

Biographical Information

Gracia Burnham

Gracia grew up in a home that put the Lord and his Word at the center of their lives. She could sing hymns from memory even before she could read! When she was seven or eight, a caring Sunday school teacher explained to her the importance of committing her life to Christ. Not long after that she begged for the opportunity to be baptized.

Upon graduation from high school, Gracia chose to attend Calvary Bible College in Kansas City because of their music program. She graduated with a bachelor's degree majoring in Christian education.

While she was at Calvary, a friendship flourished with a fellow student by the name of Martin Burnham. Gracia learned that Martin was the son of missionaries, Paul and Oreta Burnham, who were serving in the Philippines. Martin's primary interest was aviation....and Gracia!

She and Martin were married in Kansas City in 1983. After several years of training with New Tribes Mission, they headed for the Philippines in 1986. For seventeen years Martin was a jungle pilot delivering mail, supplies, and encouragement to other missionaries. He also transported sick and injured patients to medical facilities. Gracia supported him whenever he was in the air by maintaining radio contact.

The Burnham's three children, Jeffrey Paul, Melinda Joy, and Zachary Scott were born in the Philippines and home-schooled by their mother.

On May 27, 2001, while celebrating their 18th wedding anniversary at Dos Palmas Resort off Palawan Island, rebels from the Abu Sayyaf Group seized the Burnhams and several other guests of the resort, and took them as hostages to Basilan Island. In the ensuing 376 days of captivity they endured incredible hardship and emotional fatigue. On June 7, 2002, Martin was killed in a firefight between the Philippine military and the Abu Sayyaf Group. Gracia was wounded in the leg but was freed.

Gracia now resides in Florida. She is the author of the book *In the Presence of My Enemies*, which gives a gripping account of their year of terror in the Philippine jungle. In her second book, *To Fly Again*, Gracia reflects on the lessons and spiritual truths learned while in the jungle. She is a popular and engaging speaker in high demand at churches, colleges, and conferences across the United States. She is

also the Founder and Director of The Martin & Gracia Burnham Foundation.