

Lillian Toft Ashby

1938-1976

“Life has given me love and joy and the Lord has blessed me so richly that it is hard to believe. It is a wonderful thing when you slowly begin to understand your role in life and what the Lord expects of you.”

From a young age, Lilli had the courage to do what she believed was right. She accepted the gospel in Denmark and chose to be baptized. Later, Lilli emigrated on her own to the United States where she eventually married in the Mesa Arizona Temple and began a family.

When she was only thirty-one years old, Lilli was diagnosed with cancer. She had just given birth to her fourth child. Rather than sink into despair, Lilli adopted a cheerful, can-do attitude and worked to follow God’s plan for her life. She said, “I shall do all I can to use my time well however short it will be.” Lilli felt strongly that she needed to serve a mission and got special permission to serve with her family as health service missionaries in Samoa. While there, she taught about health and sanitation. When she was feeling too ill to move around, she sewed hats and dolls to give out in her lessons. During her mission, she and her family developed a special friendship with the Dharmaraju family from India. Although the Dharmarajus had their own faith traditions, Lilli felt strongly that she needed to share the gospel with them. Each time she invited them to study the gospel, they declined. Soon, Lilli’s health worsened, and she was unable to visit her friends. She knew her earthly life was near its end. Before she passed, she wrote her testimony in the cover of her scriptures. She told her family to give it to the Dharmarajus after she was gone.

The Dharmarajus were touched by Lilli's courage, faith, and love. They began to study the scriptures and eventually chose to be baptized. They went on to serve as missionaries in India, helping build up a new branch of Saints in Hyderabad, India. Although Lilli did not live to see it, her testimony grew into a rich legacy, helping the gospel grow throughout the world.

Sources to Explore:

“Lillian Ashby and the Dharmarajus” by William Kesler Jackson. September 7, 2018.

<https://history.churchofjesuschrist.org/content/lillian-ashby-and-the-dharmarajus?lang=eng>

“I Will Establish a Church by Your Hand” in *Global Histories*.

<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/history/global-histories/india/stories-of-faith/in-03-i-will-establish-a-church-by-your-hand?lang=eng>

“A Brief History of the Church in India” in *Global Histories*.

<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/history/global-histories/india/in-overview?lang=eng>

Article with photos of Lilli and the Dharmaraju family:

<https://nyheder-dk.jesukristikirke.org/artikel/lillian-toft-ashby-og-familien-dharmarajus>