

Andrews University

Digital Commons @ Andrews University

Lake Union Herald

Lake Union Herald

2-2009

A Passion for Ministry

Marjolyne Espeleta
Andrews University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/luh-pubs>

Recommended Citation

Espeleta, Marjolyne, "A Passion for Ministry" (2009). *Lake Union Herald*. 453.
<https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/luh-pubs/453>

This Faculty Stories is brought to you for free and open access by the Lake Union Herald at Digital Commons @ Andrews University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Lake Union Herald by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Andrews University. For more information, please contact repository@andrews.edu.

A Passion for Ministry

BY MARJOLYNNE ESPELETA

It might be easy for someone to think the annual Easter Passion Play at Andrews University is just another theatrical production about Jesus; attempting to use drama to depict His ministry, death and resurrection—right? Shiphrah Fepulea'i doesn't think so.

A Passion Play volunteer for the past four years, Shiphrah keeps coming back for more. To her, it's not just a production; it's a ministry. She says, "It's fulfilling to watch the change in the volunteers during the months of preparation, but especially on the big day. Everyone's working together for one purpose."

Shiphrah first became involved with the Passion Play as a freshman when a friend asked her to be the props coordinator. Although it was a position with heavy responsibilities, she was excited to be involved. One of Shiphrah's favorite memories occurred the night before the first performance. She worked diligently to make sure all the props were in place, but realized no one had created a "mummy" of Jesus, wrapped in white cloth, for the resurrection scene. She scrambled to create it, using any material available. Shiphrah still remembers her sense of relief as she watched Jesus' body being taken into the tomb.

In ensuing years Shiphrah became a scene director, a role which allowed more people interaction. The favorite scene she directed was "The Last Supper." Children involved with Benton Harbor Ministries attended for the first time that year. They had reserved seating, "but if they could have gotten any closer, they would have." This clinched her conviction that looking into the eyes of children reveals whether or not the message is getting across. Shiphrah claims, "Whatever way we use to minister to children can be used in principle to minister to a secular crowd because children and youth are essential unbelievers. No one is born an Adventist. Just like you need to break things down into simple



Through her ministry in the Passion Play at Andrews University, Shiphrah Fepulea'i desires to bring a living picture of God's love to the community.

language for children, you need to do the same for those not accustomed to biblical terms. The Passion Play gives volunteers an opportunity to do that for the community."

There were some instances when Shiphrah became discouraged, but there was never a bad year. One spring the weather conditions necessitated cutting the "Triumphal Entry" scene, which she was directing. Yet, Shiphrah didn't feel as though her work was wasted. She says, "It's not about your work; it's not about your fruit blossoming." She helped out wherever she could, never losing the spirit of ministry.

Shiphrah considers the words of Ellen White, "It is not a theatrical performance that glorifies God, but the presentation of the truth in the love of Christ" (*Gospel Workers*, p. 356). Rather than condemning the Passion Play as a "theatrical performance," she believes Ellen is reminding us it is not about the performance or emphasis on self, but about the presentation of truth and the love of God. "We are definitely trying to keep that belief as a mission in everything we do—revealing the love of God through Jesus' ministry, death and resurrection," Shiphrah says.

So what is the Passion Play all about? To Shiphrah, "It's definitely about ministering to the community—to bring them a living picture of God's love."

Marjolyne Espeleta is the marketing director for the 2009 Passion Play at Andrews University.

The 2009 Passion Play at Andrews University will be held Saturday, April 11. For information and online ticket reservations, visit www.passionplay.andrews.edu.