



Sylvia Mae Spence

January 10, 1927 - September 22, 2025

Our beloved mother, Sylvia Mae Knott Spence, died peacefully at home on September 22, 2025 at the age of 98. Her memorial will be on October 25, 5:00 pm at the Southern Asian Seventh-Day Adventist Church, 2001 East Randolph Road, Silver Spring, Maryland.

Any questions regarding the service should be directed to Nadine Tivolacci at nadinetlv@gmail.com

Sylvia's memorial will also be streamed on: <https://www.youtube.com/live/1cUH9bVa6ng?si=nfW1ovvEbfrWyl0i>

Sylvia Mae Knott was born in Orange River in Clarendon, Jamaica, to Jacob Knott and Caroline Knott-Saunders, alongside her siblings, Burt, Eunice, Myrtle, and Avis. She was raised in the Seventh-Day Adventist Church, a loyal member of the faith since her childhood. She met Gilbert Spence while he was a colporteur, selling religious books door-to-door, and they soon married and settled in May Pen to build both a family and a religious community together.

As Gilbert helped to start the May Pen SDA Church and May Pen SDA Christian School (now May Pen High School), Sylvia gave the budding community its vibrance. A lover of singing, she contributed her voice to the church's choir. She taught primary Sabbath school, painstakingly assembling

pictures and felt cutouts to illustrate Bible stories. And she made clothing, using her talents with the needle and thread to begin dressmaking. During this time, Sylvia and Gilbert had their children.

Sylvia was always moving, always active. She was very athletic, fond of swimming, and often biking to visit her sisters in Sandy Bay. And she was known for not only her sewing talents, but her cooking and baking. She never used recipes, simply relying on her instinctual knowledge of food to make dishes that filled stomachs and souls. She was industrious, full of energy and life, and those traits she carried with her when she immigrated to the United States.

Sylvia arrived in New York in the late 1960s with her sister Myrtle, where they lived together in a small apartment and worked as nannies. After several years of hard work, she earned enough to sponsor Gilbert, and upon his arrival they were able to get their own apartment in Flushing, Queens. Sylvia and Gilbert worked together, night and day, to sponsor their children to come to the United States, and after just one year, all six children were able to board a plane to JFK Airport and reunite with their parents.

Sylvia continued to work as a nanny, but she always had higher aspirations and eventually decided to go to school to earn her LPN license. She worked at Franklin Nursing Home in Flushing, NY for over twenty years. She made two of her best friends there, and she was known for her deeply diligent and tender care – patients would ask for her by name. As Sylvia and Gilbert worked to put their children through college, they attended Corona SDA Church. Sylvia sang in the church choir once again, while her husband served as an elder and Sabbath School teacher.

After several years in New York, the couple retired and moved to Marietta, Georgia, where their daughter Lornalee lived. And so, Lornalee began to take

care of her parents as they aged. Although life was beginning to slow down, Sylvia refused to slow down with it. Sylvia continued to pursue her passion for sewing, making everything from clothing to blankets to potholders.

Eventually, Sylvia and Gilbert moved to a smaller home in Galena, Maryland, to be closer to their children, and it was the perfect spot for all of them to be involved in caring for their parents. In Galena, Sylvia assumed responsibility for the care of her ailing husband. Doctors and nurses were shocked at how well taken care of he was; throughout his decline, Sylvia never tired of providing for him and keeping him comfortable. Gilbert himself said, "You sure know how to take care of a man."

After over 60 years of marriage, Gilbert passed away in 2015. Sylvia continued to live in Galena. Her youngest daughter Nadine and her two children lived with her so she would not be alone. In Galena, Sylvia gardened, planting flowers and vegetables and carefully tending them every day for as many years as she could. She also continued to sew, this time branching out into pillows.

