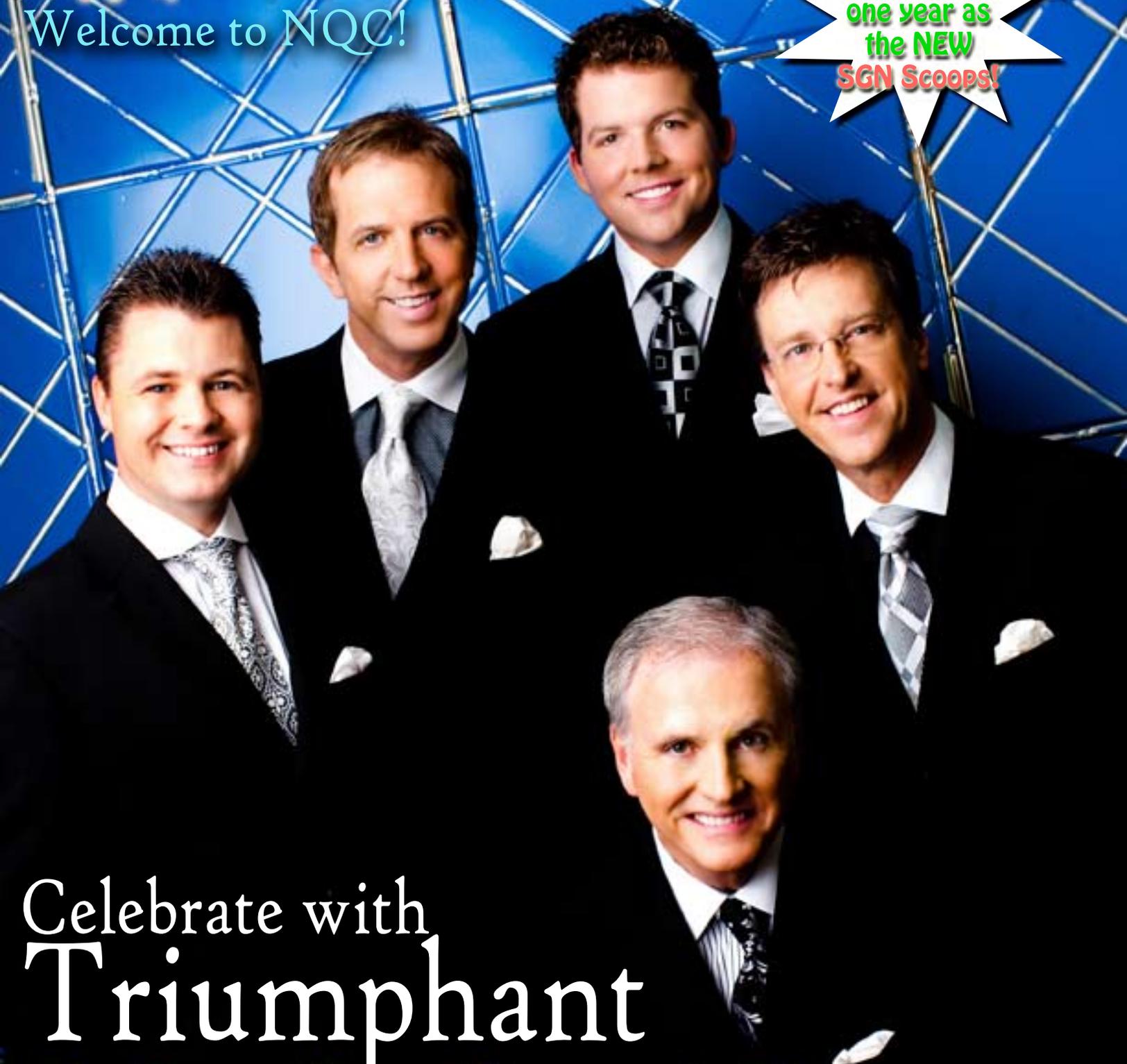


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Rob reflects  
on one year of  
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...also he says "FUN,"  
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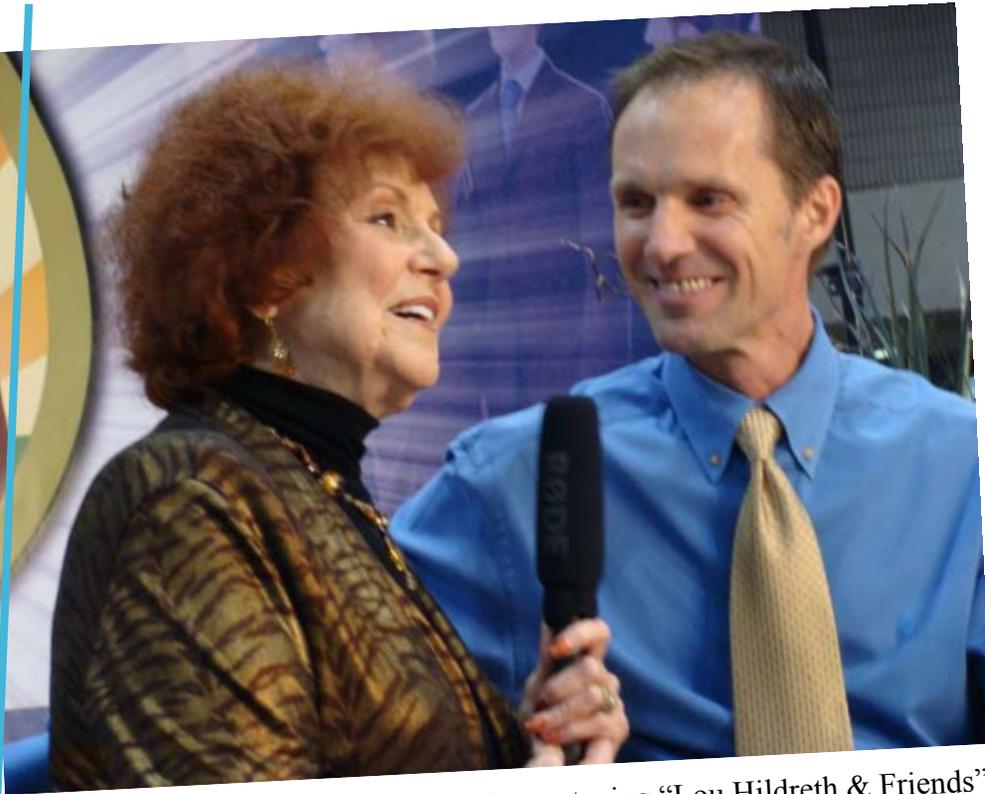
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SGN Scoops exists to showcase what is distinguished, intriguing, and real about southern & country gospel music. We seek with our stories to shed light on people fulfilling a call to minister - to make or support the making of music that excites an audience and glorifies God. And we seek to do it interactively.



Love, Life, Legends with Ms. Lou:

# 'I've never missed [an NQC]'



Billy Blackwood—Blackwood Brothers—taping “Lou Hildreth & Friends” at NQC 2009

There is no other event quite like the NATIONAL QUARTET CONVENTION. I should know-- I have never missed one, and this will be the fifty-third NQC. In 1957, the Wills Family, six brothers and sisters, made the long trip from Fort Worth, Texas to Memphis, Tennessee, at the invitation of the Blackwood Brothers and Statesmen. We sang at that first NQC and for many years thereafter.

It is like a big family reunion, and I cannot wait to see the many friends who attend this annual event. Howard and I will be at the FAMILY FRIENDLY ENTERTAINMENT booth with the Jones Family, taping interviews for the TV network. We have four booth spaces on the 10th aisle. Stop by and pick up a DVD from our interviews last year---“Lou Hildreth & Friends”

NQC 2009, featuring Guy Penrod, Tim Riley, Woody Wright, Lulu Roman, Ronnie Hinson, and several others. On the DVD, one of my friends, Randall Franks, plays “Faded Love” on the fiddle. We talk about the Wills Family and their cousin, the famous fiddler Bob Wills, and though we love fiddle music, we are thankful that “Pop” Wills and the family would only sing gospel music. There is a chapter in my book “Deep Within My Heart Lies A Melody” about this, and we will have the books with us at the NQC. (We also make them available on our up-dated website) In Louisville, a very special time is checking out the latest news with Rob Patz, Rod and Kelly Burton. Thanks to Kelly, editor of SGN Scoops, we will have some printed copies of the Branson Gospel Music Convention issue of *Scoops* at the Family Friendly Entertainment booth.

Joining the Gaither Homecoming Friends onstage for “Bill Gaither’s Sing-Along” on Friday at 12:00 in Free-

## Greenish Me | cont'd

gether or how quickly a new group has topped a chart, in the grand scheme of things, gospel music is a means to an end, a gift God gives to some people to enable them to fulfill the Great Commission He left for all believers (Matthew 28:16-20). No matter how we are “preaching the gospel,” through piano playing, singing lead or bass, promoting a concert, writing some articles, running a

showcase, driving a bus, or buying a ticket and returning home to tell our friends about the concert, the Gospel that inspired gospel music is the responsibility of each one of us.

Oh yeah... and it is the most important, fulfilling, joy-inducing thing we have to celebrate in the whole, wide world.

So get out your party noisemakers, bake your cupcakes, wave

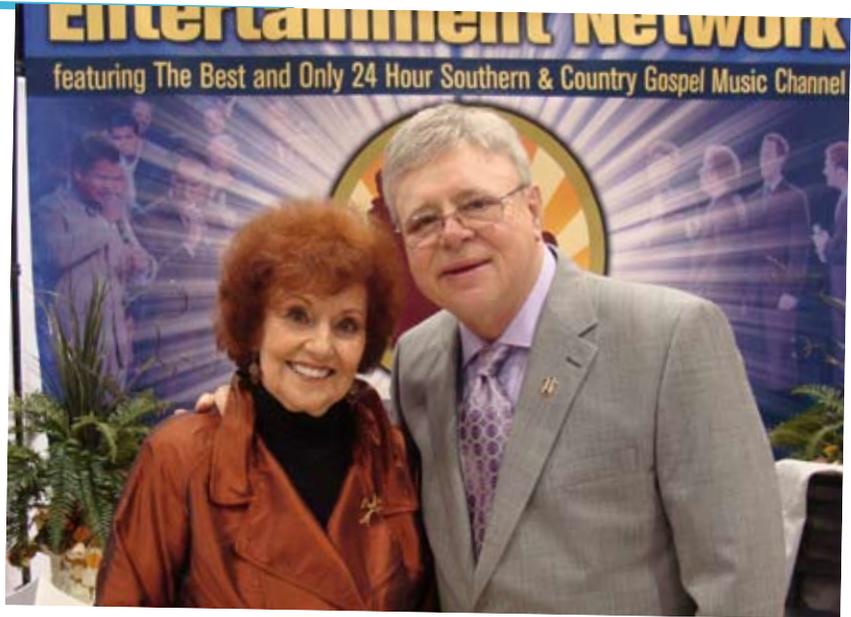
your banners...and raise your hands. **The Gospel of Jesus Christ is that He died so we all could live**, is that He took our sins upon Himself so that we can be forgiven, is that we are joint heirs with Him to the riches and splendor, the protection and prosperity, the unconditional love of the Creator God!

Whew! Now *there* is something worth celebrating! 🇺🇸

dom Hall is exciting! Our love and respect for Bill and Gloria Gaither just grows stronger each year. On Saturday, same time, same place, Norman Holland, Daywind Music Group, is presenting the "100th Anniversary Celebration" featuring legendary artists who have shaped the genre of Southern Gospel music.

On September 29th Howard and I will be in Pigeon Forge, TN, for the SGMA Hall Of Fame Induction and the *Singing News* Fan Awards at Dollywood. The red carpet will be rolled out for all of us who are already in the Hall Of Fame, but the focus will be on the 2010 inductees—Danny Gaither, Connie Hopper, Jan Buckner Goff, Bill Hefner, Sam Goodman, and Arthur Smith.

