



Silvy Glayds De Sousa

February 18, 1937 - January 17, 2021

Silvy De Sousa, adored mother, grandmother, sister, aunt, cousin, teacher, friend, and daughter of the general who led Bolivia during the 1952 Agrarian Revolution, passed away at her home in Fredericksburg, VA early Sunday morning, January 17.

Though she lived for much of her adult life in Northern Virginia, Silvy was ever a Bolivian. She was born in La Paz on February 18, 1937. Her father, Humbertó del Rosario Torres Ortíz, a career military officer, led his family, including Silvy, her mother, Alicia Sanjinés Vidaurre, and her two siblings, Gloria and Beto, on adventures across Latin America as well as overseas.

From 1938 – 1942, Silvy and her family lived in Turin, Italy, where they endured the bombs of World War II. From 1946 – 1948, they lived in Santiago, Chile, where Silvy's father served as Bolivia's military attaché. Her best memories of that period were of her parents reading books at night, tales of great adventures—Robinson Crusoe, The Count of Monte Cristo, The Three Musketeers.

In 1949, they moved to Roboré, Bolivia, a jungle town on the road between Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia and the Brazilian border. Always surrounded by nature, Silvy recalled this as one of the most enjoyable times of her life. She adopted a capuchin monkey, and named her, Petiti. After school, Silvy and her friends would go down to the river. "I remember the beautiful stones in the riverbed," she said. "They felt soft on your feet, as if they were welcoming you."

The revolution that suddenly broke out in La Paz in April 1952, and her father's leadership position in the government, gave Silvy a unique vantage. Upon her death, she was one of a diminishing handful of people with a first-hand account of the war.

In 1951, Bolivia's President, Mamerto Urriolagoitía, appointed a military junta including Silvy's father and two other generals to lead the country. They committed to deliver an election to the people of Bolivia and promised to halt what they feared was an attempted

Sovietization of Bolivia. The three generals remained in power for eleven months.

On April 9, 1952, the junta lost control of the military police force stationed in La Paz, an event which initiated the revolution. On April 11, 1952, three days after the fighting began, the revolution ended. Victor Paz Estenssoro became the president of Bolivia. Military loyalists ushered Humbertó into exile in Peru. One year later, Silvy, her mother, and her siblings, joined him there.

Silvy was sixteen years old. “We had very little money,” she said. “No possessions. Just ourselves. But with the help of a few people, we made it work.”

It was a hard time, but it created some positive memories. Many nights from their rooftop, with Arequipa’s Misti volcano in the background, Silvy and her family would stargaze. “It seemed we could see the whole universe,” she said.

With an invitation from Bolivia’s President, Hernán Siles Zuazo, reflecting an effort to reconcile wounds from the war, Silvy, her mother, and siblings, returned to Bolivia in 1958. Their father joined them two years later.

Around that time, Silvy met Joe De Sousa, who was among the first group of North Americans to join the Peace Corps, and who was stationed in La Paz. They were married in La Paz in 1965. Their first child, Richard, was born shortly after. Two and a half years later, while living in Bogota, Colombia, where Joe worked for the US State Department, they had a second child, Robert. Pursuing the diplomat’s lifestyle, a few years later, they were off to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia where their third child, Alice, was born.

In 1975, Silvy and her family moved to McLean, Virginia, and began a suburban life. She worked for fifteen years as a school counselor in the Arlington Public School System, notably at Williamsburg Middle School. In this role, naturally, she cared for immigrant children, always endeavoring to treat them with the dignity and respect they deserved.

A wonderful and humble woman with an extraordinary story.

Throughout her life, Silvy retained a deep love for her country, Bolivia, its people, customs, food, and environment, especially the mountains, most prominently Mt. Illimani, which she never tired of viewing. She was a devout Catholic and member of St. John’s Church in McLean as well as St. Jude Catholic Church in Fredericksburg.