She made dozens of pillows over the years, often working so quickly that you would think she had a daily quota to fill. She began to give these pillows to everyone in the family, personalizing the colors and designs for each person. Eventually, we became so stuffed with pillows that the gifting spread out from the family. Sylvia's pillows began to find their way to the church community in Chestertown, the staff of several of the doctors' offices she went to, and even to a local women's shelter. As she aged, she was unable to see people very often, limited in her ability to attend church or travel to make visits. But these pillows were her way of connecting. She poured her time and energy into each one, creating intricate patterns that showed how much she loved every one of us.

Sylvia maintained good health throughout her life. In her late, nineties, however, each health event was more taxing than the last. Each time, her faith and perseverance shone, pulling her through and restoring her to health. Last year, Lornalee, Nadine, Tait, and Talia established a multi-generational home in Kent Island, Maryland, to better provide for her through her illness and ensure she was never alone. In the summer of this year, she was plagued by one too many health issues, and her body couldn't handle it. By the grace of God, she was stabilized enough to return home after several weeks in the hospital. She was surrounded by the comfort, familiarity, and love of all her children.

Sylvia passed away peacefully in her sleep on September 22, 2025. Her daughter Jennifer was by her side. She is survived by her children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren, all of whom will remember her so dearly. She has made an everlasting impression on all our hearts. We thank the Lord for her, for the woman who never tired of serving others, of giving to others, and bringing glory to His name.

To make a memorial or tribute donation, please go to Compass Regional Hospice - Donate in Memory (<https://wl.donorperfect.net/weblink/WebLink.aspx?name=E354255&id=2>)

Previous Events

Memorial Service

OCT **25**. 5:00 PM - 7:30 PM (ET)

Southern Asian Seventh-day Adventist Church
2001 E Randolph Rd
Silver Spring, MD 20904

Tribute Wall

SB

“ *Spence Family:*
We often think of the times we shared in your parents home. And with Jamaica under the threat of this storm, I started to wonder if Sylvia was still alive; so I googled, and I came across her recent obituary.



Saddened we were to learn of her passing; however, grateful to have known such a classy, elegant, caring lady. Sharing Sabbath meals together in their Galena home was always a pleasure! There was always a welcoming warmth amidst the home that she created, simply with her presence.

We have the Blessed Assurance that she is sleeping waiting for Jesus to return. I look forward to The Resurrection when we will all be reunited with those we love, and spend eternity with Jesus.

Thank you for sharing her love with us. May you all cling to the wonderful memories she's given and allow them to comfort you in the days and months ahead.

*In His Love•••
Randy and Sonia Boone
Sebastian, FL*

Sonia G Boone - October 28, 2025 at 11:29 PM

NA

Thank you Sonia and Randy. This means so much to us. I remember when Mama was sick and you went to her until one of us could get there. She loved you both and enjoyed your friendship.

Nadine - November 02, 2025 at 07:51 AM

SG

“ To my dearest cousin, I am so sorry for your loss of my Aunt Sylvia. May God continue to lift you all up in prayers.



Shirmin Georgia - October 25, 2025 at 09:58 PM

NT

Thank you for your prayers Shirmin.

Nadine Tivolacci - October 28, 2025 at 12:59 PM

AS

“ Audrey S. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Sylvia Mae Spence.

Audrey S. - October 25, 2025 at 01:31 PM

SF

“ Dear Cousins,
“Our family is deeply saddened to hear about the passing of your beloved mother. Our family is praying for your family, during this difficult time. May her beautiful memories of cooking, sewing, and her love for of the Lord bring you peace in the days ahead”.
Love always,
Audrey & Family.



Shaw, McLarty Family - October 25, 2025 at 01:26 PM

NT

Thank you cousins for your support and prayers.

Nadine Tivolacci - October 28, 2025 at 01:00 PM



“ Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Sylvia Mae Spence.



October 24, 2025 at 09:07 PM



“ Saunders Family planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Sylvia Mae Spence.

