

## **Biographical sketch**

“You will be working in Colombia. Expect a letter in the mail tomorrow, and you will say yes.” As I was praying one August night in 1969, I suddenly heard the Lord’s voice in my heart saying these things. I knew it wasn’t my imagination, so I went to my mailbox the next day, and there was the letter waiting for me! An American teacher was urgently needed for a private school in Medellin, Colombia! My expenses would be paid and I could live on a compound with several American families. I was a fairly new Christian, and this seemed a little frightening, moving to another continent, and in addition, having the responsibility of teaching 6th through 9th graders in a three-room schoolhouse! But I would be with friends, and a knowledge of Spanish wasn’t required.

All went well, and what was to have been just a two-year contract teaching American and Canadian children, would turn into nearly an entire lifetime in Colombia, living and working there. After learning Spanish, I began teaching children’s Bible classes in homes, which later expanded to training teens and Sunday school teachers in children’s evangelism. Three months intensive training with Child Evangelism Fellowship (CEF), prepared me to be more effective, and I eventually trained teams of young people in both city areas and country villages. The Colombian countryside is beautiful, especially along impressive rivers like the Magdalena and Cauca. The people are kind, generous, and especially appreciative of all help and educational training given them. Unfortunately, those wonderful peaceful years came to an abrupt end, when communism, like an insidious merciless cancer, began to take over small towns, then whole vast areas of the rural countryside. It became too dangerous for Americans or other foreigners to travel outside the major cities, and even wealthy Colombians are in danger (kidnapping is lucrative for the criminals, coupled with their coca “industry”). The subversive forces extract a “fee” (vacuna) from the country farmers to be “protected”, but at the same time, children as young as seven or eight and older are abducted to “fight as soldiers for the cause.” Entire families flee to the cities and leave everything behind, just to save their children. The supposed “peace plan” brokered in Cuba a few years ago with the FARC, the largest subversive army in Colombia, has had mixed results.

In the following years, I continued to give classes in urban areas, married in 1984, wrote several books, translated numerous books and booklets for publishing houses, and in the ‘90’s, with a committed group of educators and school principals, we founded the Colombian Association of Christian Schools. We have an agreement with the Oral Roberts University, Tulsa, Oklahoma, for the accreditation of Christian schools, and cooperate with the Association of Christian Schools Int’l (ACSI). Yearly conventions unite hundreds of educators from all over the nation and other countries.

In 2003, I moved to the States to be closer to my elderly mother, and worked as an interpreter in clinics and schools. Mom passed away at age 97 (still driving till the very last!) In 2016 I moved back to Colombia (Bogotá) to retire here, while still keeping active in volunteer work and translation of books and requested articles (see [www.creation.com](http://www.creation.com)). If my classmates are finding it too expensive to retire in the States, you would love it here! My medical coverage is less than \$40 dollars a month, the hospitals and clinics are modern with well-trained staffs, housing is reasonable, basic living costs are moderate, and no

heating bills, as we're closer to the sun (the source of global warming and climate change). Fresh food is abundant and inexpensive, with a year-round growing season! Best wishes to all of you, thank you for keeping me updated, and you'll be in my thoughts as you celebrate a great 60<sup>th</sup> H.S. reunion!

Sally Lee Arias