We thank God for granting us traveling mercies and increasing our desire to lift up the name of Jesus in all we do. 🇺🇸



Tim Riley –Gold City— on the DVD “Lou Hildreth & Friends” taped at NQC 2009

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# WHY GEORGE LUCAS MADE ANTI - STAR WARS MOVIES

## WHAT HAPPENS WHEN RELIGIOUS THEMES BECOME UNPOPULAR

Given that this summer marks the 30th anniversary of *The Empire Strikes Back* (and, yes, knowing that makes me feel old, too), I thought I would take the time to discuss the *Star Wars* movies, since they're some of my greatest cinematic joys – and, over the last 10 years or so, some of my greatest banes.

To say that the original *Star Wars* movies left a huge impression on me would be an understatement. The first movie came out when I was 2 ½ years old, and I still remember being taken to one of the re-releases (probably 1979 or so, when I was 4 or 5). Just like with, say, *Sesame Street*, I can't remember a time when *Star Wars* wasn't there. It's hard-wired into my brain for life. I collected the action figures, I read the comics and novels, I bought every new version that came out on home video, and I anxiously awaited the release of the new films. (Yes, I'm one of "those people." Thanks for asking.)

Of course, the prequels were hugely disappointing to me, as they were to many people. But there's a deeper problem than even just the lack of quality in the filmmaking. Let's set aside, for the moment, the terrible acting, the awful dialogue, and the often incoherent plots. Let's even set aside one legitimate argument in the prequels' favor: *that after all the hype, the new movies couldn't possibly hold up to the fans' hopes of being the transcendent, life-changing experiences we expected them to be.*

Lately, one element of the films in particular has really started to bother me. It's that the prequels are philosophically at the opposite end of the spectrum as the original films.

The first *Star Wars* movie, in 1977, came at the end of a long period of increasingly depressing, sometimes violent, nihilistic movies (*Taxi Driver*, *The Godfather Parts I & II*, etc.), and also at the end of a very demoralizing period in our country's history (Watergate, Vietnam). The tone of this movie was like a breath of fresh air to a nation that badly needed it. In addition to just being a lot of fun,

there was a sense of optimism about life, and thematically the film was about the ability of the common person (in this case, Luke Skywalker) to change the world for the better. It was the right movie at just the right time.

Just as importantly, perhaps even more so, the movie made religion "cool" again. *All in the Family* reigned across TVs in America during the decade, with audiences laughing at the idiotic, racist – and deeply religious – Archie Bunker as he sparred with Mike, his clever and smart atheist son. Culturally, a "chilling effect" swept the nation: One didn't want to bring up religion for fear of sounding as stupid as Archie.

But in *Star Wars*, the Force is key to survival. The Force is what makes gangly, whiny Luke into a cool hero – a (Jedi) Knight, no less. The Force is alive and active, whether or not people choose to acknowledge it. While Lucas almost certainly didn't intend his movie to be a religious tract (and indeed, the concept of the Force borrows more from Buddhism than from Christianity), the film nonetheless spoke to a modern audience that, yes, it was OK (and in fact preferential) to embrace religion again. God was just as much a part of the Space Race as He was a part of anything else.

And let's not forget the emotionally powerful redemption arc that Darth Vader goes through.

Unfortunately, Lucas got severe negative backlash from his critics, particularly the so-called intelligentsia that he most wished to please. Lucas was labeled a war-monger and a religious zealot, among other things. (Read *A Galaxy Not So Far Away: Writers and Artists on Twenty-five Years of Star Wars*, ed. Glen Kenny, for a roundup of the typically nasty things that his critics say about him.) For this hippie who grew up with the counter-culture movement of the

1960s and 1970s, the endless attacks were too much to bear.

So, what does the audience learn about the Jedi in the prequels? The "glory days of the Jedi" (as Lucas frequently referred to the era) turned out to be anything but. When we first see them in *The Phantom Menace*, they're a red-tape bureaucracy. In *Attack of the Clones*, they play right into Senator Palpatine/Darth Sidious' hand in an absurd puppet war. Also, the Jedi realize that they're losing

**While [George] Lucas almost certainly didn't intend his movie to be a religious tract the film nonetheless spoke to a modern audience that, yes, it was OK to embrace religion again.**



their grip on the Force, but Yoda makes the call to lie to the Senate about their weakening. In *Revenge of the Sith*, the incompetent and power-hungry Jedi miss the obvious right under their noses (that Palpatine is the Sith Lord), they force Anakin into difficult and dishonest choices that help to facilitate his fall to the Dark Side, and even the top Jedi Masters don't have enough ability in the Force to sense when mindless clones are about to turn on them.

For a long time, I saw the regular bad decision-making of the Jedi as plot holes in Lucas' work. Then I began to realize that Lucas was being quite deliberate in these character choices. At the end of the day, the reason that the "golden age" of the Jedi fell is because the Jedi deserved it.

The original *Star Wars* movies were re-worked myths for the technology age. As such, religious people found much to enjoy about them. The *Star Wars* prequels, on the other hand, are political commentary on how (in Lucas' view) everything goes down the drain when committed religious people get involved in politics. In essence, they're anti-*Star Wars* movies.

So, no, George, I don't care that the third season of the *Clone Wars* cartoon series (set between Episodes



Wallpaper featuring Clone Wars from StarWars.com

II and III) is starting this fall. (Why would I get excited to watch a show about a war being manipulated on both sides by the same person, much less a show where I already know which characters live and die?) I'm just not interested in any new *Star Wars* media unless you change your mind about how to present this universe, or until you let someone else be in charge – someone who understands what *Star Wars* is really all about. 🇮🇪

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"I am the queen of multi-tasking!" As bathwater filled the tub this morning, I cleared the counter, made beds, hung clothes, loaded the washing machine, put away a load of clothes, laid out supper, changed the puppy pads, did a set of squats, put in contacts, brushed teeth, threw hair in a pony tail and exfoliated my face! The time was just 8:15 am and before the water ever dripped, I had posted a press release, answered email, and drove my son to a 6:00 am Cross Country practice, then my daughter to school by 7:15am. Sigh... "Now I can start multi-tasking my to-do list and work flow" I whispered to myself!

Before children, I worked at a local bank. I answered multi- phone lines, retrieved atm cards, opened safe deposit boxes, cross-sold as I opened new accounts- and still had loan papers ready by deadlines. Occasionally, I would get annoyed with co-workers who could only accomplish one thing at a time. The multi-tasking in banking was nothing compared to the multi-tasking of motherhood I soon experienced.

In 4 short years, I birthed 3 babies! I moved beyond "annoyed" to jealousy when I noticed other moms that seemed to have it easier than I! I recall staggering through the door to the pediatrician's office after huffing up 8 flights of stairs with my 3 kids only to see a slumbering, one week old baby with its mommy, daddy, grandma, and grandpa all there to keep its pacifier in its mouth! Because the elevator was out of order

and I had no one to help me, there I stood (barely) gasping for breath with my infant slung on hip, little girl in pull ups, a crying/sick preschooler, and a diaper bag crammed with sippies, snacks, diapers, books, and more!

During this phase of our lives, I opened my home as a licensed daycare for other children- which meant more multi-tasking. I learned how to manage- even it if meant feeding my baby while feeding an older one on my lap as I read stories to other children on the couch next to me. As I write this, I'm exhausted just thinking about it and feeling guilty remembering my MANY failures.

While multi-tasking recently, I burned chicken on the grill beyond recognition and in spite of doing lunges down the hall-way while carrying towels to the closet- trust me- my legs aren't muscular! Believe me, I can't be everything to everyone 100% of the time. Honestly, I sink or tread water many times as I try to stay afloat in my sea.

While wallowing in inadequacy, that's when I become super- impressed with God. I am in awe when I dwell on how He orchestrates the universe AND supervises the lives of individual people! Unlike me- He has this world in control 100% of the time while being everything to everyone! What really makes my brain enlarge is to think about how He manages and executes His Kingdom by maneuvering through His creation- even those broken and restored! Despite the reports of the world going to hell in a hand-basket, God's Kingdom is forcefully advancing throughout the world and He's busy working through the lives of His soldiers to do so! As Christians, we are enlisted in His army advancing the Kingdom of Light. His soldiers are male, female- all

shapes, sizes, ages and colors uniquely created with gifts and talents for the sole purpose of recruiting other soldiers for His glory!

In the last month, God has stretched my eyes to see a glimpse of His multi-tasking activity by allowing me to sing in several venues, attend many southern gospel concerts, and by posting news on SGN-Scoops.com. I feel like God has given me a fresh perspective from His view-point and its thrilling! In the last month, I've had the privilege of seeing more than 100 southern gospel artists perform. I attended Family United, SGN Music Fest, Pat's Heavenly Jubilee, Georgia Country Gospel Music Association Events, and several local concerts. I observed groups/soloists as legendary as the Blackwood Brothers Quartet, as popular as the Gaither Vocal Band, as talented as the Collingsworth Family, as lively as Ernie Haase and Signature Sound and as promising as emerging artist Josh Neymon. Some of these artists had spiked hair, holes in jeans ministering in graphic tees singing music that "kicked" while others wore suits & ties singing music that was heavenly. Some played guitars, others pianos, some harmonicas, others drums, some trumpets, others violins, some played nothing but all were a huge blessing to all who heard.

When I haven't been out listening or participating, I have been sitting at the "news desk" at SGN-Scoops.com reading all the exciting news coming in! Artists are walking through new doors of opportunity by working with booking agents and record companies taking their music to new levels of professionalism. Some artists are taping DVDs, writing news songs and the news goes on and on! Perhaps the most exciting news is the various overlapping events taking place all over the country- and even the world!

### **Do you see what I see? HALLELUJAH, God is multi-tasking!**

God is executing His master plan by working through His creation! He is using ministers of all kinds and matching them up with a variety of audiences! God needs a variety of artists with different personalities, gifts and talents to reach the young, old, hurting lost as well as the young, old, hurting found! The Lord illustrated this beautifully to me recently as I attended a Blackwood Brothers Quartet concert. In this isolated event, the particular audience consisted primarily of senior citizens- in addition to me, my husband and a handful of young folks. About half-way through, I observed it wasn't the type of concert where the gospel was "hammered" or that instituted an "altar-call"-per say Thank goodness, the Lord caused me to notice those around me before my observation could even lead me to form an opinion. The sweet elderly folks around me were smiling ear to ear as the lady next to me adjusted her hearing aids. They clapped, sang along and stood to their feet as they were touched. The Lord reminded me this particular audience knows the gospel and some had been faithful for more years than I'd been alive. The "aging" group is faced with the challenge of loss in the most severe way! They're losing spouses, friends, and health- just to name a few. This specific crowd needed an escape from their world of aging and what could be better than a night of remembering happy songs of "yesterday" and hearty laughter? The Blackwood Brothers Quartet met those people where they were and were masters at show-

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ering the love of God. Isn't that really what it's all about?

Many of you can relate to multi-tasking, for we juggle homes, children, work and gospel music- It's just a reality of the days in which we live. However... If you should find yourself doing something like: signing lunch checks and permission slips as you inch through the school drop off line or eating as you work... instead of getting stressed, be reminded of God's multi-tasking! God is surely multi-tasking and He fails at NOTHING! His truth is marching on! 🇺🇸

Our SGN Scoops Staff is comprised of professional writers, singers, speakers, publicists, and ministers. Please visit their websites for more from them. **| CONTRIBUTORS**



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Through a series of events, **JEFF HAWES** has moved from the classroom where he taught high school English in Jackson County, Alabama to the tour bus of gospel great Karen Peck & New River. Jeff chronicles the fulfillment of his gospel music dreams and his road life exclusively for SGN Scoops. Learn more about him at [karenpeckandnewriver.com](http://karenpeckandnewriver.com)



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**CHAD HAYES** is a pastor, husband, and father to an adorable one year old. He is also the resident CD reviewer for [SGMRadio.com](http://SGMRadio.com)



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As a busy ventriloquist and comedian performing throughout North America and beyond, guest columnist **RYAN BOMGARDNER** receives over 500 requests and performs 140 of these shows annually. Ryan has entertained hundreds of thousands at events ranging from corporate events and churches to concerts, Christian cruises, and TV appearances. Ryan's mission is to provide clean entertainment for all ages and reach people who wouldn't normally go to church or get to hear the gospel message. He resides in Pennsylvania with his wife and online at [ryanandfriends.com](http://ryanandfriends.com)



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Since we began a new decade, it has become painfully obvious to me that I am no longer a part of the up-to-date technologically advanced generation. Technology moves so fast, things that were 'cool' just a few years ago are completely out of date. I miss Pac-Man, typewriters, and dot-matrix printers! I, for one, don't mind telling you that I honestly long to once again hear the sound of a dial-up internet connection.