Saunders Family - October 24, 2025 at 09:07 PM



“ Heavenly Heights Bouquet was purchased for the family of Sylvia Mae Spence.



October 24, 2025 at 12:24 PM



“ Hassen Butler & Mary Stewart purchased the Sweet Tranquility Basket for the family of Sylvia Mae Spence.



Hassen Butler & Mary Stewart - October 24, 2025 at 09:08 AM

HM

“ Hyacinth Machado purchased the Peaceful White Lilies Basket for the family of Sylvia Mae Spence.



Hyacinth Machado - October 24, 2025 at 03:41 AM

HM

“ Hyacinth Machado planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Sylvia Mae Spence.

Hyacinth Machado - October 24, 2025 at 03:41 AM



“ Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Sylvia Mae Spence.



October 23, 2025 at 12:04 PM

TH

“ The Moon's - Thomas and Hilma purchased the Arrive in Style for the family of Sylvia Mae Spence.



The Moon's - Thomas and Hilma - October 23, 2025 at 09:40 AM

TH

“ *The Moon's - Thomas and Hilma planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Sylvia Mae Spence.*

The Moon's - Thomas and Hilma - October 23, 2025 at 09:40 AM

CC

“ *Chestertown Seventh-day Adventist Church purchased the Rose Remembrance for the family of Sylvia Mae Spence.*



Chestertown Seventh-day Adventist Church - October 22, 2025 at 12:49 PM

DT

“ *Dr and Mrs Spence, I will certainly be sending prayers and best thoughts for you on Sabbath. I will be in TN having memorial service for my father, Malcolm, who passed on Sept 16. I remember your Mom's lovely face and smile very well! May she rest in God's arms. Blessings! Deborah Thurlow, Music*

Deborah Ann Thurlow - October 21, 2025 at 06:30 PM

NT

Our condolences for the loss of your father. Our prayers are with you and your family. Thank you for your prayers.

Nadine Tavalacci - October 24, 2025 at 11:23 AM

KM

“ *Kenneth M. planted a grove of 3 [Memorial Trees](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Sylvia Mae Spence.*

Kenneth M. - October 21, 2025 at 03:46 PM

NT

“ 2 files added to the album Tribute Wall



Nadine Tivolacci - October 21, 2025 at 11:05 AM

HC

To Nadine and the entire Spence family, please accept my condolences. Sister Spence's life has been a living testimony of what being a Christian truly means. She is sleeping in Jesus. Her testimony is 2 Timothy 4:7-8, I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith, henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge shall give me at that day. I love the Spence family and you all are forever in my prayers. Hayden Blake.

Hayden Blake, grew up in Corona SDA Chu - October 25, 2025 at 11:27 AM

HC

My life has truly been touched by sister Spence, brother Spence and the entire Spence family, I love you all dearly. Praying that Our God will give comfort in this difficult moment. Her name is written in heaven's book of life. Love you all.

Hayden Blake, grew up in Corona SDA Chu - October 25, 2025 at 11:38 AM

KM

“ *Sister Spence, the beloved matriarch of the Spence family, was also a pillar of strength and faith at the May Pen Church. To me, she embodied the very essence of Christian living — a woman of diligence, wisdom, and deep reverence for God, truly a woman whose worth was far above rubies.*

Growing up in Jamaica, I knew her as a devoted Sabbath School teacher, but it was during my time in New York that I came to truly experience her warmth, generosity, and genuine care. Her home was always open and welcoming, a haven of kindness that felt like family.

She lived a long, purposeful, and inspiring life — one marked by the remarkable achievements of her children and grandchildren. Now, she rests in peace beside her beloved husband, awaiting that glorious Resurrection Day.

My heartfelt condolences go out to all her children, grandchildren, and the entire Spence family. May her legacy of faith and love continue to shine through each of you.

Kenneth McIntyre - October 19, 2025 at 10:23 PM

NT

Thank you Kenneth for sharing your memories and the wonderful words of encouragement.

