

Finnie Evangeline John

Finnie Evangeline John's involvement with the fledgling Southern Asia Adventist Association began upon her arrival in the U.S. in 1964 following that of her parents, Mr. & Mrs. I. R. Thomas and brother Rajan who came in 1961, 1962 and 1963 in that order. She was soon involved in meetings and activities of the Association lending her full support to SAAA. In 1964, soon after arriving in the U.S. she began working at the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in Washington, D.C.

When she was born, her father wanted her name to be different from the usual. First thinking of "Josephine", he decided to name her Finnie. For a young girl, this was certainly unique especially in India.

Finnie could be considered a third generation Adventist. Her maternal grandparents, Pastor and Mrs. V.D. Koilpillai were pioneers in the Adventist Church in India. Her paternal grandparents, Mr. & Mrs. G.P. Iyngayam, were committed members of the Bangalore S.D.A. Central Church and later the Vepery S.D.A. Church in Chennai.

Finnie was gifted with a very keen intellect. This was not by accident. Her mother began home-schooling her from a very early age through the Adventist Home Study Institute. During this time, she developed a keen interest in reading books and was focused on her studies. In 1955, when the Bangalore Spencer Road S.D.A. Middle School added boarding facilities, she and her brother were enrolled there while their parents were still in Bangladesh. Prior to the boarding facilities being completed, they lived with their grandparents, Mr. & Mrs. Iyngayam for a few months. To Finnie's delight, "grandpa" had a small bookstore/library filled with English books that Finnie's aunt, Sarojini, had brought from the U.S.. Every evening on the way back to their grandparents' home from school, she spent her time there reading as much as she could.

Finnie went on to Spicer High School and Spicer Memorial College where she graduated with a Bachelors Degree in English in 1964. While in Spicer College, she met Harrison John, and the two of them fell in love. Harrison came to the U.S. soon after Finnie in 1964, and they were married on July 5, 1965 at the Sanitarium Church in Takoma Park. This was the first wedding of a Southern Asian S.D.A. couple married in the U.S. The entire Southern Asia Adventist community members in the area, and all her fellow staff of the Asian Department at the IMF were invited to the wedding – barely 200 in all. Finnie continued her education taking evening classes while working full-time and graduated with an M.A. in English from the University of Maryland in 1969.

Finnie was highly respected in her workplace, the IMF, where she worked for over 40 years. She served in the Human Resources Department for many years and worked her way up to a very senior position and executive coach. Finnie was always willing to help new Southern Asian arrivals to the U.S. find positions in the IMF. Her skills and dedication were so valued that top management persuaded her to postpone her retirement to assist in the review of a new and

complex compensation package. She also guided and mentored all the staff that she associated with. They loved and respected her so much that when she passed away, the staff successfully petitioned Senior Management to have one of the main conference rooms in the new IMF building named in her honor.

Finnie was involved in many community service activities and SAAA has benefited greatly from her dedication and leadership.

Finnie served as editor of the SAAA newsletter, the Southern Asian, along with her husband Harrison for many years. In 1996, as President of SAAA, she worked with Dr. Michael Osuri, the Chairman of the Board at that time, to plan a weekend of events celebrating the 35th Anniversary of SAAA entitled *Our Family, Our Journey, Our Story*. All of the Southern Asian churches and organizations in the area were invited to participate in this celebration. Finnie also worked with SAAA Vice President Krupavaram Meesarapu to plan the first SAANA Summit at Glacier View Ranch in Colorado in 1997, an opportunity for Southern Asia Adventists from all over North America to come together. This was the first of many SAANA Summits held in different locations across the U.S..

Finnie was also very deeply involved with the Property Management Council, and was instrumental in raising considerable funds for that project with a dream of building a SAAA Community Center.

Finnie had a strong Faith in God all through her life. That faith sustained her as she and her husband Harrison waited ten years for God to give them a child. Their faith was answered by being blessed by their son Iyanrick. They were happy to see Iyanrick complete his Masters in Public Health and Law degree. Iyanrick married Shilpa Chetty, now an OB/Gyn who specializes in high risk pregnancy and genetics. They have three children – Kamran, Dhiren, and Asha. Thanks to modern science, Finnie was able to view a scan of their first grandson Kamran prior to resting from her life of service in 2007. Finnie's legacy of caring for those of the South Asian community has been passed on to their son Iyanrick, who has been an advocate working to improve the health of underserved Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander communities.

SAAA has truly been blessed by the lives and service of Finnie and Harrison John.