

Filipino widow buying time in battle against deportation

By Mark Langen

CAYLEY — Lolita Handsaeme, the Filipino widow who faced deportation August 20, has won a major battle with Canadian Immigration officials in her bid to remain in Canada. Handsaeme, through legal representation in the person of Edmonton lawyer Shirish Chotalia, filed a motion Aug. 3 in an Edmonton federal court for application for leave, extension of time and for judicial review.

"The motion preempts any other action of the Immigration department," explained Reverend Bob Manly, who took up the fight on Handsaeme's behalf when Immigration Canada indicated that the Cayley widow would be deported to her native Philippines. "As I understand it the courts will review the ruling and she will be awarded landed immigrant status."

Following a story on her impending deportation in the *Regional* for the week of June 27, 1994 Handsaeme and Manly were promptly visited by Calgary television news crews. At the same time, Immigration Minister Sergio Marchi was visiting Calgary and her case became a topic on several radio talk show across the province. Since then, Handsaeme has been deluged with letters of support and telephone calls from all over southern



Lolita Handsaeme

Alberta and indeed, western Canada.

Handsaeme's problems began when her husband, Edward, died suddenly in November, 1993. Lolita, who had been under sponsorship by her husband for landed immigrant status, was informed that she would face deportation August 20, 1994. Immigration officials in Calgary told her that due to the death of her husband her sponsorship had been invalidated. At this point, Manly, pastor of Wood Memorial United Church in Cayley, where Lolita attends, became involved.

Manly encouraged members of his congregation to write letters of support for Handsaeme to Members of Parliament, Senators and Immigration Minister Sergio Marchi. Manly's petition was circulated throughout the United Church Presbytery in the

immediate area including communities from Banff to Rockyford, from Acme to Claresholm and all points between. Support was phenomenal.

In addition to calls and letters, support came from Richard Tumanon of the Filipino Association of Calgary and from Lourdes Morales, Consul General for the Philippines in Vancouver. The Filipino Association of Edmonton has also thrown in their support.

"But the fight isn't completely over," warned Manly, who encouraged caring individuals to continue with their letters of support to government officials.

"We must not let our government forget about incidents that effect immigrant people like Lolita. If Lolita was an American in this same situation we'd have the U.S. government all over us like a bad suit."

And, for now, Lolita Handsaeme has no fear that Canadian Immigration officials will put her on a plane at Calgary International airport for a one-way trip to Manila.

"Immigration can do nothing," added Manly. "Her case must now be heard by federal court."

A date for the hearing has yet to be established.