



# SHINING LAMP

A Bahá'í who served humanity with radiance

Eleanor Moon "Soo" Fouts (1923–2016)

On a Sunday morning in 1941, Japanese fighter planes attacked the U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. Over 2,400 lives were lost. It was the start of World War II for the U.S. It was also the end of formal schooling for Soo Fouts. High school seniors were asked to work at Pearl Harbor, and Soo took a job.

Eleanor Moon Fouts, who was known as Soo, was born in Hawaii in 1923. Her parents came to the island of Maui from Korea to work on a plantation. They didn't earn much, but they tried to give Soo and her five siblings a bright future.

When she was about six, Soo went to some of the first Bahá'í children's classes in Hawaii. At the start, she was most excited by the lemonade and cookies in class. But she grew fascinated by Bahá'u'lláh. She became a Bahá'í at age 17.

## World Travels

While working at Pearl Harbor, Soo met a serviceman named Leroy Fouts. They married when she was 20 and had a son, Leroy Jr. They went to the mainland U.S. and moved from place to place. They chose cities with few Bahá'ís and helped to build communities. Over the years, their homes ranged from California to Florida. Soo said she felt empty if she let too much time pass without telling someone about the Faith.

Soo worked for 14 years at a media company in Washington, D.C. Her life changed in 1976, when she became the first Asian woman elected to the National Spiritual Assembly, the governing body for the Bahá'ís of the U.S. For a decade, she traveled

the world representing the Assembly. One highlight was meeting the only reigning Bahá'í monarch, His Highness Malietoa Tanumafili II, at the dedication of the Bahá'í House of Worship in Western Samoa. Soo also served as the U.S. representative to the United Nations Conference on ending racism and racial discrimination in 1979.

Soo and Leroy purchased a gift shop in Florida. With Soo's talent for business, they soon owned four shops. She visited 16 countries to purchase items to sell. At every stop, she loved to speak about the Faith, her "favorite subject."

Back home, Soo traveled and shared the Faith, especially in the South. "Mankind's remaining hope," she said, is "a common Faith under one God which will address itself to all mankind . . . to help us live up to our fullest potential as spiritual beings encased in this physical vehicle."

## Return to Her Roots

After her husband's passing in 1992, Soo fulfilled her dream to live and teach the Faith in another country. She moved to China and then to Korea, her parents' homeland. She was over 70 years old and had forgotten how to speak Korean, but she said, "I re-learned it and I was very happy." In 2004, she returned to the U.S.

All her life, Soo lovingly encouraged people with her unshakeable faith. She passed away in 2016 in Illinois. The Universal House of Justice praised her "passion for teaching the Faith and her many years of selfless service" and offered prayers "for the progress of her noble soul . . ."