These days, it's impossible to go to a mall without seeing someone talking on a bluetooth, updating their Facebook status via Blackberry, texting on their iPhone or Twittering. Many of you are thinking, "I don't know any of the words in that last sentence."

No problem, that's why I'm here to help you learn.

We should probably begin by discussing some of these 'new-fangled gadgets' and terms which perhaps a number of readers may not know what they are, let alone how to use them. Therefore, I have provided a glossary of terms to help you understand the latest technology vocabulary. Imagine the possibilities at the next family reunion when you ask the grandkids if they received any interesting 'tweets' recently. You'll be the coolest adult over 30 in the entire family!

**Texting:** An odd, primitive form of communication on a cell phone, similar to that used by early cave men. Example of a text: "My BFF n Joe R comN ovR U want 2come2?"

**Twitter:** 1) what a bird does; 2) an annoying and mainly pointless form of letting the whole world know what you're doing: Example: I'm going to bed now. (Who cares?)

**Tweet:** 1) also what a bird does; 2) a single futile message sent from twitter.

**Blue tooth:** the microscopic cell phone device that makes the rest of us look like a fool because we think the user is talking to us.

**iPhone:** a state of the art contraption which allows you to talk on the phone, browse the internet, watch a movie, and/or save the world. Many use these to look important around others.

**Facebook:** a digital yearbook where you get to decide who in the world you want as your 'friend'. You also get to block out the people you want to forget.

**chillax:** A term which means you're chillin' while relaxin' (or else it means you're so cold you feel like wax... I can't remember).

**Myspace:** Yet another place to waste time online.



**Google:** a verb which means "I don't know either, but I'm going to find out."

Example sentence: "I'll Google that."

**iPod:** device that teenagers plug into their brains (2 plugs needed; plug one in each ear) permanently makes them oblivious to the world

around them.

**Blackberry:** 1.) type of fruit; 2.) one of those little thingy's that distract businessmen right before they walk into you.

**Miley Cyrus:** Too complicated to explain.

Now that you know what each of these things are, you'll be able to communicate with the younger generation. The most important thing when talking with them about technology is to act like you know what you're talking about. If you don't know, just make up words and say it's the latest 'app' that everyone is getting. "Wooooohhhh" they'll respond in sheer amazement and awe.

And since I'm trying to be 'cool' as well, I have Facebook too! Look my name up on Facebook and let's be friends! 🇺🇸

## A Humorous Pause

BY RYAN BOMGARDNER



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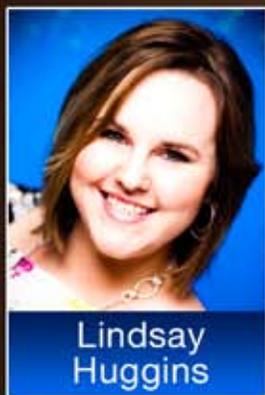
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## Triumphant: Victorious.

**Successful. Exultant.** In 2010, The Triumphant Quartet entered its seventh year as a successful southern gospel quartet whose songs exult and praise the victory of the Lord. In a feat that is unheard of these days in the gospel music industry, this quartet still claims the same line-up as they did in 2003, when they were called “Integrity” and performed at the Louise Mandrell Theatre in Pigeon Forge. With the release of their latest CD, *Love Came Calling*, Triumphant Quartet celebrates their partnership with Mansion Entertainment and a new season of rejoicing in what God is doing through their ministry.

**Jeff Stice talks about what makes it work & what lies ahead.**

**By Lorraine Walker**

*Love Came Calling* is also the name of their live DVD, released in conjunction with the CD and recorded at Henderson, Tennessee in July. The title song was written by Dove award winners Wayne Haun and Joel Lindsey. The lyrics are compelling: "Long before I ever knew the sound of what could turn my life around, He was calling... Love came calling..." and the song just may be another chart-topper for the group that has seen several in recent months.

Triumphant Quartet's current hit song is entitled, "Somebody Died For Me", from their *Everyday* project, released in 2009. The song was written by Christy Sutherland and tells the story of soldier who lived through battle because another soldier, his best friend, died in his place. From a similar story published in *USA Today*, Sutherland talks about the song's concept and creation.

"I remember when I read the article thinking 'What would I do if a friend were to give their life for me?' In that moment it was as if the Lord said, 'Somebody did die

# Triumphant 7 Quartet: Years of Celebration

for you and He is your Friend.' I was just overwhelmed with a sense of God's great love for me, that He would send His Son to die for me. I knew I had to write a song. I called my friend and co-writer Kyle Matthews and we wrote the song over a period of a few weeks."

Sutherland continues, "Triumphant actually heard me perform the song at a charity event in East Tennessee. They asked if they could record the song and I told them I would love for them to record it, but I was planning on releasing my recording to radio as a single. They said that was fine with them and they would not release it as a single before I did. So, I released the song and it became my first *Singing News* charting single. I am even more excited that it is now climbing the charts with the guys singing it. The highest honor a songwriter can receive is to have other artists wanting to record their songs."

Triumphant Quartet has received a lot of response from the performance of "Somebody Died For Me", and will no doubt see that response continue with the release of the "Love Came Calling" recording. Vocalists Clayton Inman, David Sutton, Eric Bennet, and Scott Inman put their hearts and souls into every new release and this latest recording continues with that tradition.

Jeff Stice, pianist with Triumphant and *Singing News* Musician of the Year, is thrilled with the new project. " 'We Shall Overcome' is my favorite song on the new project with 'Love Came Calling' a close second," says Stice. "I did 'We Shall Overcome' with The Nelons years ago. I've always loved the song and always thought it would make a great quartet song. I think the guys really pulled it off. I love it!

"I think what makes this CD so special to me," he continues, "is that from day one, I've always wanted to feel like we improve on every CD,

Honestly I hope people continue to pray for Triumphant Quartet, that we'll stay focused on why we do this: For the honor and glory of God.  
 ~Jeff Stice

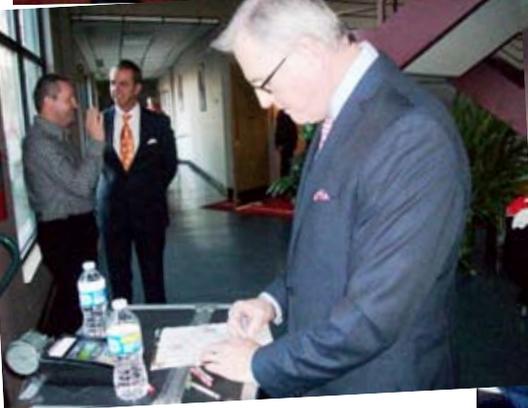


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from the quality of the project to the song selection. This is truly my favorite project that we've done to date."

Stice and the rest of Triumphant Quartet have won many awards during their tenure, but the accolades don't seem to have given the members an over-inflated sense of stardom. "I think everyone wants approval. Whether we win anything or not, it makes you feel like people are enjoying what you're doing and maybe it's helping someone in some way. I think [the awards] have to be kept in perspective though.



Honestly I hope people continue to pray for The Triumphant Quartet that we'll stay focused on why we do this: For the honor and glory of God."

Jeff Stice has been around Southern Gospel for many years and has experienced the highs of winning awards and

Clockwise from top: The group members and their wives prior to the January 2010 Grammy awards; with Babbie Mason, rehearsing for Carnegie Hall concert in New York City; At NQC 2009 after receiving the SN Fan award for Quartet of the year; Clayton preparing for a concert by coloring. Photos this page courtesy of Clayton Inman

playing Carnegie Hall, as well as the lows of being a struggling artist. From his father's quartet to the Nelons and on to Perfect Heart, he has been one of the industry's premier pianists for almost three decades. Stice shares from his heart about his career and the music that he loves.

"I was raised in Southern Gospel Music," says Stice. "I fell in love with it at a very early age. I've had opportunities to go into other kinds of music, but I honestly don't see myself ever playing anything but Southern Gospel Music!"

However, Stice takes a moment to reflect on one of the times where he thought he needed to step away. "A few years ago I had a bit of trouble trying to recover from my group, Perfect Heart. I honestly had no idea what I



was going to do. There were so many bills that the group had, that I didn't see any way out but trying to find something else to do. But because God had other plans, He provided ways for me to dig out. It was the major confirmation that I needed to stay in Southern Gospel Music."

Stice notes that his wife, children and his parents have all been tremendously supportive of his career. He says his Dad is his spiritual mentor, someone who has modeled Christ to him. Stice has learned many things from his father, including putting God first and to live a life of integrity. "My dad is my hero. Five years ago he suffered a stroke that probably should have killed him. Instead he lost the use of his right arm and leg. To this day he'll tell you that with the stroke God gave him an awesome responsibility to deal with it. Man, do I love the guy!"

As well as his Dad, Jeff says he has several heroes in the music field as well. "Wally Varner, Darrell Stewart, Hovie Lister, Eva Mae Lefevre," lists Stice. "Rex Nelon, Lorne Matthews, Les Beasley, Glen Payne, George Younce, James Blackwood, JD Sumner. This list could go on forever. Outside of the industry: David Foster, Floyd Cramer, Ray Charles, Roger Williams, Randy Waldman, David Benoit and others." These legends were always willing to share their advice,



At the April Harmony Honors in Nashville, presented by Southern Gospel Music Association, Triumphant joined the Oak Ridge Boys on "Everyday," a hit for both groups decades apart. After the song, they began an impromptu version of "Elvira."

Photo by Aaron Crisler/GospelMusicUpdate.com

and what Stice learned from them he shares with other new artists: "Be nice to everyone and try and take time with them."

Jeff Stice had the opportunity to travel with his hero Rex Nelon, and mentions one specific moment that has remained fresh in his memory. "When I was in The Nelons, Rex was setting me up to do a piano solo. Well the piano was on the side of the stage and the bench barely had room to fit on the stage as well. As I got ready to play, one of the legs on the bench slipped off the platform. In slow motion I began to fall! It seemed like it took thirty minutes to get to the floor. But, being the 'professional' that I am, I jumped up and began to play, acting like it was part of my show. I know I was blood red!"

It has been many years since Stice's embarrassing experience with the floating piano bench, and he says he has seen a lot of changes in the industry during that time. Southern Gospel has undergone a major shift in the use of sound tracks. Radio and the struggling economy have also had a major effect on the artists and the industry.

With all this, Stice says the biggest challenge for artists in this decade is: "Trying to be original with new ideas, yet stay true to what Southern Gospel really is."

As Triumphant continues to stay true to the sound of Southern Gospel as the group marches into the new decade with all of its challenges and uncertainties, Stice is optimistic about the future. "I hope [we will be] continuing to do what we do now. We all get along really well and are on the same page. I just want to continue to grow with these guys. They really are my best friends. I would love for all of us to stay together for years and years, and to come to be known as a ministry that made a difference in somebody's life."

As for Jeff Stice personally, he says that as he enters a new decade of his own life, he has been going through a period of self-examination as God has been speaking to him about specific areas. "I just turned fifty - I know it's hard to believe - and your priorities begin to change. I want more than ever for God to use me in whatever way He chooses." 🇺🇸



Above: Grand pianist Dino Kastronakis took the stage and wowed the audience; Below: A quartet comprised of Kenny Bishop, Danny Parnell of Ascension, Josh Teasley of Firm Foundation, and Buddy Liles are interviewed by Gospel Music Today's Ken Grady.



... Local artists sharing the same stage — often on the same evening — with Southern Gospel legends like the Chuckwagon Gang or the Blackwoods?

... An unscheduled alter time taking place in the midst of a very scheduled evening?