Nadine Tavalacci - October 21, 2025 at 11:01 AM



“ *Sweet Sincerity was purchased for the family of Sylvia Mae Spence.*



October 19, 2025 at 09:44 PM



“ Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Sylvia Mae Spence.



October 10, 2025 at 09:49 AM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Sylvia Mae Spence.

October 10, 2025 at 09:49 AM



“ Strength & Solace Spray was purchased for the family of Sylvia Mae Spence.



October 07, 2025 at 08:47 PM



“ City of Takoma Park Mayor and Council planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Sylvia Mae Spence.

City of Takoma Park Mayor and Council - October 07, 2025 at 10:01 AM

CC

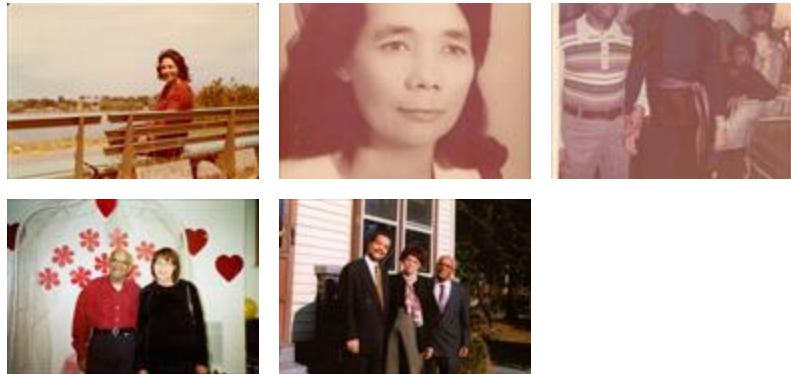
“ *City of Takoma Park Mayor and Council purchased the Strength & Solace Spray for the family of Sylvia Mae Spence.*



City of Takoma Park Mayor and Council - October 07, 2025 at 10:01 AM

KI

“ *35 files added to the tribute wall*



Kim - October 03, 2025 at 02:49 PM

HB

Growing up in the Corona SDA Church, sister Spence was not only a mother to her children, but to all the young people of Corona SDA Church. The love we all received from sister and brother Spence, were no different than the love show to their own children . When I heard the news of her passing, even though I had not seen her in some time,my heart broke. She lived for Jesus. To the Spence family, take comfort in knowing that there is a crown laid up in heaven with her name. Love you all and praying for you. Hayden Blake

Hayden Blake - October 06, 2025 at 04:23 PM

NT

Thank you Hayden for sharing your memories of our mother in our forever- church - home, Corona SDA Church. And thank you for your prayers.

Nadine Tivolacci - October 08, 2025 at 09:12 AM

YF

“ *Yvonne Harrison-King and family planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Sylvia Mae Spence.*

Yvonne Harrison-King and family - September 30, 2025 at 01:20 PM

YF

“ *Yvonne Harrison-King and family purchased the Peaceful White Lilies Basket for the family of Sylvia Mae Spence.*



Yvonne Harrison-King and family - September 30, 2025 at 01:20 PM

KI

“ *4 files added to the tribute wall*



Kim - September 29, 2025 at 02:18 PM

LW

My deepest condolences and prayers are with the Spence family on the passing of Mrs. Spence may God comfort and give you peace during this difficult time.

Lillian Wade - September 29, 2025 at 09:12 PM

NT

Thank you so much Lillian.

Nadine Tavalacci - September 29, 2025 at 09:27 PM

KC

“ We are so sorry for you loss. Mrs. Spence was such a lovely woman, we were blessed to have known her and had her in our lives. She will be missed. Dave and Kim Clarkson

Kim Clarkson - September 29, 2025 at 11:42 AM

NA

Thank you so much.

Nadine - September 29, 2025 at 09:12 PM

HT

“ Heidi Thompson lit a candle in memory of Sylvia Mae Spence



Heidi Thompson - September 28, 2025 at 09:29 PM

NT

Thank you for remembering her.