Her three children, nine grandchildren – Daria, Rachael, Brian Russell, Charlie, Michael,

Antoni, Holland, Victor, and Ian – brother, Beto, nieces, nephews, and many cousins, including a large and loving assembly of Bolivians residing in Northern California, survive her. She will be buried in the La Paz Cemetery, next to her father and mother.

Comments



“ 18 files added to the tribute wall



alice stewart - January 25 at 07:19 PM



“ Thank you to everyone that came out today.
And thank you for all the beautiful flowers.

alice stewart - January 25 at 07:17 PM



“ Full Of Love Bouquet was purchased for the family of Silvya Glayds De Sousa.



January 24 at 06:19 PM



“ Full Of Love Bouquet was purchased for the family of Silvya Glayds De Sousa.



January 24 at 02:12 PM



“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



alice stewart - January 24 at 01:08 PM



“ I became Silvy's neighbor when I moved into my home two houses away, on Hot Spring Lane in 2002. Over the years, Silvy became my dear friend. We shared stories of our lives and families, lunches, birthday celebrations, Rummikub games, and wonderful conversations about our shared and deep love for God. Silvy's spirit was beautiful, her heart was full of love and compassion for others. She loved her family and was so proud of her children and grandchildren. She be missed but I know she is in the presence of God Almighty. Rest well my dear Silvy. Love, Debbie



Deborah Johnson - January 23 at 09:42 PM



“ Beautiful

alice stewart - January 24 at 01:04 PM



“ Basket Full of Wishes was purchased for the family of Silvy Glayds De Sousa.



January 23 at 02:15 PM



“ Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Silvya Glayds De Sousa.



January 23 at 10:52 AM



“ Silvya was a dear friend for me. Fun to talk to and she loved to play games. It was always a pleasure to visit her . A lady with class. I will dearly miss her.

Ursula Mason - January 23 at 07:32 AM



“ You were a good friend to her

alice stewart - January 23 at 09:33 AM



“ Sentiments of Serenity Spray was purchased for the family of Silvya Glayds De Sousa.



January 23 at 12:11 AM



“ When I retired I moved from New York City to Fredericksburg and invited both of my new neighbors for coffee. Debbie I had met two years earlier when I bought the house and she kept on telling me: “You have to meet Silvya”.

So I invited the two ladies for a chat. I was immediately drawn to Silvya who had gorgeous white hair. She made me feel so welcome as her new neighbor. This was how our friendship started. We would share our life stories and experiences. Invite each other for lunch, call each other when deers came to the back yards or a rainbow was in the sky. We would invite each other for a few Rummikub plays. Every Thursday we went shopping and had lunch before heading home. We would go swimming at the YMCA. We picked strawberries at a farm and spend hours discussing politics, faith, family and life in general. I admired her Kindness, her love and compassion. Always making others feel welcome or noticed. She was a deeply caring person and also a terrific cook. She liked to invent when cooking and I learned from her.

She had led an interesting life and shared many of her stories. It was a privilege to call her my friend.

Heidemarie Steinebach - January 22 at 08:37 PM



“ My husband Charles and I were fortunate to be Co-Grandparents with Silvya and extended family members of her family. We appreciated very much her kindness, humor and fabulous hospitality. We shared not only Grandchildren but many laughs. We have treasured memories and will miss her. Extending our sincere sympathy to her family.

Charles and Susan Stewart, Novato, California.

susan stewart - January 22 at 08:24 PM



“ Rainbow Reflections Basket was purchased for the family of Silvya Glayds De Sousa.



January 22 at 07:42 PM



“ Mi querida Tíatantos recuerdos tuyos me vienen a la mente ... desde pequeña hasta hace unos pocos días atrás

Como te decía en nuestra última conversación...tú, llena de sabiduría y tino en la vida... me enseñaste, quizás sin saber, a cerca de Dios, tienes una forma única de percibirlo en la naturaleza y en las cosas maravillosas de su creación (eso por supuesto no lo enseña cualquiera). Recuerdo muchas conversaciones que tuvimos largas, no tan largas, chistosas y llenas de coincidencias me enseñaste bastante y claro también me heredaste otras tantas cosas por eso gracias... muchas gracias !!!