There was indeed something unusual going on in the sprawling Branson Convention Center — overlooking Lake Taneycomo in the downtown heart of Branson, Missouri — last June 28 through July 2.

It was the Second Annual Branson Gospel Music Convention, a unique event spearheaded by Kentucky-born gospel artist, Rod Burton and his spouse, Chicago-native Kelly Capriotti Burton.

### But why another gospel music event?

Kelly Burton explains, "When it first started, I think it was a way to give people like Rod — with his heart and his type of ministry — a showcase. There really wasn't a national showcase for moderately successful gospel singers. But we have a lot of friends in the same boat, like the Jay Stone Singers and McMillan & Life."

Since the summer of '09, the event has — spiritually — expanded into something more. "It turned into a calling on our lives," muses Kelly. "We feel the convention is our church. For one week, we are pastors to the artists. The artists need a time to refresh and take time out. They need a time to get back to the source of the music, and that is Jesus."

**WHY**  
*another Gospel  
 Music Event?*

*Fresh from the 2nd Annual  
**Branson Gospel Music Revival,**  
 guest writer Joshua Heston, editor of State of the  
 Ozarks, finds the answer.*

Photos by Julie Groves

Branson was a good choice. The small Ozark city of only 6,000 year-round residents hosts millions of tourists every year.

It is a town with a strong commitment to patriotism and Christian values, something that was not lost on newcomer and brilliant vocalist, Taj Rohr.

"God displays who He is through the atmosphere and the people here," noted Rohr. "It doesn't matter where you go in Branson, at some point in each show they acknowledge Jesus Christ and that is extremely, extremely rare these days."

**While many Southern Gospel artists were discovering Branson (and the surrounding Ozarks) for the first time, Ozark residents were slowly discovering the Branson Gospel Music Convention.**

Jonathan Edwards, quartet vocalist and radio personality with KWFC-Springfield, notes, "It is a statement of what Branson is about. And to have the mayor and our state representative involved? I think it just shows another pillar, another leg for the town."

It is an event of considerable undertaking. One hundred and ten artists, at least 30 industry exhibitors, 45 different sets, four separate chapel services, a talent search and an awards show are involved.

"It's a five-day show that takes Rod and Kelly all year to get ready for!" exclaimed Sharona Carter of the Jay Stone Singers. But perhaps it is in the planning that obvious differences to other events begin to show. Sharona continued, "At so many conventions, the performers are on one plane and the audiences are on another."

"We don't want that commercialized feel," explained Bobby Carter, also of the Jay Stone Singers. "We want it to be a worship time. That's where the spotlight is! It is on the Message. We come away from the week blessed and encouraged and revived."

No point during the Branson Gospel Music Convention was that more evident than during the Wednesday night show. It was also a time that could have driven someone more obsessive-compulsive about the schedule... crazy.

[continues>](#)



**Left: Ann Downing sings. Above: One of the 'all star quartets' at the Diamond Awards: Dan Keeton, Jimmy McMillan, Kevin Cleghorn of Crosspoint, and Michael J. of Ascension.**

From top: 2nd Generation's Brenda Denney with Mike Allen. Gerald and Debi Crabb at the Diamond Awards, where Gerald accepted awards for his songwriting and on behalf of children Jason (Male Soloist and Country Male Artist and Aaron & Amanda (Duet).

Contemporary group Beyond the Ashes took the stage and began singing "That's How Much I Need A Savior." Pianist Zack Swain remembers, "For me, [this] was the defining moment of the event. They started singing and when they did, the Holy Spirit just kind of took over the event. The people were coming out of their seats. The artists were coming up to the front of the stage. This was the first time I had seen that happen at an event of this magnitude."

Johnathan Bond of Young Harmony agrees. "It was tremendous. The more you do for God, the more Satan fights you. But knowing you have people you can lean on? It was amazing."

**Also returning to the Branson Gospel Music Convention this year was the Diamond Awards. Owner Rob Patz worked closely with a number of artists to create an event that was both substantive and polished.**

Twenty awards were given out during the Thursday evening. It was one of the most well attended nights of the Convention. Jason Crabb received the Male Soloist of the Year Award while Second Generation took home the Sunrise Award. Les Butler of Solid Gospel 105 made a video appearance to accept his Paul Heil Award in Broadcasting, as did Bill Gaither for acceptance of the Quartet of the Year Award.

Exceptional performances punctuated the ceremonies. Unique gospel "super-groups" were formed just for the evening. Among others, Praise Inc. and Jericho combined for the song "First Day In Heaven" as did Brenda Denney (of 2nd Generation), Steve Bridgmon (of Firm Foundation), Gaither Homecom-



**Diamond Awards hosts Christy Sutherland and Johnathan Bond kept the show moving and the humor rolling.**



**The husband wife banter of hosts Rod and Kelly Burton welcomed the nightly audiences, brought a few laughs and unveiled the new name of the event.**

ing great Mike Allen, and "Mr. Branson GMC" Rod Burton in singing "God Walks The Dark Hills."

One night Dino Kartsonakis took the stage. The venerable pianist, who resides in Branson with his wife Cheryl has become nearly as well known for his carrot cake (the couple owns a cake shop in nearby Hollister) as his piano skills.

The convention also showcased an exceptional piano jubilee, organized and led by Arkansas-native Zack Swain, joined on stage by Shannon Bunch and Jeff Duffield. "My goal was to feature some of the musicians who often don't get recognized," said Swain.

On Friday night, Rod Burton made the announcement, "This is the last year of the Branson Gospel Music Convention," as a new banner was unveiled behind him.

"Branson Gospel Music Revival" was the title.

**Scheduled for next summer, the event**



Jonathan Edwards backstage with Donnie and Lisa Williamson of The Homesteaders.



< The backstage area is manned by artists. Often they were gathered there to fill in for each other and to pray,

**continues to mature.**

And while comparisons with the revered National Quartet Convention in Louisville are inevitable, Kelly Burton is quick to point out, "I don't see a constructive reason for comparing the two events. They have different audiences and purposes. And one is 53 years old and the other is two! We never want to replicate what someone else is doing - and doing well. We attend the NQC. We have answered a different call with Branson GMR."

Perhaps Violet Maynard, gospel singer from Ohio, summed it up best, "I want my light shining for Christ. The best part for me was the fellowship with the artists and the folks in attendance. When we can fellowship like that, it gives me some assurance that I'm doing my job in

spreading the message of Christ through song."

God bless the Branson Gospel Music Revival. 🇺🇸

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# Live at the Brumley Sing

Tales from 'America's Largest Summer Sing' from a member of the family behind it all.

By Betsy Brumley-Bernier

Here I am at the Brumley Gospel Sing once again. I have never known my life without the Singin' (that's what the family calls it). The Singin' is actually older than I am, so come the first full weekend in August, I know exactly where I am going to be: surrounded by 30 award winning artists and 40,000 of the best fans in Southern Gospel Music.

People call the Brumley Sing the "Granddaddy of all Gospel Sings" and I guess it is, but for me it is part of my soul. I feel very blessed and honored to be a part of something in this world that has touched so many lives. Each year people come up to me and tell me stories of how Grandpa's music and words have encouraged them. I hear stories of happiness, sadness, joy and strength and each one touches me. The fans at the Brumley Sing, as well as the artists who perform, are the best and mean the world to me.

I have grown up in front of most of our fans. They all know me and I know them and one of the things I look forward to the most is seeing all those friendly faces from my childhood and catching up. Each year that passes we tend to lose one or two faces, but after 42 years, well, that is the way God panned it.

Grandpa had a lot of foresight when he wrote the song "If We Never Meet Again." He wrote this song, after a singing convention in Memphis 1945. He knew that this moment in time would never come again and those same people would most likely never gather together again in the same way. I grew up understanding the meaning of that song, so I cherish each Sing knowing that I may not see some of these wonderful people again.

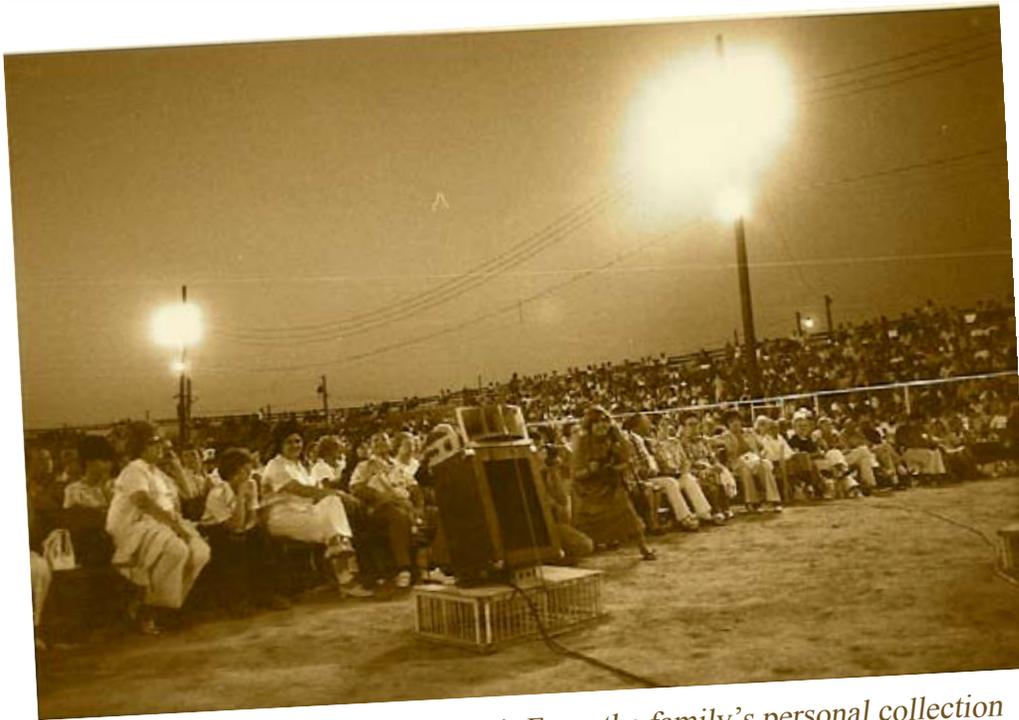
I have such wonderful memories of the Singin'. Of course anyone who has been coming for a while remembers being outside in Springdale at the rodeo arena. The heat and the rain and even one tornado never stopped the Sing. Fans came out in droves and endured whatever Mother Nature threw at them. The artists still dressed in their finest and sang well into the night or actually into the early morning.

Things were a lot different then. Back in the '80s and early '90s, back when the crowds reached upwards of 14,000 a night and we had performances until 2 or 3am, we did everything the old fashioned way. This is before reserved seats when people started lining up at 10am to get the best seats. Folks packed a cooler full of food, sat in their lawn chairs under an umbrella and just waited until the doors opened at 5pm.

The *Gospel Singing Journal*, our Brumley Sing paper, was put together by hand. The addresses were typed on labels and each one was placed on the corner of each paper by hand. The papers were manually separated by zone and zip code and stacked. Back then the mailing list was like 50,000. It was a huge job. It took about a week to get all the papers out.

Once we got the first computer, it was my job to type in all the names and addresses so we could print the address labels. It took me a whole summer to do that, but it saved so much time in the end. Now of course everything is automated and it takes a day to do what it took us a week to do back in the old days. This is how I remember the Brumley Sing. These memories along with so many others that there is no space to share are engrained inside me and make up a part of who I am.

Dad has always been very particular in the way he handles the Sing and his business. He has instilled in me that same value system. There are certain things



Above: an early Brunley Sing crowd. *From the family's personal collection*  
 Below: From Thursday night, 2010. *By Barbara Morgan*



you do and certain things you do not do. He has always taught me to keep my word and if there is a concern to ask me and not take anyone else's word for it. Even now at the Brunley Sing, people should take everything with a grain of salt unless you hear it directly from Dad's mouth. Make no mistake Dad is the guy in charge and the final word is his. The Brunley Sing is Dad's pride and joy, but I am sure everyone can see that by how well he runs it.

There is a lot that goes on behind the scenes that the fans never really get to see. The singers start doing sound checks about 2pm. That is 5 hours before the concert even starts. Dad also conducts a managers meeting each night to go over how the evening is going to run and what the artists can expect. Really the easiest part to the whole event is when the actual Sing is going on.

