

that whosoever was me. If I would ask the Lord to forgive my sins, he would do it. It became clear to me that the Lord could save me. I don't think I said anything to Alvina, but a little while later she turned to me and asked if something had happened."

Martha explained to her sister that she had asked the Lord to forgive her sins.

"Alvina was so happy to hear those words," Martha says. "That's when I knew something important had happened in my life."

Martha shared her experience with her parents and began living out the day-to-day routine that would eventually lead her to another decision: how to respond to the call she felt to become a missionary.

"As I neared 8th grade graduation, I thought about what I would do now," Martha says. "At first I had no thought of going on to high school because there were no finances for that. I stayed at home several years, but the thought of getting more training wouldn't leave me."

When Martha approached her mother about the possibility of attending nearby Freeman Academy to attend high school, her mother responded with words of caution.

"She said, 'Martha, if you want to go on to be in the service of the Lord, we'll support you in that and find a way to pay for high school. But if you just want to be a farmer's wife, we can't send you for more training.' I knew then I had to make up my mind to be in God's service or stop pursuing more education."

Martha's heart wouldn't allow her to give up her dream. She went on to high school at Freeman Academy, finding yet another hurdle as she claimed her high school diploma.

"By then it was the 1930s," Martha says. "Dad had lost the farm. While college seemed impossible, my family knew it wasn't logical for me to just stay at home. We all decided I would go to college for one year, long enough to obtain a teaching certificate. Then I could work and bring money into the family."

After completing her teaching certificate, Martha took on her first teaching job. The first two years seemed good, she remembers. By year three she knew she had not yet found her life's work.

"I knew I would have to find my own way to go to Bible school," she says. "I had to work while I was in school. I lost my job once and it took time to find another one. But I finished my

training at Moody Bible Institute. That was a precious time in my life."

Martha's journey in service to God took her to Minnesota for several years and eventually to Ecuador. There she learned Spanish and assisted in translating Christian literature into Spanish to give missionary teachers a wider range of teaching resources.

"I was there 28 years and enjoyed every bit of it," Martha says. "When I retired and returned to the States, I came to Freeman and lived with my sister. I actually worked here in the kitchen at Salem Mennonite Home part time. My sister eventually came here and now I live here."

Among the blessings Martha enjoys now are a sharp, clear mind and ongoing strong sense of compassion for those around her.

"One of the ladies who lives here was ready to give up on our weekly Bible study," Martha says. "She just didn't understand it. I know how important it is to understand God's word, so I asked if she would like to have Bible study with just the two of us. She agreed."

For the past 18 months or more, Martha has mentored her friend, who recently accepted the gift of salvation.

"Over the years I have always come back to those first scriptures I heard at our tent revivals," Martha says. "I have never forgotten that for all those who receive him, God promises to make us his children. That means we're not born of human descent, but born of God. I have relied on that truth throughout my life. I know that I am born again, born of God's Spirit."

■ By Loretta Sorensen



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