Te vi, llena de amor, regia, elegante y perfumada !!! Así te fuiste siempre te llevo en mi Te quiero.

Lore



Lorena Torrez Ortiz - January 22 at 05:30 PM



“ In my first days of life, I met Mrs. De Sousa in Africa, my mom said she used to loved to hold me. Growing up I remember her giving me lots of hugs as a child, I always felt safe and love with her, she was my second mom.... In my childhood, our families a lot of time together. Wonderful meals, stories and adventures. Lots of laughs.

Now, after all these years, this time I'm the one reaching out to hug and embrace her, with a lot of comfort knowing she is in a wonderful place! Time goes by so fast. But what she leaves behind in my heart is kindness and love...

-Bryan



Bryan Cobb - January 22 at 03:37 PM



“ She loves you, Bryan. And your entire family. Beautiful words.

alice stewart - January 22 at 03:46 PM



“ When I was 6 years old, my mother and I traveled to Bolivia to visit her family. My older brothers took their own trip that summer with our father, so I had my mom all to myself. I remember snapshots of that trip clearly. I remember wearing the American Airlines wings given to me by the flight attendant on departure day and feeling nervous and excited about where we were going. My mother was such a grand and mysterious figure in my life and I was incredibly curious as to where we would end up. I remember my mother speaking in her native tongue to the flight attendants, a language unfamiliar to me. I remember feeling her excitement and pride as we closed in on her homeland.

I don't remember landing in Bolivia, but I do remember waking up that first night feeling terribly nauseous due to altitude sickness, and my mother helping me in the bathroom all night long. I also remember my cousin Betitos white house, playing with him in the garden, and watching "Flipper" in Spanish on TV. I remember mountains and blue skies and new smells and my mother's hand in mine as we walked this strange city in this very foreign land. I remember my great aunt Betty's home with plants and birds - fresh bread and warm tea - and formalities I'd never seen before. But what I most remember about that trip was visiting a cemetery where my mother took me to see her mother, my namesake and grandmother, Alicia. What I didn't know at the time is that her already deceased father would later be brought to this cemetery, by my mother a few years later, so her parents could finally rest together.

Stopping first to buy flowers at a busy kiosk, my mother walked me through what seemed to be a mini city, within this very active and busy city. Walls of mementos, plaques and flowers greeted us soon upon arrival. These cement walking paths, flanked by stacked compact tombs, rising high above my head, lined our way. And all the while that deep blue sky and impressive snowy mountain surrounded us and touched down to where we stood to honor our loved one. But not just any loved one: a mother - my mom's mother - my grandmother.

It's that memory that came back to me just after my mother's death. The cemetery. My mother bringing me, her daughter, to honor her mom. The flowers. The deep revery. The remembrance. The importance. The mystery of this incomprehensible love. I remember wondering how my mom could possibly live without her mom. Someone so important. So special. So vital to one's existence.

And I learned a few things that day from my mom, and the many days to follow:

She taught me there's life after death.
She taught me that family is everything.
She taught me to honor your loved ones.
She taught me to pass on your wisdom.
She taught me to take care of those in need.
She taught me nature is divine.
She taught me humor is essential.
And she taught me that we can endure anything.

I love you, Mommy. You will live in my heart forever. You will always be my home, my

nest, my nourishment, and my comfort. I'm honored to be your daughter.

alice stewart - January 22 at 03:29 PM



“ Arrive in Style was purchased for the family of Silvy Glayds De Sousa.



January 22 at 03:17 PM



“ Fiery Lily and Rose was purchased for the family of Silvy Glayds De Sousa.



January 22 at 02:38 PM



“ Maricruz Pinto Fugon purchased the Country Basket Blooms for the family of Silvy Glayds De Sousa.



Maricruz Pinto Fugon - January 22 at 10:36 AM