Dad also has great volunteers and employees who help make the Sing a success. The volunteers have been with Dad since the '80s or longer and they do not need to be told what to do. The volunteers have been Dad's right hands for 30 years. All of Dad's volunteers are family friends he trusts. I grew up with their kids. These folks are like family to me and they are very special. They spent many a night at our house making homemade ice cream and having cookouts. Dad's volunteers are with us year round, not just at the Singing. We are truly blessed

to be surrounded by these folks who have been with us for so long and helped us build the Brunley Sing to what it is today.

After 42 years you would think things have changed a lot, but they really haven't. Back in 1969 when Grandpa Brumley, my Uncle Bill and Dad started this Sing, they laid the basic ground rules of how things are to be done and they are still followed today. Duane Garren is a good example of this. Dad has always employed someone to go out and promote the Brunley Sing and be town crier for the Sing. This is a basic promotion tool that has been used for years. In the beginning Dad and Bill used to go out and promote on radio, TV, and in person. Ten years ago as Brunley Music began to focus on other business ventures, Dad got too busy to go out himself, so Dad hired Duane as Director of Marketing and Promotion for the Brunley Sing and he still works for us today.

The fans really make this event special. They come back year after year and being able to provide this type of family event is such a special blessing for us. Our fans come from all over the US and Canada. Back in the Springdale days we would regularly have people from Australia and Europe. Last year we had a lady from South

James was around a lot when I was a kid.  
He would come to Grandpa and Grandma's  
house and talk for hours with Grandpa.



Albert E. Brunley and James Blackwood

(Brunley Family Personal Collection)



*The Inspirations*



*This photo: Barbara Morgan*

*Brumley Sing,  
Thursday, August 5, 2010*

# MRS. PRESIDENT

In 1992 I went with Dad to a Southern Gospel Music Guild meeting in Nashville. He took me into a room filled with legends in our business: Les Beasley, Ed Harper, Mickey Gamble, Foxy, Maurice Templeton, Paul Heil, Jerry Kirksey, to name few. At the beginning of the meetings the guys always go around and introduce themselves and tell who they are representing. So as we go around the room introducing ourselves, we get to me and I, in a confident voice said "My name is Betsy Brumley and I am President and CEO of Albert E Brumley and Sons." Everyone just looked at me. Their eyes just widening in shock and then I said, "Naw, I'm just kidding!" We all laughed, but deep down they all knew someday it would be true.



*Betsy Brumley-Bernier is the granddaughter of Albert E Brumley, regarded as one of the greatest songwriters of all time. She is a trained chef and travel aficionado. She owns I'll Fly Away Productions, LLC along with her husband Kevin. [www.ifaproductions.com](http://www.ifaproductions.com)*

After 42 years you would think things have changed a lot, but they really haven't

Africa come and enjoy the Sing. How wonderful that Southern Gospel has fans all over the world and they choose to come be a part of The Brumley Sing. Our family feels very honored to be able to share our legacy with so many people from so many different countries and regions of the U.S.

This year was not different. We had folks from all over the United States and Canada. One row of cars had 18 different states represented. We started on Wednesday night with a great line-up. We had the Diplomats kick things off, and they were amazing. Following them was Karen Peck, Greater Vision, Tim Lovelace, Daily and Vincent, The Primitive Quartet and the Reggie Sadler Family. These artists gave tremendous performances to start the weekend off right.

Thursday night was electric. We had a sold out crowd and the merchandise area was buzzing. At one point I am not sure if another person could have fit. We had an amazing group of artists. Aaron Wilburn was back to his old self and cutting up back stage. The Booth Brothers, put on one great show and then there is the Isaacs. What can you say about the Isaacs? "Walk On" is just an awesome song and their harmony is like angels. First timers to the Brumley Sing was Triumphant Quartet. Wow, how amazing were they? Now those boys can sing! Jeff and Sheri closed out the show for us.

Friday was a big day with two Booth Brothers matinee shows, plus a full line-up at the night show. The Booth Brothers did a great job for us and we love working with them. Michael says calls the Brumley Sing is one of the biggest small Sings there is. I happen to think he is right. By Friday night we all dragging, but when Little Roy and Lizzy are around it is hard to be tired. Little Roy never gets off stage. I sometimes think he performs more in the merchandise area than on stage. Dennis Swansberg is also a first timer to the Brumley Sing. He had everyone in stitches.

On Saturday Dad has always given an appreciation brunch to those who make this event possible. All the ticket handlers, people from the city of Lebanon, the volunteers and folks from the music industry are invited to that the Brumley family can show just how much we appreciate all the hard work these guys do all year long. Dennis Swansberg was the entertainment this year. His eulogy for the Pillsbury Dough Boy is just priceless. I thought my sister was going to fall out of her chair laughing.

After the brunch, we headed over to the Saturday matinee. Mark Bishop always acts as the master of ceremonies. Mark has been coming to the Brumley Sing for about 20 years now; first with the Bishops and now on his own. Mark is a true professional. We shared stories and chocolate chip cookies back stage. The Talley Trio was fantastic and Charlie and the Florida Boys had the joint jumpin' with some great '50s and '60s music.

Saturday night came way too fast. Old friends and the sound of old-fashioned quartet singing just brings floods of childhood memories to mind. Memories of James Blackwood, Big Jim Hamill, and JD Sumner are so precious to me. James was around a lot when I was a kid. He would come to Grandpa and Grandma's house and talk for hours with Grandpa. They were such good friends. James was such a special person. I miss talking to him about old times.

I remember the first time we were inside in 2002 in Fayetteville the deep, rich sounds from the quartets made the bleachers rattle. The music just filled the arena, just like it does today in Lebanon. The Dixie Echoes, Kingsmen, and Mark Trammel have been around the Brumley Sing for over 30 years. They brought it again this year.

People ask us when we start planning for the next Sing and the truth is we start even before the event takes place that year. We eat, sleep, talk, and promote all year long. It takes a lot of hard work from Dad to make the Brumley Sing what it is. He does have help and the city of Lebanon is really a great place to hold an event. They make our job a lot easier. As for me, it's in my blood.

People still talk about being at Springdale and the unique feel of the rodeo arena. The energy of an outdoor concert is unmatched and the fact we would have 14,000 people each night made it electric.



*The Isaacs "Walk On" and more at 2010's sing.  
 Photo by Barbara Morgan*

Over the years we have seen it all: heat extremes, down pours of rain and even a tornado, but now finally we are inside.

We are now on the fifth year of the Brumley Gospel Sing in Lebanon, Missouri, and we have no plans to move any time soon. Lebanon has been such a blessing to us. The facility is superb and the friendliness of people in this picturesque little

town of 16,000 is what being in the Ozarks is all about.

As the Brumley Sing goes into its 43rd year, we look forward to continuing our family heritage for many years to come. When August rolls around, there will be a Brumley Sing. And rest assured there will always be a member of the Brumley family at the helm of the Brumley Gospel Sing. 🇺🇸

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# Gospel Group Guy

## David Hill Talks About Quartets, Mixed Groups, and the David Hill Trio

By D. Ann Bailey



Very few people can list on their resume that they have sung with not only some of the top quartets in Southern Gospel Music but also some of the best mixed groups in Southern Gospel Music... but David Hill of the David Hill Trio can truly make that claim. Having sung with The Anchormen, The Singing Americans, and Gold City from 1990-1996, then making the move to mixed groups with the Nelons and the Perrys from 1998-2000, his resume is something most singers can only dream of.

David says "As a young man I was a huge fan of the Hinsons but also grew to love mail quartets. When that door opened, I went through it. When I went with the Nelons I found that my voice seemed to fit better with mixed groups. Of course now, I'm a mixed trio kind of guy."

David is joined in the trio by his wife Amanda and by Stephanie Lindsey. "Amanda sings soprano and grew up singing at church but didn't have much group experience. She had filled in for Libbi Perry Stuffle once and with the Nelons on another occasion. But she has a clear soprano voice and a great ability to communicate. Stephanie had sung with one of Liberty University's choral groups, her strong alto brought our sound together."

After a couple years off the road, a valley in David and Amanda's life was the catalyst for where the David Hill Trio is today. "In 2002 my wife and I found out that we were expecting our second child, we had picked out her name, Raegan Elizabeth Hill and her due date was December 25, 2002. Seven days

continues>

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before the due date my wife went in for a checkup and the doctor discovered that our baby was not alive. Two days before Christmas that year we buried our baby girl. It was a dark time but it was during that time that God showed me who I am and what He had called me to be."

"In 2003 I had been doing some solo dates but I really missed singing in a group setting. I knew my wife sang but didn't know if she'd be interested in singing together. We had a long talk one night and Amanda told me she would love to sing. So the search began for an alto for our group."

"We sincerely prayed about a third member to our group. One

Wednesday night at prayer meeting we heard a voice behind us singing during the congregational songs. I asked our worship leader who she was and was she someone we would want to have with us. His report was confirmation so soon afterwards Steph was the third member of DHT."

"Steph is a preacher's kid from Hollywood, FL and we knew we had a good fit when we put the sound together. We're about ministering and that is where her heart is."

In 2010 the group is doing about 75 dates and they will be increasing those dates in 2011. "We are enjoying what we are doing currently but we certainly would not complain if the singing schedule picked up to the place where we were traveling more.

"Amanda has a really good job at Tideland Bank and Stephanie is an accountant and has her own accounting business. I work in the

studio producing as well as home-schooling our two children, Mason and Eliana Grace. I also spend a lot of time working on booking the group. We are open to do whatever God wants, continue as we are or be on the road more, that's not our decision, it's up to Him."

"We are at an exciting time right now; we have a new project that should be out within the next month. It has a number of songs written by my friend Jason Clark, of the Nelons including Good, Good News' which will probably be our first single. He

and his wife Kelly Nelon Clark also wrote 'God Makes No Mistake' for Amanda and me, it goes with our testimony of



the loss of Raegan.

"We also cut a Nelon classic 'I've Got a Right,' written by Nancy Harmon. My wife Amanda wrote 'Awesome Are You Lord,' Ricky Atkinson wrote, 'He'll Never Forsake,' and Kari Jobe wrote 'No Sweeter Name.'"

"Our message is the cross- that is why we do what we do. It is a privilege to sing about Jesus Christ. We sing wherever the doors open. Of course, like all Southern Gospel Groups we love when we get to 'suffer' for the Lord, like our upcoming Smoky Mountain Christmas Showcase in Pigeon Forge, TN. We are going to be joining a number of our friends and enjoying good music and one of the best locations around. But no matter where we go, the message is what is important

"I love what I'm doing, I'm having a blast. I get to minister and be with my family, it doesn't get much better than that!"

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*Since January 2010, my life has completely changed.*

As the newest addition to Karen Peck and New River, traveling has become a daily part of life. Since 1983, I have lived in the rural community of Flat Rock, Alabama. Never in a million years would I have ever thought I would be singing with my dream group and getting to visit places like Canada, New York City, the Bahamas, and even beautiful Hawaii.

For a high school English teacher, singing usually took a back seat to education, but in January, God opened a door and allowed me to have an audition with Karen Peck and New River. I couldn't believe that this was actually happening to me. I remember the night Karen called. In fear that my cell battery would die, I chose not to answer the phone. When I heard the voice mail she left, I immediately threw the phone down and ran a lap around the living room, like that of a hyper-active 5 year old girl. I had never been so excited in my entire life.

Just the opportunity to go out with Karen and Susan for a couple of trial weekends was unbelievable to me. There I was, my first weekend, singing to hundreds of people. Would they like me? Would I remember all of the songs, words, music, stage transitions, people's names? my name? In all honesty I was SCARED! Karen and Susan were great coaches and helped me learn all of the necessary tools I needed to have to transform me from Mr. Hawes into Jeff of KPNR.

