

Giving Love Away

Mary Virginia Martin (1913 – 1990) was an American actress and singer. She originated many roles over her career, including Nellie Forbush in *South Pacific* and Maria in *The Sound of Music*. She was named a Kennedy Center honoree in 1989. She was also the mother of actor Larry Hagman, an actor with many credits, including the *Dallas* television series.

One evening, the great Broadway musical star was preparing to go on stage in *South Pacific* when a note was handed to her. It was from Oscar Hammerstein, who at that moment was on his deathbed. Hammerstein (1895 – 1960) was an American writer, theatrical producer, and theatre director of musicals for nearly 40 years, credited with writing 850 songs. The short note simply said:



“Dear Mary, a bell’s not a bell till you ring it. A song’s not a song till you sing it. Love in your heart is not put there to stay. Love isn’t love till you give it away.”

After her performance that night, many people rushed backstage, crying, “Mary, what happened to you out there tonight? We never saw anything like that performance before.”

Blinking back the tears, Martin then read them the note from Hammerstein.

Then she said, “Tonight, I gave my love away!”

Today, in the centers of Life Care and Century Park and in the work of Life Care at Home, our associates will be giving their love away.

– Beecher Hunter