she worked part-time. Not safe! After a number of years experiencing petit mal seizures, the condition ceased. The doctors thought the seizures probably started because of blows to the head; and yes, she had a few from snow skiing and sledding! Mom was game for almost anything we kids did! It’s a wonder she lived to 93!

Joan didn’t have much more discernment in choosing a husband than Marilyn did. As a married senior at BJU, I didn’t really know what I was going to do for a job after graduation. But during that year the Lord definitely led me to join EMU. I not only had a burden to serve the Uruguayan missionaries, but I saw the need for my parents to be able to travel together, both around the USA and to Uruguay. So, immediately after my January 1976 college graduation, I joined the mission team of EMU as an office trainee and then eventually office administrator. Mom patiently taught me bookkeeping, basic accounting, and money management needed for the job.

Marilyn was finally able to spend longer amounts of time in Uruguay with George. Mom – unlike Dad – learned Spanish and actually used it, though she almost always taught Bible lessons with an interpreter. Her kind and caring spirit endeared her to the EMU missionaries and many of the church people. Mom was as comfortable living in Uruguay as she was at home in the US.

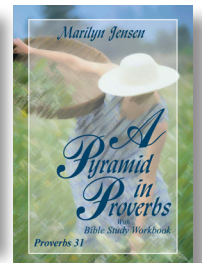


*(l-r) Marilyn, Cindy, Chicha Rodriguez, & Ursula Thiessen in Uruguay - 2006*

During a prolonged stay in Uruguay, Marilyn taught a Sunday school series on the Virtuous Woman of Proverbs 31. I’m not sure how or when she got a chart of John Wooden’s “Pyramid of Success,” which he developed while teaching his college basketball teams. But she noticed parallels between Proverbs 31 and the principles in the Pyramid and used it as an outline for her series. (John Wooden coached UCLA basketball from 1948-1975 and was the winningest basketball coach in NCAA history – still. He was also



*John Wooden & Marilyn*



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### *Matriarch of EMU & the Jensens* (continued from page 3)

a devout Christian. My dad was a huge fan, so possibly she came in contact with the Pyramid through him.) The main teacher of the Sunday school class, Chicha Rodriguez, encouraged Marilyn to put the lessons into a book for the benefit of others. Marilyn wrote Coach Wooden asking if she could use his Pyramid in her book. He wrote her back on June 26, 1982, granting her request. It took her almost 10 years to finish the task and get it printed – the copyright application was made in June 1992. The English version of her book was self-published through a local printer. Eventually, the book was translated and printed in Spanish and distributed through Kregel Publications. Joan and I helped with the layout and proof reading, as well as mailing requested books from the Home Office. We didn't have much to do with the Spanish version. However, when I "inherited" Mom's files, I went through her "A Pyramid in Proverbs" folders, which included sales summaries from Kregel. I was amazed at how many thousands of her books have sold! Both versions went through several reprintings. And all the proceeds went to missions. That was Marilyn.

Another EMU mission field that my parents visited often was the Nuñezes' ministry in Cancún, Mexico. My folks had known Marco since he played soccer with Rick and



(l-r) George & Marilyn, Gwendolyn & Marco in Cancún - 2011

me at BJU. Besides Uruguay, Mexico was their next most frequented country as Dad preached in churches and taught Marco's trainees. Mom helped Gwendolyn in the ladies' and children's ministries. In George and Marilyn's later years, the shorter flights to Cancun were much easier on them, too.

At least 10 years before my father died in 2019, he was showing signs of Alzheimer's, though at the time none of us understood it. Dad knew something was wrong, and this frustrated him to no end. Mom bore the brunt of most of his frustration. Eventually, they had to quit presenting EMU in churches and ceased overseas trips. That was hard for a couple who were used to being on the go so much. Mom took care of Dad at home as long as she could. Eventually, we kids told her that Dad needed full-time care in a facility. Then, just a few years after his death, she moved into assisted living.

For a southern California girl who didn't want to leave home, even for college, Marilyn became quite a well-travelled woman – all the States but Hawaii and many foreign countries. And she did so with grace and patience. Her life was seldom easy, but always blessed, as God's grace was evident in her life and attitude. She served her family and others well; we are inspired by her words and deeds. Though my dad did much more counseling, Mom's wisdom guided me through some crises that could have been disastrous. I thanked her then, and I thank the Lord now for allowing me to have such a godly, gracious, gregarious, and gorgeous Mother. There are so many superlatives I want to string together here to describe her character and life; but I suppose the summation she would most appreciate – and is most appropriate – is that she was a Proverbs 31 Woman –with the added blessing of being beautiful inside and out! †

### *The Christmas Bonus*

by Ken Jensen

There are probably few people who would not appreciate receiving a Christmas Bonus. (Though there are no doubt a few employers who would prefer not to give them.) Mission organizations generally do not give bonuses to their missionaries due to the financial structure of missions.

However, for several decades EMU has taken up an offering for our missionaries – both nationals and Americans – from among the readers of this Newsletter. Those gifts have always been a tremendous blessing to the recipients. And the gifts have been used by the EMU families for things as varied as Christmas gifts to medical bills, home improvements to kid's school tuition – almost anything you can imagine.

It is that time of year when we bring this giving opportunity before our readers. As always, any undesignated donations to the Christmas Fund will be divided evenly among our Uruguayan missionaries. But all gifts designated to a particular missionary family – foreign or American – will go directly to that family.

As participant givers to this cause over the years, Joan and I have found that actually the **Bonus** redounds to us through God's blessings in return and witnessing the joy of the recipients. Thank you for whatever you are able to do for our EMU missionaries. †

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