Nadine Tavalacci - September 29, 2025 at 09:26 PM

TM

“ Thomas and Hilma Moon planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Sylvia Mae Spence.

Thomas and Hilma Moon - September 28, 2025 at 06:34 AM

TM

“ Thomas and Hilma Moon purchased the Florist Choice Bouquet for the family of Sylvia Mae Spence.



Thomas and Hilma Moon - September 28, 2025 at 06:34 AM

SW

“ The Ward, Senior and Francis families send our condolences to the Spence family for this great loss. We will continue to pray for you all.

Sylvia Ward - September 27, 2025 at 04:09 PM

NA

Thank you for your prayers.

Nadine - September 29, 2025 at 09:13 PM

CB

“ Spence Family, we recall those good old days at May Pen Church. Praying the Lord's comfort and peace surround you in this time of sorrow.

The Coleman Family



Cheryl Coleman Buchanan - September 26, 2025 at 10:33 PM

NA

Thank you for your prayers.

Nadine - September 29, 2025 at 09:14 PM

RS

“ *My condolences to the Spence family. My father Reginald Spence R.I.P. had spoken highly of our relatives in Maryland. R.I.P. Sylvia Mae Spence from Reggie Spence and family in San Diego California.*

Reginald Spence - September 26, 2025 at 05:17 PM

NA

Your father always maintained a connection with family. He was a good uncle. Thank you for your message Reginald.

Nadine - September 26, 2025 at 09:19 PM

DJ

“ *So sorry for your loss. :Sylvia was so kind & had such a gentleness about her. I will always cherish the pillows she made, Such a lovely lady. She will be missed*



David & Jessie - September 26, 2025 at 03:27 PM

NA

Thank you Jessie and David. It meant a lot to my mother that you loved your pillows.

Nadine - September 26, 2025 at 09:15 PM

DT

*Drs. Domavan and Iline Tracey
Looking forward to that great getting up morning when we shall meet Sister Spence. Our sincerest condolences to the Spence family.*

Drs. Donavan and Iline Tracey - September 29, 2025 at 08:32 PM

NT

Thank you for your kind words. Blessings.

Nadine Tivolacci - September 29, 2025 at 09:30 PM

BW

“ *Betty Wood lit a candle in memory of Sylvia Mae Spence*



Betty Wood - September 24, 2025 at 02:43 PM

NT

Thank you Betty.

Nadine Tivolacci - September 24, 2025 at 02:46 PM

DM

On behalf of the McIntyre Family, I express deepest sympathy and send our condolences to Sylvia Spence's family.

Sis. Spence has been one of the persons who comes to mind the moment one mentions the name May Pen Seventh-day Adventist Church. Although she was somewhat a quiet person, she was front and centre in most of the activities of the church, including the choirs, socials, supporting the youth programs, etc.

I have always admired her keen sense of humour, and her ready laughter when she observes something funny, or when she and the ladies get together and chatted. She loved people and she especially love to see the young people of the church participate in the activities of its programs.

She loved and cherished her family, loved her children dearly and strove to give them the best. She was also a loving and supportive wife to her husband "GM." God rewarded her faithfulness in this life with length of days, however, we look forward to that eternal rich reward of endless living.

So, Dr. Weymouth, Jennifer, Maxie, Karen, Lorna and Nadine, take comfort in the fact that your dear mother will rest in peace until the eternal Life-giver calls her from her rest, and restore her radiant charm, even so much more glorious than before.

May Sylvia Mae Knott Spence rest in peace.

Donald McIntyre and family

Donald McIntyre - September 28, 2025 at 01:49 PM

NT

It means so much to us that you shared such vivid memories of our mother. Thank you for sharing her acts of service, sense of humor, and the love she had for her family. We are grateful.

Nadine Tavalacci - September 29, 2025 at 09:25 PM