



Lupi (Ruby) Potenitila Wolfgramm-Sikahema

July 23, 1942 - April 5, 2013

Lupi (Ruby) Potenitila Wolfgramm Sikahema was born July 23, 1942 in Koloa, Vava'u in the Kingdom of Tonga to Sione Tufui Wolfgramm and Uinise Uluakiaho Salote Taimi Piutau Tongi. She passed away peacefully in her sleep, at age 70, in Moorestown, NJ on Friday morning, April 5, 2013.

At age 12, Mom and her younger sister, Makeleta (11), left home for Liahona High School, the private boarding school owned by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, on the island of Tongatapu. Mom was a popular and striking figure as a member of Liahona's renowned marching band as a baton twirler, new to Tonga at the time. She was so acrobatic and athletic, her classmates playfully nicknamed her "Thriller," because she mesmerized crowds with her graceful routines when she threw her baton high in the air, then caught it behind her back as she twirled in one motion. This would have been commonplace in any American high school in that era, but new and revolutionary to Tongans in the 1950's. At Liahona, Mom later met a young man named Sione Loni Sikahema Unga, an LDS convert, who was a star rugby player from the neighboring village of Ha'alaufuli on her home island of Vava'u. They fell in love and married civilly on September 1, 1961 in Nuku'alofa, Tongatapu.

They had three children by 1967, Vai, Lynette and Kap. That was a milestone year because for six years, they saved and sold everything they had, including

produce from their garden, so we could travel to New Zealand, to be sealed as a family in the Hamilton, New Zealand Temple. That family sealing and their marriage was solemnized on October 27, 1967.

Other than Dad sneaking off to Fiji as a stowaway on a ship in '58 for two months, the New Zealand trip was their first time on foreign soil. It opened their eyes to new possibilities. They immediately started saving and planning to emigrate to America.

In 1969, Mom and Dad left us with our maternal grandparents and emigrated to Laie, Hawaii, where Mom enrolled at Church College of Hawaii, later renamed BYU-Hawaii. Dad worked full time at the Polynesian Cultural Center and Mom worked part-time dancing in the Tongan Village and in the night show. On their meager wages, it took a year of saving before they sent for Vai, the oldest. Faced with the harsh realities of tuition, books, rent, utilities, car payments, groceries, gas and maintenance – completely new to them – Mom was faced with a difficult dilemma. Continue her education and pursuit of a teaching degree, or drop out and help Dad work to expedite their two younger children's emigration? She dropped out and they moved to Mesa, Arizona, applied and received permanent residence status so they could work. Mom worked long days as a seamstress at a factory called Arizona Needle while Dad worked as a security guard at Mesa High School. Two-and-a-half years lapsed before they earned enough to send for Lynette and Kap in 1972.

Given Mom's difficult dilemma of choosing between college and her children, she strongly emphasized that we received a formal education. She was justifiably proud that we earned degrees from prestigious American universities and that Lynette is a PhD candidate and Kap has a Masters of Public Administration. All of her college-aged grandchildren are at BYU, Utah Valley University and the University of Washington.

Mom also emphasized service by serving two full-time LDS missions with Dad – both in Tonga – in 1962 as a young married couple to the village of Ha’akio and later in 1987, in the mission office under President Eric B. Shumway. While she never earned that cherished college teaching certificate, Mom was an exemplary Sunday School and Primary teacher until diabetes rendered her incapable. She taught scores of young men and women who served missions, earned university degrees, served in the military and married in the temple.

As her health declined in her final years, she and Dad lived with Lynette’s family and Kap in Seattle. Her final months were spent with Vai and Keala in New Jersey where she received exceptional care from doctors and nurses in Virtua Hospital in Voorhees, NJ and later at CareOne Rehabilitation Center in Moorestown, NJ, where she died. Special mention should be given to Dr. Drew Pecora and the entire staff at CareOne for not only caring for our dear mother, but loving her as well.

Our family is also grateful for the care given Mom by Peni Malohifo’ou, an uncle, and the staff at SereniCare Funeral Home in Draper, UT and David Petaccio of Mt. Laurel Home For Funerals in New Jersey.

Mom is survived by her loving husband, Loni, her three children, seven grandchildren (Landon, LJ (Kaylie), Leonard Trey, Lana (Marcus), Jarrett, Jade and Paula Vuna; two great-grandsons (Gabriel & Joshua) and seven siblings: Makeleta, Ana, Mele (Nuku), Makalita (David), Lopini (Ana), Lenaati (Edwina) and Filipe (Vickie). Mom is preceded in death by her parents and two younger brothers, Vilimanulea and Makelani.

Viewing and wake will be held at the Tongan South Stake Center on Friday evening, April 12, from 6-10pm at 4660 West 5015 South, Kearns, UT. Funeral service will be held Saturday morning, April 13, 11am at Cannon Stake

Center, 934 W. Fremont Ave. (1100 South), SLC, UT 84104. Mom will be interred at Salt Lake City Cemetery. In lieu of flowers, please donate to the LDS Perpetual Education Fund.

Funeral Service are being handled by Serenicare of Draper, Utah under the direction of Peni Malohifo'ou. Any comments, questions or concerns please call 801 255-2801 or email peni@serenicare.com.

-

Tribute Wall



“ *Lupi (Ruby) Potenitila Wolfgramm-Sikahema*

October 05, 2023 at 07:49 PM