

# I Know ...Because the Author

By Phyllis Jastram

**H**ave you ever read a page-turner book you couldn't stop reading? With every page, you read faster and faster because you want to hear what happens next. The book is filled with the emotions of life: joy, laughter, tears, beauty, love, and death. Each chapter brings something new.

Every day, I thank God for all the chapters in my life and I'm eager to turn each and every page...because I know the Author of Life (Acts 3:15).

*"With the Lord begin thy task, Jesus will direct it..." (TLH 540)*



## Hemiji, Japan. September 1945.

My soon-to-be husband wrote me a long scroll letter in which he shared his good first impressions of the Japanese people. Starting his overseas duty, he landed in Japan with the first of the occupation troops. Only weeks before, we'd been together at a roller-skating rink near Sioux Falls, SD, and he had proposed to me with a beautiful diamond. Now he was thousands of miles away. His words to me included his ideals and goals for our marriage, and he closed with a simple phrase, "until either one of us shall depart and pass on."

So began the chapters in my life with my husband and life partner. We shared countless chapters:

& years at the seminary as a married couple



& our orientation, travel, and new work as missionaries in Japan

& our 23 years living among the rural population of Japan

& parenting five little ones, teaching them along with many Japanese students

& our ministry and fellowship in several stateside parsonages and congregations

& building our own home after retirement

& serving as Minnesota North LWML District President.

Those pages turned so quickly, and I always cherished the reminder, *"With the Lord begin thy task...for His aid and counsel ask"* (TLH 540) from one of the hymns we taught our children in hopes they would always remember those words. I have tried to remember those words myself and seek His aid and counsel, especially when the chapters have become more challenging.

The pages of a difficult chapter turned slowly. Gradually but surely over a nine-year period we adjusted our lifestyle to meet the challenges of Hubby's slow but ever-progressing disease, Multiple Systems Atrophy (MSA), the disease





that finally would not permit movement of his muscles, the disease that finally ended his earthly life. “...*Until either of us shall depart and pass on.*”

*We know that in everything God works for good with those who love Him, who are called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28).*

It is amazing how the Lord gently leads by instilling the desire to continue on with life as fully as possible, even though it was difficult. He brought friends to help us in emergencies. Our children — busy with their own lives — supported and loved us throughout this often-painful chapter. One of our sons carried his father upstairs whenever we came to visit; another son carried his dad on his back from building to building during a seminary reunion; another made a special bed for Dad when we visited; another traveled with us so we could attend a missionary reunion. Our daughter dropped everything in her life to travel a long distance when her father was suddenly hospitalized.

The family of pastors helped when we attended conferences. Our church family lovingly spoke to my husband and helped in every way possible when we attended weekly worship services. A

great lesson for me during this chapter: I learned to ask for help from neighbors in emergencies day or night!

*“Let each day begin with prayer, praise, and adoration, On the Lord cast every care, He is thy salvation.” (TLH 540)*

The Lord provided many resources so we could find just the right help or equipment or treatment at the very time it was needed. He enabled us to stay in our home for many years. At the end of this chapter, He opened the door for all of our children to gather at their father’s bedside for the last couple days of his life. As I look back, I see His handwriting between the lines of that whole chapter of my life. *“For His aid and counsel ask, Jesus will perfect it.”*

## **Another Chapter: Life without My Husband**

After the committal service at Trinity Lutheran Church near Hartford, SD, our family returned to their homes, jobs, lives. I spent about a week with my sister and her husband, taking care of business, resting, and renewing. When it was time to go home to Minnesota, it slowly dawned on me that I would be making the four-hour drive alone. When I pulled my car into the garage,



I realized that this car, this house, and all “our” possessions were now my sole responsibility. The thought was overwhelming. Bible verses, hymns, and prayers gave me the comfort and assurance I so needed during this new chapter in my life. *“Morning, evening, and at night, Jesus will be near thee.”*

I continued to turn the pages of my life — uncertain about this new chapter, but knowing that I had friendly neighbors, friends at church, and many things to do. I started singing in the church choir — sometimes through tears — and I became more involved in the LWML and other church activities. Our five children loved and supported me with phone calls, letters, and visits from all over the country: New Mexico, South Dakota, Texas, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. Our daughter came to help with the letters of thanks to all who had given their support, and our son came to do some necessary house things. The pages kept turning and I faced new challenges with the House Chapter and all its yard work, home maintenance, and home repairs. But whenever I would ask, someone always helped me.

## Life went on.

This chapter began with great loneliness — there is still loneliness — and I have wondered, “Why should I be enjoying this all by myself?” I now realize that

because of Hubby’s careful monitoring and accounting of our

finances through the years, he was able to provide for me, his wife, even though he is no longer here on earth. With that realization I can better appreciate what is now my responsibility. Because of his diligence, his memory is still with me as I turn the pages.

The other day as I began a long car trip, I found myself longing for my Hubby to sit beside me to enjoy the drive. Then, as often happens, when I begin to ponder that thought, I realize he awaits His Lord with his fellow believers, many of whom learned of their Savior from his teaching and preaching. When the Lord comes, we will be together again.

The book of my life has been a page-turner filled with delightful, challenging, and beautiful chapters — because the author of my salvation is my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. *“With the Lord begin thy task, Jesus will direct it...”* (TLH 540)

*Phyllis Jastram spent 23 years in Japan as a missionary wife and now lives in northern Minnesota. A long-time LWML’er, she has served the Lord with gladness in many offices including Minnesota North District President and service on LWML national committees. Today, Phyllis serves as the Christian Life Chairman for her society and zone. She has five children, fourteen grandchildren, and six great grandchildren.*