One of the funniest but scariest adventures while out on the road was when our group sang with the Bill Gaither Homecoming Tour in Ontario, Canada. I just couldn't believe what all it took to travel to another country, but I soon found out that I wasn't in Alabama anymore. As we arrived in Canada, I instantly must have looked like a target for interrogation. A lady in the airport separated me from Karen and Susan,

and I went through another line. This was my first mistake. I think because it was all happening so fast, I couldn't really think too clearly. In fact, I didn't even know where I was going. I thought telling them Canada would be sufficient. Boy, was wrong?

As I approached the tall, very broad shouldered security guard, my heart sank as I knew he would ask me why I was entering his country. As he asked the question, my lips started quiver-

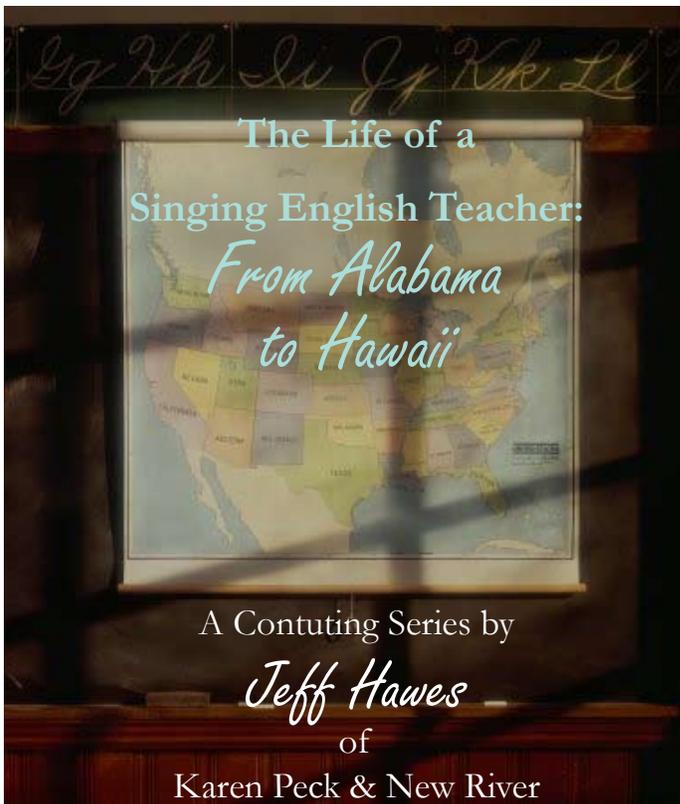
ing and nothing would come out. It seemed as if nothing I said was going to work for him, and he printed a big X on my passport information sheet. An X? As a teacher, I knew very well that an X on a paper, especially with red ink wasn't a good sign. As I turned the corner, I was met by two other agents who took me to a questioning room. The singing English teacher had just been called to the principal's office.

After what seemed like ten hours, security guard number 2479 approved my passport sheet and allowed me to enter the country.

**As a teacher, I knew very well that an X on a paper, especially with red ink wasn't a good sign. ... The singing English teacher had just been called to the principal's office.**

For your warning: make sure that you carry more than four dollars in your wallet and print out directions to the location you are going. For some reason, a guy in a baseball cap who only carries a few dollars and doesn't know where in the world he's going is somehow suspicious to these people.

For the past nine months, I have truly been living a dream. God is so faithful and gives us exactly what we need. Perhaps my favorite song we sing is "My God Will Always Be Enough." This songs speaks exactly through the hearts of everyone who listens. This simple message cannot be any more true to the fact that if we have God, He can fill any longing our heart's desire. It is an honor to travel with these two amazing women of God, and may He keep blessing me with adventures and opportunities whether it be in Flat Rock, Alabama or Ontario, Canada. 🇺🇸



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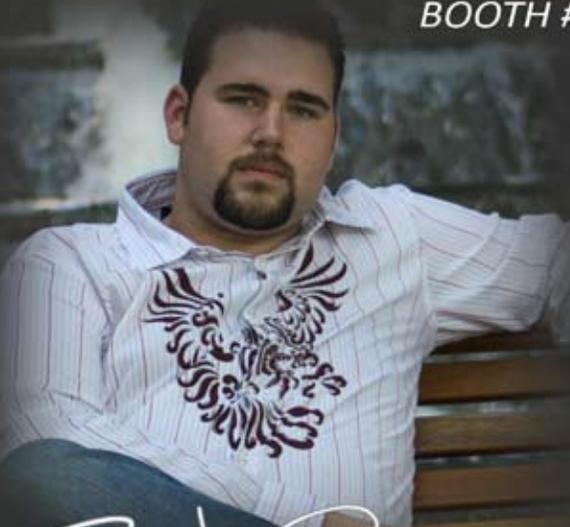


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# How Hope Prevails Through Compassion International in the Midst of Bogotá's Poverty

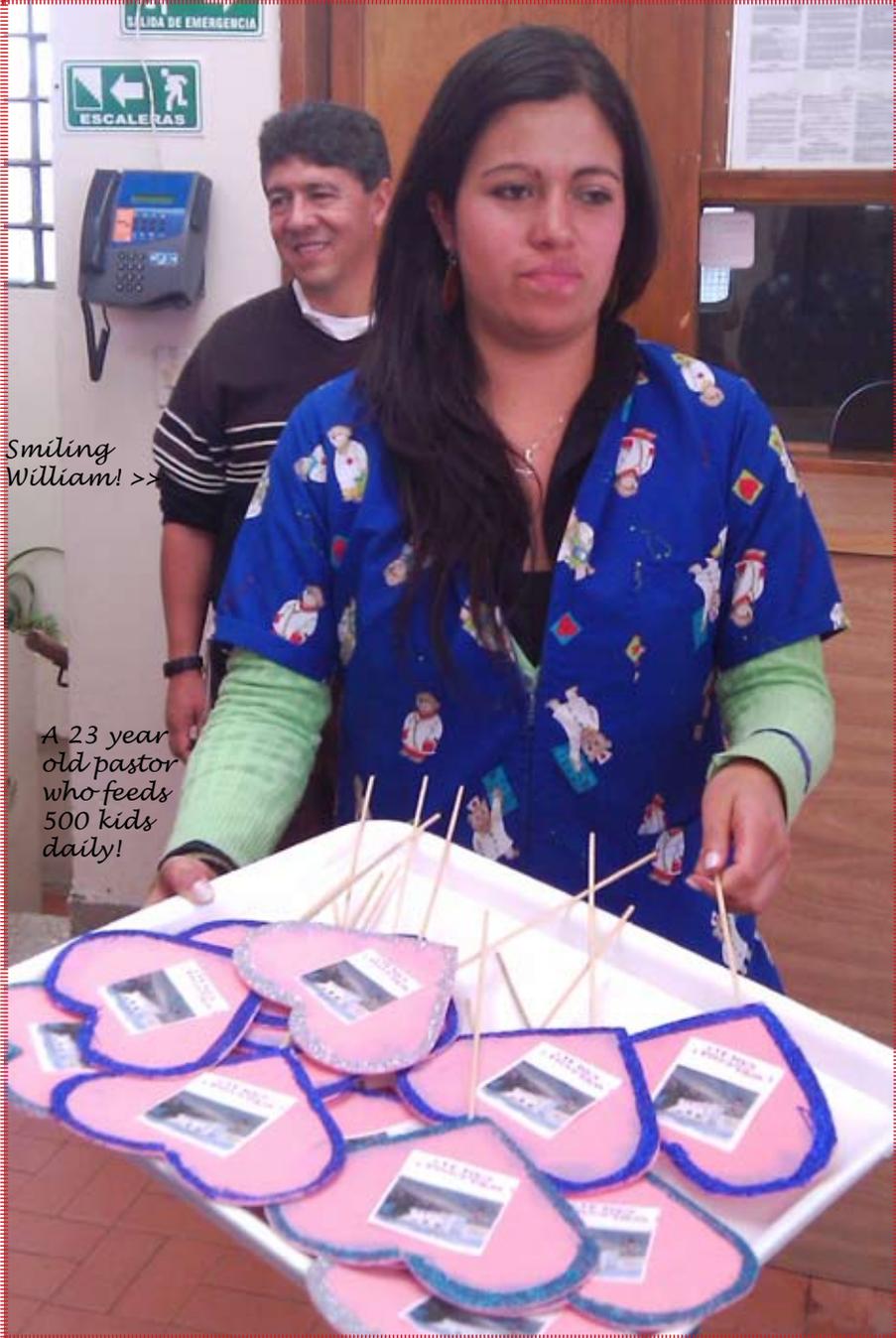
A travel journal from  
Editor Kelly Capriotti Burton



*On the streets of Bogotá; Our 'blue group' meeting with students in the Leadership Development Program and their mentors.*



Our team praying together



Smiling William! >>

A 23 year old pastor who feeds 500 kids daily!

*I didn't know what to expect. I anticipated devastation. I anticipated despair. I anticipated feeling American guilt over the things I have and helplessness over the things I cannot fix. I did not expect to be hauling myself up the side of a mountain village on a sunny Monday morning, with two small children, their entourage, and my own apprehension in tow.*

*When we reached the first plateau, on the side of a mountain in Bogotá, Colombia, I could already smell the lack of plumbing, the lack of curbside garbage pick-up. I could see that most of the homes before me were constructed from unstable scraps. And yet, the first words I could muster to speak to my husband, who was standing next to me with tears in his eyes:*

**"God is here."**

In August, my husband Rod Burton and I, along with 17 American counterparts, traveled to the capital of Colombia through Compassion International. As Compassion artist advocates, we were to experience firsthand the work of this international organization to better equip us to help further its work.

The set up of the trip looked simple enough on our printed agenda: each day we would visit a Compassion project, which is a locally-established church receiving assistance through Compassion to feed, protect, educate, and minister to the community's children. Each day we were to visit a home of a child attending the project. Each day we would see a different aspect of Compassion's work: nutrition, worship, classroom teaching, occupational training, college preparation, behind-the-scenes business operations...

What the printed agenda could not foretell us what how our tour would take us from that mountain, where hope could be felt but not seen, to a different mountain top, where hope smiled at us through eyes of young people who had made the journey, from hopeless to hope.

### Characteristics of Compassion

If you are a fan or participant in the Christian music world, Compassion International is likely not a stranger to you. Since 1952,

this child-advocacy organization has spread its work into 26 countries and partnered with 11 other countries to serve well over one million children and their families.

How does it happen? The answer, Compassion believes, is releasing children from poverty in Jesus' name, one child at a time, through the support and relationship of a sponsor to that child. By partnering with the Christian music community, over 130 thousand new sponsors have joined the cause in the last 20 years, with help from names like Michael W. Smith, Amy Grant, and Rebecca St. James. Southern gospel has become involved, too, with artists such as The Hoppers, Greater Vision, Legacy Five, HisSong, and many more. In fact, if you take a look around National Quartet Convention this week, signs of Compassion are everywhere. According to Compassion's Todd Stewart, gospel music artists working with Compassion exceeded the sponsorship goals made for the past year.

It's not only the music industry that finds Compassion to be an easy fit. Churches, Christian events and organizations such as MOPS, Hearts at Home, and numerous youth conferences, and individual sponsors across the country partner with Compassion to bring new sponsors into the fold. In a time when the American economy has made charitable causes a struggle for many, Compassion continues to grow. This can likely be attributed to its long-standing history and its documented financial integrity (Its annual reports are published on the official website, [www.compassion.com](http://www.compassion.com)) as well as its transparency. Not only are artist advocates often invited to tour Compassion projects, but sponsors and their families have the opportunity to do so as well.

Meanwhile, communication between sponsors and children is a key component to the overall ministry. Just as important as the financial support a sponsor offers, personal support through prayers and letter writing is extremely significant to the lives of Compassion children, as evidenced by the kids we visited with in beautiful Bogota.

