

# Faith In Action

A series profiling members and friends of SMCC

## Leila Mishalany

Leila was born to a Christian family on August 14, 1931 in Jerusalem, where her Lebanese father, Salim, taught physics and chemistry, and where her German born mother, Marianne, worked as a nurse. Leila's Aunt Johanna was, for 60 years, an administrator at the leprosarium in Jerusalem, built by Kaiser Wilhelm. There young Leila, unafraid of the disease, befriended patients like the blind, 16 year old Esther, who became her close friend; a memory she cherishes to this day.



Leila studied scripture and was confirmed at age 12. At age 16, her family moved to Beirut, Lebanon, where she was enrolled in The American School for Girls. She was now in the company of American Presbyterian missionary teachers, whose guidance served to enrich her spiritual life. Now fluent in German, English, and Arabic, she joined the Lebanese Presbyterian Church where services were conducted in Arabic.

Leila graduated at the age of 18, fell in love with promising young medical student, Henry Mishalany, and in 1950 they married. Henry's Christian grandfather was responsible for the first Bible to be printed in Arabic. In 1951, Leila gave birth to their first child, Lina. The Mishalany's moved to Connecticut, then to Virginia where Henry trained for a career in surgery. In 1953, their twins George and Randa were born, and daughter Vivian came in 1954. In 1956 they moved again, this time to Montreal, Canada. Traveling internationally with a young family was necessary for Henry's career, but it was taxing. They were, nonetheless, a committed team, bound together in their love of Christ, and, in Leila's words, "God was always with us".

Again the family returned to Lebanon where son Charlie was born in 1968. But, the Lebanese Civil War broke out in 1975, and young men were being forcibly conscripted into the militias. In order for Henry, now a well known pediatric surgeon (the first in Lebanon) to continue his medical career, the Mishalany's returned to the United States in 1976, and joined SMCC. Henry passed his US medical exams, got a license to practice, and joined Children's Hospital's Pediatric Surgery Unit. Leila remembers his remarkable hands which had saved so many children's lives.

Tragically, Henry died in an automobile accident in 1991, but Leila continued to honor his memory. She served as a deacon for 3 terms, taught Middle Eastern cooking for several years, and now arranges flowers each week for delivery to church members who cannot attend services. She serves as president of the Lebanese Ladies Cultural Society which educates Lebanese children too poor to attend school. From singing in church at age 5 accompanied by her pastor on violin, to befriending lepers, to holding her family together during their difficult travels, this Presbyterian lady is the embodiment of commitment to church, family, and God's Word.

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