### Faces of Compassion

The personalities on our trip were bright and varied: our American Compassion trip leaders, whose talents ranged from amazing photography to fluent Spanish to general cheerleading, and fellow artists who, as singers, writers, artist and event managers, marketing staffers, comedi-



*Aspiring singers, business executives, and Presidents inspired us!*



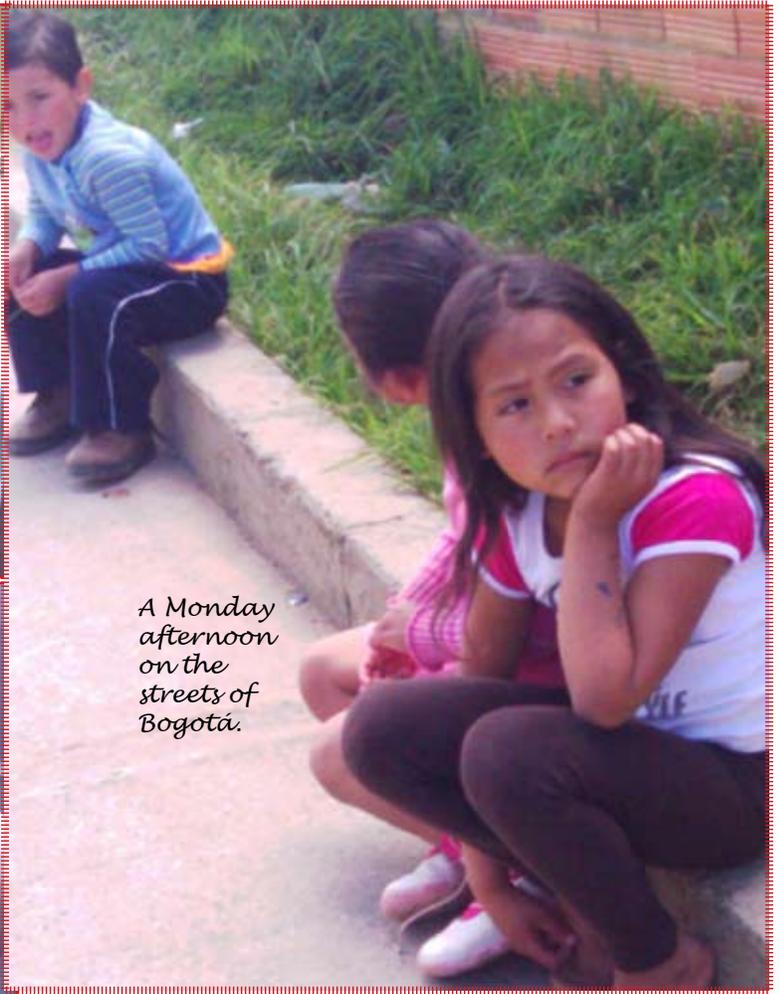
*Solveig, Jim, & their sweet sponsored child*



*Rod sang "Jesus Loves Me" with his little Ladye*



*Ryan, Stephen, & Shawna respond to a presentation.*



*A Monday afternoon on the streets of Bogotá.*



*Shannon, Mike, and Yulli, mutually inspired.*

ans, DJs, and one precious college student, came to Colombia fully open to whatever opportunities were there (not a crossed arm, rolled eye, or giant ego in

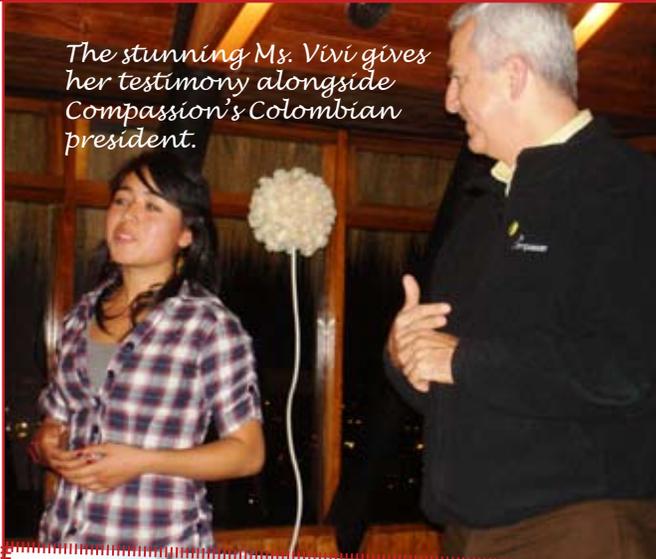
the bunch!)

Stephen Jones, husband and father of three daughters, Compassion staffer for over 15 years, and now the Director of Creative Relationships, served as our trip leader. Stephen kept us on schedule, kept us safe, kept us encouraged with pats on the back. I saw him wipe tears away many times. There was nothing old hat about this trip to Stephen; he was friends with the late, great Christian artist Rich Mullins, whose signature song “Awesome God” came alive during our days in Colombia. On our first night, after we gathered at the airport, Stephen told us that Rich had had a big burden for Colombia and that we were each there for a purpose. I’d say by the end of that week, those two statements came together: a piece of each of our hearts now lies there in Bogotá.

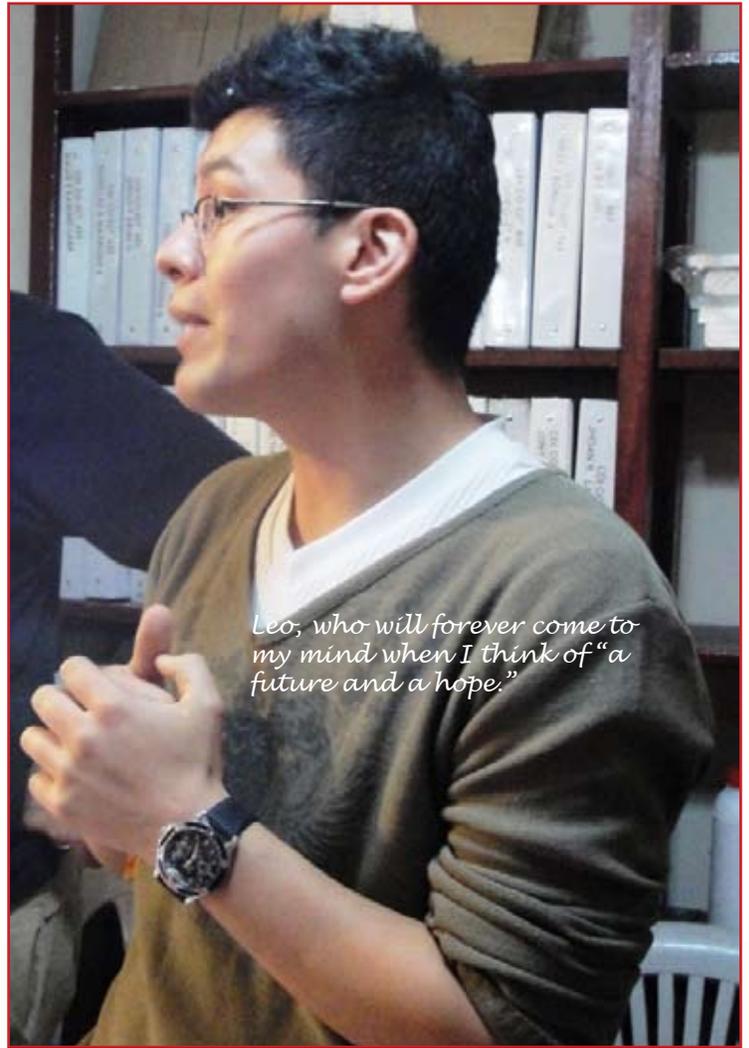
Additional Compassion staffers Ryan O’Quinn, Stephanie Waldop, Shawna Kirk, and Keely Orr Scott are each gifted with adaptable personalities, quick wit, and hearts for their work. Keely, our trip photographer, managed to capture the colorful beauty and chaos of Bogotá, with its many geographic, logistical, and metaphorical layers. (Check out [keelymariescott.com](http://keelymariescott.com)) Maria Howes was celebrating her 10th anniversary as a Compassion staff member and brought her daughter Raquel, a university sophomore, along.

Meanwhile, fellow advocates Jim and Solveig Chaffee, Lee Roy and Elaine Roy, Blaine Larson, Bill Booth, and Ron Miller of Nashville, Tennessee, Ryan Bomgardner of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, and Mike and Shannon Promicerio of Ladera Ranch, California, each had a unique talent and story to bring to our four day trek.

Shannon, an author and speaker to young women, and her husband Mike met their sponsored young lady in the most unique way – as she popped out of a gift-wrapped box to surprise them. Later that day, they were given the unforeseen chance to introduce her to a “graduate” of Compassion’s leadership development program. What a gift that was, for all of us to watch a 10 year old girl see what her life can become! Ryan and



*The stunning Ms. Vivi gives her testimony alongside Compassion's Colombian president.*



*Leo, who will forever come to my mind when I think of "a future and a hope."*



*With my sponsored 'son' Jhordan*

Blaine took turns offering their talents to the kids: Ryan through puppetry, ventriloquism, and comedy, Blaine through a song with just enough Spanish words to get everyone excited. Bill, the father of two boys, received the world's longest and most precious hug from his four-year-old sponsored girl, while all of us were touched deeply by seeing Elaine with her sponsored child, a young girl who has lost her mother.

On our second night, Jim and Solveig Chaffee exchanged stories with Rod and me over crepes and waffles, at a popular local restaurant called... Crepes and Waffles. To me, their love story, their blended family, their outlook on life encompassed the heart for Compassion. It is the same one that tells us to open our minds to the circumstances of others, to receive redemption, to offer understanding, to live second chances fully. Solveig's gentle and beautiful spirit was emulated through her acoustic rendition of "Put Your Hand in the Hand of the Man," and Jim's burly stature was sweetly compromised every time he looked at her, or at their sponsored child.

Because most of us were meeting our own sponsored children during the trip, and because each of the Compassion projects treated our arrival like a World Series ticker-tape parade, emotions were constantly high. During the course of our days, I saw grown men cry as little girls hung around their necks or sang "Open the Eyes of My Heart" in Spanish. I saw women open their arms and laps to as many children as would fit. I saw each of us take obvious steps out of our comfort zones, be it in attempting to speak Spanish or dance (in public! With people watching!) or eat a local delicacy, fire-roasted ants (or in my husband's case, eat rice!). All of these efforts and reactions are part of the Compassion full-embrace that is given to the countries it aids. Sponsorship is more than signing a check; it is giving your heart away to a person, place, and culture.

But my American counterparts were not the only ones who weaved their way into my story of eternity. Along the way there was William, our Colombian host, whose every moment during those four days was dedicated to our comfort, safety, and understanding. A few times during the trip I compared William's demeanor to that of Mr. Rogers... kind, generous, content. But honestly, he embodied selfless Christlikeness more than I have ever seen. I will never be able to thank him, or repay him.

Our other hosts and interpreters all served us so well and shared their lives with us. But it was one testimony of a Compassion translator that will long be used to inspire current and potential sponsors. Meet Leonardo, whose salvation came to him through the very letters he was translating, who learned about the future and hope described in Jeremiah 29:13 in the encouragement shared with sponsored children – and decided he must have that for himself. (Watch Leo’s testimony here).

Compassion speaker manager Shawna Kirk tells us: “One amazing thing I keep in my heart is really about Leonardo and how he became a believer from interpreting the letters back and forth from sponsors to children. He expressed to me that those letters have a greater impact than just for the kids, meaning parents, interpreters, etc....how Jesus shows up through Compassion and people willing to respond to the call, in many lives through that act of sponsorship!”

### Work of Compassion

I can describe the sight and smell of the house, but it would not make it real enough. I can tell you that it was tiny, only big enough for two double beds, yet a place where nine people sleep. I can tell you the walls were covered with dirty old rugs, that the floor was simply dirt, that the electrical hook-up looked dangerous. I can tell you that the mom looked hopeless and exhausted as did her teenage daughter. I can tell you how I held one of her three-year olds until I had to literally sink to my knees. She was covered with a smile and she covered me with kisses. I prayed for her, “May the joy of the Lord always be

your strength.” It is still my prayer for her.

I can perhaps better describe our “fancy dinner” the third night, atop a mountain, with candles and dim lights and elegance abounding as we looked out the glass walls down to the city. That night, we heard testimonies from four young people who had started their lives in homes much like the one I just described. The difference...oh, the difference!... that hope, that Compassion has brought to them is this: With smiles and tears and humor and conviction, they can now say the poverty cycle in their families will be broken through them, in Jesus’ name. They are part of the elite Compassion initiative called Leadership Development Program.

*Did the trip change your life? No matter how grandiose it may sound, my answer is a resounding “Yes!”*

Through LDP, students are given the opportunity to pursue a college degree with full funding, to complete courses in Christian leadership, and then, to go back to their communities and families and improve them. One of the students who spoke to us, whom I call La Mayora, plans to return to her community, Margangue, become the mayor, and fix the water system. Next year she will graduate from the university. The love of Jesus shines through her. And not one of us sitting around the table doubted for a second that she will accomplish her goals.

The work of Compassion inspires La Mayora. It also teaches young people, most of whom will not make it into LDP (in Colombia, there are

approximately 26 thousand sponsored children, and around 100 who made it into LDP thus far), job trades like computer repair, jewelry making, cosmetology, and others. It helps them with their school work and teaches them English. It provides them with meals their families cannot provide, provides them with safety when their parents are working, and most importantly, as my husband says it, makes the difference for them between Heaven and Hell.

People have asked me since we returned: Did the trip change your life? No matter how grandiose it may sound, my answer is a resounding “Yes!” I did not come home and give all my children’s toys away, but you can bet there will be less under the Christmas tree this year.

We have not decided to live abroad on the mission field, but we are spending intentional time with our children to write letters to our sponsored children and collect change for the Un-sponsored Children’s Fund. We do not interrupt every waitress or cashier or friend with stories from our trip, but given the chance to talk about loving our neighbors, we have so many stories of Compassion to share.

Rich Mullins wrote the words, our churches have sung it across the years, and across the miles to Bogotá, the message rings true: Our God is an awesome God. He does reign from Heaven above with wisdom, power and love. I do not understand everything I saw in Colombia or why it is so different from where my family lives. I do not have a solution to the poverty or despair that I saw. But I do know God has it all in His hands, and He is asking us to be His hands here on earth in every situation where we can. 🇨🇴

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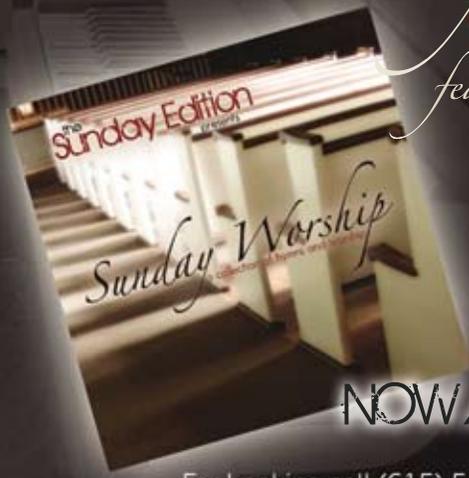
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*Romans 5:8- But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*

*Romans 6:23- For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

C: Call upon Jesus and ask Him to come into your heart, forgive your sins, and make you one of His children.

*Romans 10:9- That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.*

*Romans 10:13- For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.*

If you would like to accept God's free gift of salvation, then all you have to do is pray and ask Him. Your prayer might sound something like this:

*Dear Jesus, I know that I am a sinner, and I know that I deserve Hell because of it. However, I believe that you died on the cross and rose again in three days to pay for my sin. I ask you to come into my heart, cleanse my sin, and make me one of your children. Thank you, Jesus. Amen.*

Please remember that simply saying a prayer doesn't save you. You must believe this in your heart as well.

If you have any questions about salvation, or if you just prayed to receive Christ, please e-mail us at [sgnscoops@gmail.com](mailto:sgnscoops@gmail.com). We'd love to rejoice with you! God bless you!



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 - Psalm 92:1*

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# Garnish Your Plate With Praise

*"Christian Fitness" by Laurette Willis*

Most of us are accustomed to thanking God for our meal before we start eating. What I propose is encircling our dining experience with praise.

In Isaiah 55:2 the Lord says, "Listen carefully to Me and eat what is good, and let your soul be satisfied with abundance."

*Do you see the three parts of that scripture?*

1. *Listen carefully to Me*
2. *Eat what is good*
3. *Let your soul be satisfied with abundance*

As Paul wrote, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work."

While we know that scripture is "spiritually discerned" and has great significance for our spiritual lives, it is also immensely practical and relevant to our everyday lives.

As we grow in our walk with the Lord, we realize that He is genuinely interested in everything that concerns us—even what we eat. By being willing to discipline our flesh, we become more sensitive to His leading.

***Substitute a portion of what you would ordinarily eat - and give it to the Lord.***

*Out of the Blue...*

Have you ever had an idea come to you "out of the blue?" That's how this idea came to me. You know when something is so good, you can't possibly take credit

for it? That's how I feel about this. Not long ago I was Prayer Journaling. That involves writing prayers to God and recording what you believe He is telling you in the Scriptures and in your heart.

I wrote: "Father, how can I best reach and maintain the healthy ideal weight and size for me?" The idea, or revelation, that occurred to me was so complete and made so much sense. I must have stopped and stared for a full minute in wide-eyed wonder.

The Lord led me to Isaiah 55:2 and this plan:  
*Give the Lord a portion of your food every day.*

**How?**

Substitute a portion of what you would ordinarily eat and give it to the Lord. Since you can't physically give that food to the Lord, what do you substitute it with?

*An offering of Praise...*

Praise and thanksgiving. Your portion is what you eat. The portion you give to the Lord is your offering of praise and thanksgiving. The physical food you leave on the plate serves as a symbol of the sacrifice

of praise you will be offering Him from your heart.

After all, praise is called the "fruit of our lips!"

You know how "full" you feel when you completely throw yourself into praise and worship? Or if that's not your style, recall a time when you were so tremendously thankful for an answered prayer or the Lord's intervention at the exact moment you needed Him most that you thought you'd burst? That's what I mean.

I used to eat way past the point of satisfying my physical hunger to fill a void of a different kind. Have you? If you will eat slowly enough to be sensitive to when your stomach is satisfied, you will recognize when to stop eating—even if there's still food on

*continues>*



your plate.

Put your fork down and if you're alone, start praising the Lord. Thank Him for who He is in your life. Worship Him for His amazing attributes and His love for you. It will be a time of sweet communion between the two of you. After all, He is the "bread of life" that truly satisfies. You may be amazed at how quickly you feel satisfied.

If you are with the family or out to dinner at a restaurant, when you sense that you have had an "elegant sufficiency," put your fork down and silently praise and worship the Lord. Thank Him in your heart.

You don't have to be flaky about it.

No need to be rude or hyper-spiritual and shut everyone else out because, "I'm communing with God." Hoo-wee, what a witness!

Instead, why not tell those at table something wonderful the Lord has done for you or someone you know?

In the Psalms, David often spoke of telling others about the Lord's marvelous works. That's praising Him! No one has to know what you're doing if you don't

want them to know.

It's a great opportunity to tell your children why you love and trust in the Lord. Share an experience of what God did for you or someone in your family, or some-

one in the Bible. You might begin by saying, "I was thinking about how much the Lord loves us."

You'll be giving glory to God and "satisfying your soul with abundance" at the same time.

1. *Listen carefully to Me*
2. *Eat what is good*
3. *Let your soul be satisfied with abundance*

(Adapted from BASIC Steps to Godly Fitness by Laurette Willis, Harvest House Publishers) available at [www.PraiseMoves.com](http://www.PraiseMoves.com).

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## Who's making new music...

### CD Reviews by Chad Hayes

# THE HOPPERS

*Something's Happening*  
www.thehoppers.com

The Hoppers have been one of the stalwart groups in Southern Gospel for many years, garnering many industry awards during their existence. The group had its beginnings in 1957, when it was known as "The Hopper Brothers And Connie" and consisted of exactly that- Claude Hopper, his 4 brothers, and his future wife, Connie. Claude and Connie still anchor the group today, and they are joined by their two sons, Dean and Michael, as well as Dean's wife, Kim. This is the lineup that is well-known for songs such as "Shoutin' Time," "Jerusalem," and "The Ride."

*Something's Happening* is the group's new release. The album contains 12 songs from the pens of such writers as Kyla Rowland, Rusty Golden, Dianne Wilkinson, Gerald Crabb, Jim Brady, Bill Gaither, and others. I was excited to see that Lari Goss produced the album, as I have become a fan of his work the past few years. He is one of the most talented producers in the industry today.

*Now, the moment you've all been waiting for: THE SONGS!*

"Victory Shall Be Mine" starts things off on an up-tempo note. Written by Nancy Harmon in the 1970's, it was previously recorded by the Rex Nelon Singers. It has that classic 4-part mixed group arrangement that the Hoppers pull off very well. Kim's lead vocal is strong and clear, giving the song just the right feel.

"Oh How Amazing Is Amazing Grace" has a similar tempo, albeit with a lighter feel. This song has a catchy tune, and the arrangement showcases the tightness of the group's vocal blend. The tempo then slows down for a Kyla Rowland ballad called "Something's Happening." This is the album's title track, and Southern Gospel fans might remember its previous recording by

the Mercy's Mark Quartet on their album by the same name. However, the Hoppers' arrangement is vastly different than the one done by Mercy's Mark. Connie does a recitation in between the verses that, to me, adds an entirely new dimension to this power ballad

and makes it one of the stand-out songs on the album. I also love how the song starts softly and builds throughout, leading to a big ending.

Rusty Golden and Dianne Wilkinson teamed up to pen the fourth song, a medium-tempo offering called "Nobody's Too Bad Or Too Good." Here we are treated to the debut of Karlye Hopper, the 15-year-old daughter of Dean and Kim. Karlye has a very good vocal for a young lady, and it sounds

as though she's going to have some of her mother's trademark soprano range before it's all said and done. This song has a light acoustic arrangement that really brings the vocals to the forefront, and the rest of the group does a splendid job backing up Karlye. I look forward to hearing more from her in the future.

Dean and Kim are then featured on Song #5, Larry Hinson's "I've Been To Heaven.". After listening to this song, I may have to add Dean Hopper to my list of most underrated lead vocalists in Southern Gospel. It's easy to overlook male lead singers in mixed groups, but Dean is one that, while not flashy, is solid and consistent. Next in the song list is another ballad called "East Of Jerusalem." Kim's lead vocals give this song that extra "something" that really helps to convey what is a powerful message.

Connie is featured on Song #7, "Could It Be I'm Dreaming" by Gerald Crabb and Gina Vera. This is a medium-tempo song with a lighter feel, and Connie's rich alto voice and vocal stylings are truly a perfect fit here. The arrangement of this song is also a nice



'The overall effect is a listener's joy.'

change-of-pace at this point in the album.

The eighth song has a title that I truly love- "He Remembers To Forget." In my opinion, this is an awesome vocal hook. The lead vocal seems to switch back and forth between Dean and Kim, and the overall effect is a listener's joy. The group then goes back in time with an arrangement of Ira Stanphill's hymn, "I Know Who Holds Tomorrow." The Hopper Brothers and Connie recorded this back in the early 1960's, and Claude gets the feature as the group reprises it here. Claude is known more as a bass vocalist, but his range here is that of a baritone/lead vocalist.

The Gaither Vocal Band previously recorded the up-tempo "On The Authority." Dean gets the feature, and his voice here sounds more "country" than I've ever heard it. It actually reminds me a bit of Russ Taff. The eleventh song is another one that the Mercy's Mark Quartet recorded- "Living In The Arms Of Mercy." The

Hoppers' version is slightly different, and it features Michael Hopper (who is usually the group's drummer) singing the tenor part. I must say that he fits into the group sound quite nicely.

Finally, the album closes out with a classic power ballad. "Statement Of Faith" is sung along with the Booth Brothers, Greater Vision, and Legacy Five- a Southern Gospel industry choir!

Simply put, this is an excellent album from an excellent group. The Hoppers have continued their tradition of quality music here, and this is an album that needs to be in every Southern Gospel lover's collection. There is a good variety of tempos and styles, and the song selection is very strong. Overall, I give this album a rating of 9.5 out of 10 microphones!

*Favorites: "Oh How Amazing Is Amazing Grace", "Something's Happening", and "He Remembers To Forget"* 🇺🇸

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